AN
EXPOSITION
OF THE
Old and New Testament:

WHEREIN
EACH CHAPTER IS SUMMED UP IN ITS CONTENTS; THE SACRED TEXT INSERTED
AT LARGE, IN DISTINCT PARAGRAPHS; EACH PARAGRAPH REDUCED
TO ITS PROPER HEADS; THE SENSE GIVEN,
AND LARGELY ILLUSTRATED;

WITH
PRACTICAL REMARKS AND OBSERVATIONS:

BY MATTHEW HENRY.

EDITED BY
THE REV. GEORGE BURDER, AND THE REV. JOSEPH HUGHES, A. M.

WITH THE
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
BY THE
REV. SAMUEL PALMER.

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TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
A PREFACE,
BY ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE SEMINARY AT PRINCETON, N. J.

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AN EXPOSITION,
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
UPON THE PROPHETICAL BOOKS
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT,

NAMELY,

ISAIAH, JONAH,
JEREMIAH, MICAIAH,
LAMENTATIONS, NAHUM,
EZEKIEL, HABAKKUK,
DANIEL, ZEPHANIAH,
HOSEA, HAGGAI,
JOEL, ZECHARIAH,
AMOS, AND
OBADIAH, MALACHI.
THE

PREFACE

to the

PROPHETICAL BOOKS.

THOSE books of scripture are all prophetical, of which here, in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, we have endeavoured a methodical explication and a practical improvement. I call them prophetical, because so they are for the main, though we have some histories, (here and there brought in for the illustration of the prophecies,) and a book of Lamentations. Our Saviour often puts the Law and the Prophets for the Old Testament. The prophecies, by waving the ceremonial precepts, and not insisting on them, but only on the weightier matters of the law, plainly intimated the abolishing of that part of the law of Moses by the gospel; and by their many predictions of Christ, and the kingdom of his grace, they intimated the accomplishing and perfecting of that part of the law of Moses in the gospel. Thus the prophecies were the nexus—the connecting bond between the law and the gospel, and are therefore fitly placed between them.

These books, being prophetical, are, as such, divine, and of heavenly original and extraction. We have human laws, human histories, and human poems, as well as divine ones, but we can have no human prophecies. Wise and good men may make prudent conjectures concerning future events; (moral prognostications we call them;) but it is essential to true prophecy that it be of God. The learned Huetius lays this down for one of his axioms, Omnia prophetica facultas a Deo est—The prophetic talent is entirely from God; and he proves it to be the sense both of Jews and heathen, that it is God's prerogative to foresee things to come, and that whoever had such a power, had it from God. And therefore the Jews reckon all prophecy to be given by the highest degree of inspiration, except that which was peculiar to Moses. When our Saviour asked the chief priests whether John's baptism were from heaven, or of men, they durst not say, Of men, because the people counted him a prophet, and, if so, then not of men. The Hebrew name for a prophet is muh—a speaker, preacher, or orator, or interpreter, that delivers God's messages to the children of men; as a herald to proclaim war, or an ambassador to treat of peace. But then it must be remembered, that he was formerly called me or mpr, that is, seer; (1 Sam. ix. 9) for prophets, with the eyes of their minds, first saw what they were to speak, and then spake what they had seen.

Prophecy, taken strictly, is the foretelling of things to come; and there were those to whom God gave this power, not only that it might be a sign for the confirming of the faith of the church concerning the doctrine preached, when the things foretold should be fulfilled, but for warning, instruction, and comfort, in prospect of what they themselves might not live to see accomplished, but which should be fulfilled in its season; so, predictions of things to come long after, might be of present use.

The learned Dr. Grew describes prophecy in this sense to be, "A declaration of the divine pre- science, looking at any distance through a train of infinite causes, known and unknown to us, upon a sure and certain effect." Whence he infers, "That the being of prophecies supposes the non-being of contingents, for though there are many things which seem to us to be contingents, yet, were they so indeed, there could have been no prophecy; and there can be no contingent seemingly so loose and independent, but it is a link of some chain." And Huetius gives this reason, why none but God can foretell things to come, Because every effect depends upon an infinite number of preceding causes, all which, in their order, must be known to him that foretells the effect, and therefore to God only, for he alone is omniscient. So Tully argues; Qui tenet causas rerum futurarum, idem necesse est omnia tenet quae futura sint; quod facere nemo nisi Deus potest—He who knows the causes of future events, must necessarily know the events themselves; this is the prerogative of God alone.† And therefore we find that by this the God of Israel proves himself to be God, by his prophets he foretold things to come, which came to pass according to the prediction, Isa. xlvi. 9, 10. And by this he disproves the pretensions of the Pagan deities, that they could not show the things that were to come to pass hereafter, Isa. xli. 25. Tertullian proves the divine authority of the scripture from the fulfilling of scripture-prophecies, Idoneum, opinor, testimonium Divinitatis, veritas Divinationum—I conceive the accomplishment of prophecy to be a satisfactory attestation from God.‡ And beside the foretelling of things to come, the discovering of things secret by revelation from God is a branch of prophecy, as Ahilah's discovering Jeroboam's wife in disguise, and Elisha's telling Gehazi what passed between him and Naaman.

But prophecy, in scripture-language, is taken more largely for a declaration of such things to the children of men, either by word or writing, as God has revealed to them that speak or write it, by vision, dream, or inspiration, guiding their minds, their tongue, and pens, by his Holy Spirit, and giving them not only ability, but authority, to declare such things in his name, and to preface what they say with, Thus saith the Lord. In this sense it is said, The prophecy of scripture come not in old time by the will of man, as other pensions moral discourses might, but holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. The same Holy Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters to produce the world, moved upon the minds of the prophets to produce the Bible.

* Demonstrat. Evang. cxxv. 15. † Cosmol. Sermon. lib. 4. cap. 6. § Du Pin, Hist. of the Canon, lib. 1. cap. 2. ¶ Cicero de Divi lib. 1
† Apol. cap. 99.
PREFACE.

Now I think it is worthy to be observed, that all nations, having had some sense of God and religion, have likewise had a nation of prophets and prophecy; have had a veneration for them, and a desire and expectation of acquaintance and communion with the gods they worshipped in that way. Witness their oracles, their augurs, and the many arts of divination they had in use among them, in all the ages, and all the countries, of the world.

It is commonly urged as an argument against the Antients, to prove that there is a God, That all nations of the world acknowledged some god or other, some Being above them, to be worshipped and prayed to, to be trusted in and praised; the most ignorant and barbarous nations could not avoid the knowledge of it; the most learned and polite nations could not avoid the belief of it. And this is a sufficient proof of the general and unanimous consent of mankind to this truth; though far the greatest part of men made to themselves gods, which yet were no gods. Now I think it may be urged with equal force against the Deists, for the proof of a divine revelation, that all nations of the world had, and had veneration for, that which they at least took to be a divine revelation, and could not live without; though in this also they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. But if there were not a true Deity, and a true prophecy, there would never have been pretended deities and counterfeit prophecies.

Lucurgo and Numa, those two great lawyers of the Spartan and Roman commonwealths, brought their people to an observance of the laws by possessing them with a notion that they had them by divine revelation, and so making it a point of religion to observe them. And those that have been ever so little conversant with the Greek and Roman histories, as well as with the more ancient ones of Chaldea and Egypt, cannot but remember what a profound deference their princes and great commanders, and not their unthinking commonalty only, paid to the oracles and prophets, and the prophecies of their soothsayers, which, in all cases of importance, were consulted with abundance of gravity and solemnity; and how often the resolutions of councils, and the motions of mighty armies, turned upon them, though they appeared ever so groundless and far-fetched.

There is a full account given by that learned philosopher and physician, Casper Peucer, of the many kinds of divination and prediction used among the Gentiles, by which they took on them to tell the fortune both of states and particular persons. They were all, he says, reduced by Plato to two heads: Divination, Martyrs, which was a kind of inspiration, or was thought to be so; the prophet or prophetess foretelling things to come by the ancient Martial divinities, such as was Apollo at Delphi, and then the Sibyl and other similar beings: which, with others like them, were famous for many ages, during the prevalence of the kingdom of darkness, but (as appears by some of the Pagan writers themselves) they were all silenced and struck dumb, when the gospel (that truly divine oracle) began to be preached to the nations. The other kind of divination was that which he calls Omens, which was a prognostication by signs, according to rules of art, as by the flight of birds, the entrails of beasts, by stars or meteors, and abundance of ominous accidents, with which a foolish world was miserably imposed upon. A large account of this matter we have also in the late learned dissertations of Anton. Van Dale, to which I refer the reader.

But nothing of this kind made a greater noise in the Gentile world than the oracles of the Sybils, and their prophecies; their name signifies a divine counsel: Sibylus, qu. Siobulus: Sios, in the Aesic dialect, being put for Theos. Peucer says, Almost every nation had its Sibyls, but those of Greece were most celebrated. They lived in several ages; the most ancient is said to be the Sibylia Delticba, which lived before the Trojan war, or about that time. The Sibylla Erythrea was the most noted; she lived about the time of Alexander the Great. But it was the Sibylla Cumana of whom the story goes, that she presented herself, and nine books of oracles, to Tarquinius Superbus, which she offered to sell him at so vast a rate, that he refused to purchase them, upon which she burnt three, and, upon his second refusal, the other large, but made him give the same rate for the remaining three, which were devoted with great care in the Capitol. But those being afterward burnt accidentally with the Capitol, a collection was made of the other Sibylline oracles, and those are they which Virgil refers to in his fourth Eclogue.

All the oracles of the Sibyls that are extant, were put together, and published in Holland not many years ago, by Servatius Gallanus, in Greek and Latin, with large and learned notes; together with all that could be met with of the metrical oracles that go under the names of Jupiter, Apollo, Serapis, and others, by Joannes Ospeaus.

The oracles of the Sibyls were appealed to by many of the Fathers, for the confirmation of the Christian religion. Justin Martyr appeals with a great deal of assurance, persuading the Greeks to give credit to that ancient Sibyl, whose works were extant all the world over; and to their testimony, and that of Hadigis, he appeals concerning the general conflagration, and the torments of hell. Clemens Alexandrinus often quotes the Sibyhs' verses with great respect; so does Lactantius; St. Austin. De Civitate Dei, has the famous acrostic at large, said to be one of the oracles of the Sibylla Erythrea, the first letters of the verses making Ιησου Χριστον τον Θεον του Σωτηρον—Jesus Christ the Son of God the Saviour. Divers passages they produce out of these oracles which expressly foretell the coming of the Messiah, his being crucified, his miracles, his sufferings, particularly his being buffeted, spit upon, crowned with thorns, having vinegar and gall given him to drink, &c.

Whether these oracles were genuine and authentic or no, it has been much controverted among the learned. Baronius and the Popish writers generally admit and applaud them, and build much upon them: so do some Protestant writers: Isaac Vossius has written a great deal to support the reputation of them: and (as I find him quoted by Van Dale) will needs have it that they were formerly a part of the canon of scripture; and a learned prelate of our own nation, Bishop Montague, pleads largely, and with great assurance, for their authority, and is of opinion that some of them were divinely inspired. It is many ways known as a fact, as if learned men say it; that most of the oracles of the Sibyls, which speak so very expressly of Jesus and the future state, were forged by some Christians, and imposed upon the over-credulous. Huetius, though of the Romanish church, condemns both the ancient and modern compropises of the Sibyls, and refers his reader, for the proof of their vanity, to the learned Blomdel. Van Dale and Gallanus look upon them to be a forgery. And the truth is, they speak so much
we are particularly and plainly concerning our Saviour and the future state, than any of the prophets of the Old Testament do, that we must conclude St. Paul, who was the apostle of the Gentiles, guilty not only of a very great omission, (that in all his preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, and in all his epistles to the Gentile churches, he never so much as mentions the prophecies of the Sibyls, nor vouches their authority, as he does that of the Old Testament prophets, in his preaching and writing to the Jews,) but likewise of a very great mistake, in making it the particular advantage which the Jews had above the Gentiles, that to them were committed the oracles of God, (Rom. iii. 1, 2.) and that they were the children of the promise; the Gentiles, so far as the old page of sacred history runs, thinking in darkness, and being afar off, and not not conceiving that heathen women, and those actuated by demons, should speak more clearly and fully of the Messiah than those holy men did, who, we are sure, were moved by the Holy Ghost; or that the Gentiles should be instructed with larger and earlier discoveries of the great salvation than that people of whom, as concerning the flesh, it was said, But enough, if not more than enough, of the pretenders to prophecy. It is a good remark which the learned Gallaeus makes upon the great veneration which the Romans had for the oracles of the Sibyls, for which he quotes Dionsisius Halicarnassceus, ὁμοιοὶ τοῖς διδασκαλίαις, τοὺς ἐπίσκοποὺς τῶν Ἐλλήνων τοῖς Ἴδει κοράλλων—The Romans preserve nothing true of such sacred rare, nor do they hold any thing in such high estimation, as the Sibyl or gosp.

PREFACE.

for-vitres in saeculis adsè decurritur, quod nos fœr genuinis nostris, à Deo insinurato—if they had such a value for these counterfeiters, how precious is the true treasure of the divine oracles be to us!

Of these we come next to speak.

Prophecy, we are sure, was of equal date with the church; for faith comes, not by thinking and seeing, as philosophy does, but by hearing, by hearing the word of God, Rom. x. 17. In the antediluvian period Adam received divine revelation in the promise of the Seed of the woman, and, no doubt, communicated it, in the name of the Lord, to his seed, and was prophet as well as priest, to his numerous family. Enoch was distinguished in it, and had prophesied the coming of the Messiah, as Enoch did, and to him was it said, Hold, the Lord comes, Jude 14. When men began, as a church, to call upon the name of the Lord, (Gen iv. 26.) or to call themselves by his name, they were blessed with prophets, for the prophecy came in old time; (2 Pet. i. 21.) it is venerable for its antiquity.

When God renewed his covenant of grace (and that a figure of providence of which Noah and his sons, we soon after find Noah, as a prophet, foretelling not only the servitude of Canaan, but God’s enraging Japhet by Christ, and his dwelling in the tents of Sheni, Gen. ix. 26, 27. And when, upon the general revolt of mankind to idolatry, (as, in the former period, upon the apostacy of Cain,) God distinguished a church for himself by the call of Abraham, and by his covenant with him and his seed, he conferred upon him and the other patriarchs the spirit of prophecy; for when he reproved kings for their sakes, he said, Touch not mine anointed, who have received that unction from the Holy One; and do my prophets no harm, Ps. cv. 14, 15. And of Abraham, he said expressly, He is a prophet; (Gen. xx. 7.) for it was with a prophetic eye, as a seer, that Abraham saw Christ’s day, (John xvi. 28.) saw it at so great a distance, and yet with so great an assurance triumphed in it. And Stephen seems to speak of the first settling of a correspondence between him and God, by which he was established to be a prophet, when he says, The God of glory appeared to him, (Acts vii. 2.) appeared in glory. Jacob upon his deathbed, as a prophet, told his sons what should befall them in the last days, (Gen. xlix. 1, 18.) and spoke very particularly concerning the Messiah.

Hitherto was the infancy of the church, and with it of prophecy; it was the dawning of that day; and that morning light owed its rise to the Sun of righteousness, though he rose not till long after; but it shone more and more. During the bondage of Israel in Egypt, this, as other glories of the church, was eclipsed; but as the church made a considerable and memorable advance in the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and the forming of them into a people, so did the Spirit of prophecy in Moses, the illustrious instrument employed in that great service; and it was by that Spirit that he performed that service; so it is said, Hes. xii. 13. By the breath of God the Israel of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved through the wilderness to Canaan, by Moses as a prophet. It appears, however, that the Spirit of God gave revelations to others among them, to whom God made himself known and his will in dreams and visions, (Num. xii. 6.) but to Moses he spake in a peculiar manner, mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, Num. xii. 8. Nay, such a plentiful effusion was there of the Spirit of prophecy at that time, (because Moses was such a prophet as was to be a type of Christ the great Prophet,) that some of his Spirit was put upon seventy elders of Israel at once, and they prophesied, Num. xii. 23. What they said, was extraordinary, and not only under the direction of a prophetic inspiration, but under the constraint of a prophetic impulse; as appears by the case of Eldad and Melech.

When Moses, that great prophet, was lying down, he promised Israel that the Lord God would raise them up a Prophet of their brethren like unto him, Deut. xviii. 15, 18. In these words, says the learned Bishop Stillingsfleet, (though in their full and complete sense, they relate to Christ, and to him they are more than once applied in the New Testament,) there is included a promise of an order of prophets, which should succeed Moses in the Jewish church, and be the ἱερεῖς ἐπισκόποι—the living oracles among them, (Acts vii. 38.) by which they might know the mind of God. For, in the next words, he lays down rules for the trial of prophets, whether what they said was of God or no. And it is observable, that this promise comes immediately upon an express prohibition of the Pagan rites of divination, and the consulting of wizards and familiar spirits: "You shall not need to do so, nor to consult them;" (Deut. xxiii. 2.) "For, to your much better satisfaction, you shall have prophets divinely inspired, by whom you may know from God himself what to do, and what to expect."

But as Jacob’s dying prophecy concerning the sceptre in Judah, and the lawgiver between his feet, did not begin to be remarkably fulfilled till David’s time, most of the Judges being of other tribes, so Moses’s promise of a succession of prophets began not to receive its accomplishment till Samuel’s time, a little before the other promise began to emerge and operate; and it was an introduction to the other, for it was by Samuel a prophet, that David was anointed king; which was an intimation that the prophetic office of our Redeemer should make way, both in the church of the old testament, in the life of Christ, and thereupon when he was asked, Art thou a king? (John xviii. 37.) he answered, not evasively, but very pertinently, I came to bear witness to the truth: and so to rule as a king, purely by the power of truth.

* Orig. Sac. B. ii. e. 4.
During the government of the Judges, there was a pouring out of the Spirit, but more as a Spirit of conduct and courage for war, than as a Spirit of prophecy. Deborah is indeed called a prophetess, because of divine revelations for instructing Israel; but that is the only mention of prophecy in any member, in all the book of Judges. Extraordinary messages were sent by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah; and it is expressly said, that before the word of the Lord came to Samuel, (1 Sam. iii. 1.) it was precious, it was very scarce, there was no open vision. And it was therefore with more than ordinary solemnity that the word of the Lord came first to Samuel; and by degrees notice and assurance were given to all Israel, that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord, v. 20.

In Samuel's time, and by him, the schools of the prophets were erected, by which prophecy was dignified, and provision made for a succession of prophets; for it should seem, that, in those colleges, hopeful young men were early trained in the knowledge of God, and under a strict discipline, as candidates, or probationers, for prophecy, who were called the sons of the prophets; and their religious exercises of prayer, conference, and psalmody especially, are called prophesying; and their prefect, or president, is called their father, 1 Sam. x. 12. Out of these, God, ordinarily, chose the prophets he sent; yet not always: Amos was no prophet, or prophet's son, (Amos vii. 14.) had not his education in the schools of the prophets, and yet was commissioned to go on God's errands, and (which is observable) though he had not an academical education himself, yet he seems to speak of it with great respect, when he reckons it among the favours God had bestowed upon Israel, that he raised up their sons for prophets, and of their young men for Nazarites, Amos ii. 11.

It is worth noting, that when the glory of the priesthood was eclipsed by the iniquity of the house of Eli, the desolation of Shiloh, and the obscurity of the ark, there was then a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prophecy than had been before; a standing ministry of another kind was thereby erected, and a succession of it kept up. And thus afterwards, in the kingdom of the ten tribes, where there was no other priesthood at all, yet there were prophets and prophets' sons; in Ahab's time, we meet with a hundred of them, whom Obadiah hid by fifty in a cave, 1 Kings xviii. 4. When the people of God, who desired to know his mind, wanted one way of instruction, God furnished them with another, and a less ceremonious one, by a man of themselves, called a prophet of the Lord, that they could attend upon with any safety or satisfaction, they had private meetings at the prophets' houses, to which the devout faithful worshippers of God resorted, (as we find the good Shunamite did, 2 Kings iv. 23.) and where they kept their new-moons, and their sabbaths, comfortably, and to their edification.

David was himself a prophet; so St. Peter calls him; (Acts ii. 30.) and though we read not of God's speaking to him by dreams and visions, yet we are sure that the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue; (2 Sam. xxiii. 2.) and he was, as it were, the oracle of God, that gave him messages from God, and wrote the history of his times. And now the productions of the Spirit of prophecy were translated into the service of the temple, not only in the model of the house which the Lord made David understand in writing by his hand upon him, (1 Chron. xxviii. 19.) but in the worship performed there; for there we find Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, prophesying with harps and other musical instruments, according to the order of the king, not to foretell things to come, but to give thanks, and to praise the Lord; (1 Chron. xxv. 1—3.) yet, in their psalms, they speak much of Christ and his kingdom, and the glory to be revealed.

In the succeeding reigns, both of Judah and Israel, we frequently meet with prophets sent on particular errands to Hosea, Jeroboam, Asa, and other kings, who, it is probable, instructed the people in the things of God at other times, though it is not recorded. But prophecy growing into contempt with many, God revived the honour of it, and put a new lustre upon it, in the power given to Elijah and Elisha to work miracles, and the great things that God did by them, for the confirming of the people's faith in it, and the awakening of their regard to it, 2 Kings ii. 3.—iv. 1, 38.—v. 22.—vi. 1. In their time, and by their agency, it should seem, the schools of the prophets were revived, and we find the sons of the prophets, fellows of those sacred colleges, employed in carrying messages to the great men, as to Ahab, (1 Kings xxi. 18.) and to Jehu, 2 Kings ix. 3.

History shews that the Lord delivered their messages by word of mouth; only we read of one writing which came from Elijah the prophet to Jehoram king of Israel, 2 Chron. xxiii. 12. The histories of those times, which are left us, were compiled by prophets, under a divine direction; and when the Old Testament is divided into the Law and the Prophets, the historical books are, for that reason, reckoned among the prophets. But, in the latter times of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, some of the prophets were divinely inspired to write their prophecies, or abstracts of them, and to leave them upon record, for the benefit of after ages, that the children which should be born might praise the Lord for them. And, by comparing the event with the prediction, might have their faith confirmed. And, probably, those later prophecies were written, and given to the ear of the Messiah and his kingdom, or to the generations of his predecessors who had done, and for that reason their prophecies were put in writing, not only for the encouragement of the pious Jews that looked for the consolation of Israel, but for the use of us Christians, upon whom the ends of the world are come, as David's psalms had been for the same reason, that the Old Testament and the New might mutually give light and lustre to each other. Many other faithful prophets there were at the same time, who spake in God's name, who did not commit their prophecies to writing, but were of those whom God sent, rising up betimes, and sending them; the contempt of whom, and of their messages, brought ruination and death upon those who persecuted them and oppressed them; but God, who knew his own, preserved, and set them apart, and kept them safe. And he constantly, in his divine providence, show them how long; and though it was not by a prince, like Moses, that they were brought up out of Babylon, as they had been out of Egypt, but by Joshua the High Priest first, and afterward by Ezra the scribe, to show that God can do his work by or without any man; or by any means when he pleases; yet, soon after their return, the Spirit of prophecy was poured out plentifully, and continued (according to the Jews' computation) forty years in the second temple, but ceased in Malachi. Then (say the Rabbins) the Holy Spirit was taken from Israel, and they had the benefit only of the Bathkhi, the daughter of a voice, a voice from heaven, which they look upon to be the lowest degree of the same revelation. Now herein they are witnesses against themselves for rejecting the true Messiah; for our Lord Jesus, and he only, was spoken to by a voice from heaven at his baptism, his transfiguration, and his entrance on his sufferings.

In John the Baptist prophecy revived, and therefore in him the gospel is said to begin, when the church...
and had no prophets for above 300 years. We have not only the vox populi—the voice of the people, to prove John a prophet, for all the people counted him so, but our Dei—the voice of God too; for Christ calls him a prophet, Matt. xi. 9, 10. He had an extraordinary commission from God to call people to repentance, was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, and was therefore called the prophet of the Highest, because he went before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way; (Luke i. 15, 16.) and though he did no miracle, nor gave any sign or wonder, yet this proved him a true prophet, that all he said of Christ and John x. 14, Nay, and this persuaded him, if not yet, then of any of the other prophets, that whereas by other prophets Christ was discovered as at a great distance, by him he was discovered as already come, and he was enabled to say, Behold the Lamb of God.

But after the ascension of our Lord Jesus there was a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prophecy than ever before; then was the promise fulfilled, that God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh, (and not as hitherto upon the Jews only,) and their sons and their daughters should prophesy, Acts ii. 16, 18. The gift of tongues was one new product of the Spirit of prophecy, and given for a particular reason, that the Jewish pale being taken down, all nations might be brought into the church. These and other gifts were to be continued, and be employed by our Lord's servants, and not to expect the revival of them; but, on the contrary, are directed to call the scriptures the more sure word of prophecy, more sure of voices from heaven; and to them we are directed to take heed, to search them, and to hold them fast, 2 Pet. i. 19. All God's spiritual Israel know that they are established to be the oracles of God, (1 Sam. iii. 20,) and if any add to, or take from, the book of that prophecy, they may read their doom in the close of it; God shall take blessings from them, and add curses to them, Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

Now concerning the prophets of the Old Testament, whose writings are before us; observe,

I. That they were all holy men; we are assured by the apostle, that the prophecy came in old time by holy men of God, (and men of God they were commonly called, because they were devoted to him,) who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They were men, subject to like passions as we are, (so Elijah, one of the greatest of them, is said to have been, Jam. v. 17,) but they were holy men, men that in the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their lives, were examples of serious piety. Though there were many pretenders, that, without warrant, said, Thus saith the Lord, when he sent them not; and some that prophesied in Christ's name, but he never knew them, and they indeed were workers of iniquity; (Matt. vii. 22, 23,) and though the cursing, blaspheming lips of Balaam and Caleb spoke God's word, (Num. xxii.) yet there was such a difference between them, they were overruled to speak闻言, yet none were employed and commissioned to speak as prophets, but those that had received the Spirit of grace and sanctification; for holiness becomes God's house.

The Jewish doctors universally agree in this rule, That the Spirit of prophecy never rests upon any but a holy and wise man, and one whose passions are allayed;* or, as others express it, an humble man, and a man of fortitude; one that has power to keep his sensual, animal part in due subjection to religion and right reason. And some of them give this rule; That the Spirit of prophecy does not reside where there are either, on the one hand, grief and melancholy, or, on the other hand, laughter and lightness of behaviour, and impatient, idle talk; and it is commonly observed by them, both from the musical instruments used in the schools of the prophets in Samuel's time, and from the instance of Elisha's calling a fair minstrel, (2 Kings iii. 15,) that the divine presence does not reside with sadness, but with cheerfulness; and Elisha, they say, had not yet recovered himself from the sorrow he conceived at parting with Elijah. They have also a tradition, (but I know no ground for it,) that all the while Jacob mourned for Joseph, the Shechemiah, or Holy Spirit, withdrew from him. Yet I believe, when David intimates that by his sin in the matter of Uriah he had lost the right Spirit, and the free Spirit, Ps. li. 10, 12, (which therefore he bade might be renewed in him, and restored to him,) it was not because he was under grief, but that he was under unclean, impure, and polluted heart.

2. That they had all a full assurance in themselves of their divine mission; and (though they could not always prevail to satisfy others) they were abundantly satisfied themselves, that what they delivered as from God, and in his name, was indeed from him; and with the same assurance did the apostles speak the word of life, as that which they had heard, and seen, and looked on, and which their hands had handled, 1 John i. 1. Nathan spake from himself, when he encouraged David to build the temple, but afterward knew he spake from God, when, in his name, he forbade him to do it.

God had various ways of making known to his prophets the messages they were to deliver to his people; it should seem, ordinarily, to have been by the ministry of angels. In the Apocalypse, Christ is expressly said to have signified by his angel to his servant John, Rev. i. 1. It was sometimes done in a vision, when the prophet was awake; sometimes in a dream, when the prophet was asleep; and sometimes by a secret; nut strong impression upon the mind of the prophet. But Maimonides has laid down, as a maxim, That all prophecy makes itself known to the prophet that it is prophecy indeed; that is, says another of the Rabbins, By the vigour and liveliness of the perception, whereby he apprehends the thing propounded; (which Jeremiah intimates when he says, The word of the Lord was as a fire in my bones, Jer. xx. 9,) and thence it is that the infallibility of prophecy is known, arising from its assurance and certainty, and being full satisfied. Isai. xlii. 2-4.

3. That in their prophesying, both in receiving their message from God, and in delivering it to the people, they always kept possession of their own souls, Dan. x. 8. Though sometimes their bodily strength was overpowered by the abundance of the revelations, and their eyes dazzled with the visionary light, as in the instances of Daniel and John, (Rev. i. 17,) yet still their understanding remained with them, and the free exercise of their reason. This is excellently well expressed by a learned writer of our own: „The prophetical Spirit, setting itself in the rational powers, as well as in the imagination, did never alienate the mind, but inform and enlighten it; and they that were actuated by it, always maintain consistency of reason, being for a sign, are long, since counsel, and hold the inside, and we have encouragement words,§) * God did not make use of idiots or fools to reveal his will by, but such whose intellects were entire and perfect; and he impruned such a clear copy of his truth upon them, as that it became their own sense, being digested fully into their understandings, so that they were able to deliver and represent it, as others, truly as any can point forth his own thoughts." God's messengers were speaking men, not speaking trumpets.

* See Mr. Smith of Propheer. † Jerome Schub. r. 9. § Smith of Prophecy, p. 190. 

PREFACE.
The Fathers frequently took notice of this difference between the prophets of the Lord and the false prophets—that the pretenders to prophecy (who either were actuated by an evil spirit, or were under the force of a heated imagination) underwent alienations of mind, and delivered what they had to say in the interests against divine doctrine, as the Pythagoreans, who delivered their oracles with many aunt gestures, tearing her hair, and foaming at the mouth. And by this rule they condemned the Montanists, who pretended to prophecy, in the second century, that what they said was in a way of ecstasy, not like rational men, but like men in a frenzy.  

CHRYSOSTOM, * having described the furious, violent motions of the pretenders to prophecy, adds, 'O be

Heaven, &c. true prophet does not do so, sed

meante sobri, & constantani animi statu, & intelligens gve prophet, omnia pronuncia:—He understands what he utters, and utters it soberly and calmly.' And Jerome, in his preface to his Commentaries upon Nahum, observes, that it is called the book of the vision of Nahum: Non enim loquitur in incunabilis, sed est libri prophetarum seculorum coram, ut reges, qui profanant, ut quisque in omne understands every thing he says. And again, † Non ut amens loquitur prophetis, et in monere insaniatatis feminnum, sed sine mente sermonem—The prophets speak not as an insane person, nor, like women wrought into a fury, does he utter sound without sense.

IV. That they all aimed at one and the same thing, which was, to bring people to repent of their sins, and to return to God, and to do their duty to him. This was the errand on which all God's messengers were sent, to bent down sin, and to revive and advance serious piety; the burden of every song was, Turn ye now every one from his evil way: amend your ways and your doings, and execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, Jer. vii. 5. 16. The scope and design of all their prophecies were, to enforce the precepts and sanctions of the law of Moses, the moral law, which is of universal and perpetual obligation. Here is nothing of the ceremonial institutes, of the carnal ordinances, that were imposed only till the times of reformation, Heb. ix. 10. These were now waxing old, and ready to vanish away; but they make it their business to press the great and weighty matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth.

V. That they all bare witness to Jesus Christ, and had an eye to him. God's raising up the horn of salvation for us, in the house of his servant David, was consonant to, and in pursuance of, what he spake by the mouth of his holy prophet Ezechiel before he began, Luke i. 69, 79. They prophesied of the grace that should come to us, and it was the Spirit of Christ in them, or the Holy Spirit, who, by the prophets, testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. 1 Pet. ii. 10, 11. Christ was then made known, and yet comparatively hid, in the predictions of the prophets, as before in the types of the ceremonial law. And the learned Huetius observes it as really admirable, that so many persons in different ages, should conspire with one consent, as it were, to foretell, some one particular, and others another, concerning Christ, all which had, at length, their full accomplishment in him. Ab his mundi incanibus, per quattuor amorum nillia, uno vere venturum Christum praedicitur virtutibus, in ejusque ortu, seti, virtutibus, rebus gestis, morte, ac denuoque Omnium prophetae memoria consensit. From the earliest period of time for 400 years, a great number of men have foretold the advent of Christ, and presented an harmonious statement of his birth, life, character, acts, and death, and of that economy which he came to establish.

VI. That these prophets were generally hated and abused in their several generations by those that lived with them. Stephen challenges his judges to produce an instance to the contrary: Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? Yea, and, as it should seem, for this reason, because they showed before of the coming of the Just One, Acts vii. 52. Some there were, that were troubled at the word of God in their mouths, but by the most they were ridiculed and despised, and (as ministers are now by people) made a jest of. (Hos. xix. 7) the prophet was the fool in the play. Therefore came this mad folly unto thee? (2 Kings ix. 11.) said one of the captains concerning one of the sons of the prophets! The Gentiles never treated their false prophets so ill as the Jews did their true prophets, but, on the contrary, had them always in veneration. The Jews' mocking of the messengers of the Lord, killing of the prophets, and stoning of them that were sent unto them, was as amazing, unconceivable an instance of the cruelty that is in the carnal mind against God, as any that can be produced. And this makes their rejection of Christ's gospel the less strange, that the Spirit of prophecy, which, for many ages, was so much the glory of Israel, in every age met with so much opposition, and there were those that were always residated the Holy Ghost in the prophets, and turned that glory into shame, Acts vii. 31. But this was it that was the measure-filling sin of Israel, that brought upon them both their first destruction by the Chaldeans, and their final ruin by the Romans, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16.

VII. That though men slighted these prophets, God owned them, and put honour upon them. As they were men of God, his immediate servants, and his messengers, so he always showed himself the Lord God of the holy prophets, (Rev. xxii. 6.) stood by them and strengthened them, and by his Spirit they were full of power; and those that slighted them, when they had lest them, were made to know, to their confusion, that a prophet had been among them. What was said of one of the primitive fathers of the church (Origen), applied to them. What the Lord doth, it is snlly of them. (Ps. cx. 1.) The Lord shall be their strength, 1 Sam. iii. 19. What they said by way of warning and encouragement, for the enforcing of their calls to repentance and reformation, was to be understood conditionally. When God spake by them either, on the one hand, to build and to plant, or, on the other hand, to pluck up and pull down, the change of the people's way might produce a change of God's way. (Jer. xxiii. 7—10.) such was Jesus' prophecy of Ninev'sh's ruin within forty days; or God might sometimes be better than his word in granting a reprove. But what they said by way of prediction of a particular matter, and is a slain, did always come to pass exactly as it was foretold; yea, and the general predictions, sooner or later, took hold even of the times. (Zech. x. 7.) By way of instance, (Jer. xxii. 6.) suppose there be hearts which amuse, and he rakes it in, that he confirms the word of his servants, and performeth the counsel of his messengers. Is. xliv. 26.

In opening these prophecies, I have endeavoured to give the genuine sense of them, as far as I could reach it, by consulting the best expositors, considering the scope and coherence, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, the spiritual things of the Old Testament with those of the New, and especially by prayer to God for the conduct and direction of the Spirit of truth. But, after all, there are many things here dark and hard to be understood, concerning the certain meaning of which though I could not gain myself, much less expect to give my reader, full satisfaction, yet I have not, with the unlearned and un
stable, wrested them to the destruction of any, 2 Pet. iii. 16. It is the prerogative of the Lamb of God to take this book, and to open all its seals. I have likewise endeavoured to accommodate these prophecies to the use and service of those who desire to read the scripture, not only with understanding, but with pious affections, and to their edification in faith and holiness. And we shall find that whatever is given by the inspiration of God is profitable, (2 Tim. iii. 16.) though not all alike profitable, nor all alike easy or improvable; but when the mystery of God shall be finished, we shall see what we are now bound to believe, that there is not one idle word in all the prophecies of this book. What God has said, as well as what he does, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

The pleasure I have had in studying and meditating upon these parts of these prophecies which are plain and practical, and especially those which are evangelical, has been an abundant balance to, and recompense for, the harder tasks we have met with in other parts that are more obscure. In many parts of this field, the treasure must be digged for, as that in the mines; but in other parts the surface is covered with rich and precious products, with corn, and flocks, of which we may say, as we said of Noah, These same have comforted us greatly concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, and have made it very pleasant and delightful; God grant it may be no less so to the readers!

And now let me desire the assistance of my friends, in setting up my Eben-Ezer here, in a thankful acknowledgment that hitherto the Lord has helped me. I desire to praise God that he has spared my life to finish the Old Testament, and has graciously given me some tokens of his presence with me in carrying on of this work; though, the more I reflect upon myself, the more unworthy I see myself of the honour of being thus employed, and the more need I see of Christ and his merit and grace. Remember me, O my God, for good, and spare me according to the multitude of thy mercies. The Lord forgive what is mine, and accept what is his own!

I purpose, if God continue my life and health, according to the measure of the grace given to me, and in a constant and entire dependence upon divine strength, to go through the New Testament in two volumes more. I intimated in my preface to the first volume, that I had drawn up some expositions upon some parts of the New Testament; namely, The gospels of St. Matthew and St. John; but they are so large, that to make them bear some proportion to the rest, it is necessary that they be much contracted, so that I shall be obliged to write them all over again, and to make considerable alternations, and therefore I cannot expect they should be published but as those hitherto have been, if God permit, a volume every other year. I shall begin it now shortly, if the Lord will, and apply myself to it as closely as I can; and I earnestly desire the prayers of all that wish well to the undertaking, that if the Lord spare me to go on with it, I may be enabled to do it well, and so that by it some may be led into the riches of the full assurance of understanding in the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ, Col. ii. 2. And if it shall please God to remove me by death before it is finished, I trust I shall be able to say not only. Welcome his blessed will, but, Welcome that blessed world, in which, though now we know but in part, and prophecy but in part, that knowledge which is perfect will come, and that which is partial will be done away; (1 Cor. xiii. 8.—10, 12.) in which all our mistakes will be rectified, all our doubts resolved, all our deficiencies made up, all our endeavours in preaching, catechizing, and expounding, superseded, and rendered useless, and all our prayers swallowed up in everlasting praises; in which, prophecy, now so much admired, shall fail, and tongues shall cease, and the knowledge we have now, shall vanish away, as the light of the morning-star does when the sun is risen; in which we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face. In a believing, comfortable, well-grounded expectation of that true and perfect light, I desire to continue, living and dying; in a humble and diligent preparation for it, let me spend my time, and in the full enjoyment of it, O that I may spend a glorious eternity!

July 18, 1712.

M. H
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET

ISAIAH.

Prophet is a title that sounds very great to those who understand it, though, in the eye of the world, many of those who were dignified with it, appeared very mean. A prophet is one who has a great intimacy with Heaven, and a great interest there, and, consequently, a commanding authority upon earth. Prophecy is put for all divine revelation, (2 Pet. i. 20, 21.) because that was most commonly, by dreams, voices, or visions, communicated to prophets first, and by them to the children of men, Numb. xii. 6. Once indeed God himself spake to all the thousands of Israel, from the top of Mount Sinai; but it was so intolerably dreadful, that they entreated God would, for the future, speak to them as he had done before, by men like themselves, whose terror should not make them afraid, nor their hands be heavy upon them, Job xxxiii. 7. God approved the motion; They have well said; (says he, Deut. v 27, 28.) and the matter was then settled by consent of parties, that we must never expect to hear from God any more in that way, but by prophets, who received their instructions immediately from God, with a charge to deliver them to his church. Before the sacred canon of the Old Testament began to be written, there were prophets, who were instead of Bibles to the church. Our Saviour seems to reckon Abel among the prophets, Matth. xxiii. 31, 35. Enoch was a prophet; and by him that was in prediction, which is to be last in execution—the judgment of the great day; (Jude 14.) Behold, the Lord comes with his holy myriads. Noah was a preacher of righteousness. God said of Abraham, He is a prophet, Gen. xx. 7. Jacob foretold things to come, Gen. xlvi. 1. Nay, all the patriarchs are called prophets; (Ps. cv. 15.) Do my prophets no harm. Moses was, beyond all comparison, the most illustrious of all the Old Testament prophets, for with him the Lord spake face to face, Deut. xxxiv. 10. He was the first writing prophet, and by his hand the first foundations of holy writ were laid; even those who were called to be his assistants in the government, had the Spirit of prophecy, such a plentiful effusion was there of that at that time, Numb. xi. 25. But after the death of Moses, for some ages, the Spirit of the Lord appeared and acted in the church of Israel more as a martial Spirit, than as a Spirit of prophecy, and inspired men more for acting than speaking; I mean, in the time of the Judges. We find the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Othniel, Gideon, Samson, and others, for the service of their country, with their swords, not with their pens; messages were then sent from heaven by angels, as to Gideon and Manoah, and to the people, Judges ii. 1. In all the book of Judges there is never once mention of a prophet, only Deborah is called a prophetess; then the word of the Lord was precious, there was no open vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. They had the law of Moses, recently written; let them study that. But in Samuel prophecy revived, and in him a famous epocha, or period, of the church began; a time of great light in a constant uninterrupted succession of prophets, till some time after the captivity, when the canon of the Old Testament was completed in Malachi; and then prophecy ceased for near 400 years, till the coming of the great Prophet and his forerunner. Some prophets were divinely inspired to write the histories of the church; but they did not put their names to their writings; they only referred themselves for proof to the authentic records of those times, which were known to be drawn up by prophets, as God, Iddo, &c. David and other prophets, to write sacred songs for the use of the church. After them, we often read of prophets, sent on particular errands, and raised up for special public services; among whom the most famous were Elijah and Elisha in the kingdom of Israel, but none of these put their prophecies in writing, nor have we any remains of them but some fragments in the histories of their times; there was nothing of their own writing, (that I remember,) but one epistle of Elijah's, 2 Chron. xxi. 12. But toward the latter end of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, it pleased God to direct his servants the prophets, to write and publish some of their sermons, or abstracts of them. The dates of many of their prophecies are uncertain, but the earliest of them was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and Jeroboam the second, his contemporary, king of Israel, about 200 years before the captivity, and not long after Joash had slain Zachariah the son of Jehoiada, in the courts of the temple. If they begin to murder the prophets, yet they shall not murder their prophecies; they shall remain as witnesses against them. Hosea was the first of the writing prophets; and Joel, Amos, and Obadiah published their prophecies about the same time. Isaiah began some time after, and not long; but his prophecy is placed first, because it is the largest of them all, and has most in it of Him to whom all the prophets bare witness; and indeed, so much of Christ, that he is justly styled the Evan-
ISAIAH.

The first verse of this chapter is intended for a title to the whole book, and it is probable that this was the first sermon that this prophet was appointed to publish, and to fix in writing (as Calvin thinks the custom of the prophets was to publish the sermons that they delivered in the temple, and mix them up in their public prayers and proclamations, and fixed to public places, that all might read them: Isaiah ii. 2) and those who would, might take out authentic copies of it; the original being, after some time, laid up by the priests among the records of the temple. The sermon which is contained in this chapter has in it, I. A high charge exhibited, in God's name, against the Jewish church and nation: 1. For their ingratitude, v. 2. 2. For their incorrigibility, v. 5. 3. For the universal corruption and degeneracy of the people, v. 4, 6, 21, 22. 4. For the perversion of justice by their rulers, v. 23. II. A sad complaint of the judgments of God, which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and by which they would be made to utter ruine, v. 24. 25. III. A just rejection of those shows and shadows of religion, which they kept up among them, notwithstanding this general delusion and apostasy, v. 10. 13. IV. An earnest call to repentance and reformation, setting before them life and death; life if they complied with the call, and death, if they did not, v. 16. 20. V. A threatening of ruin to those who would not be reformed, v. 24. 25. 26. VIII. An appointment of the conversion of the Gentiles, and a return to their primitive purity and prosperity, v. 25. 27. And all this is to be applied by us, not only to the communities we are members of, in their public interests, but to the state of our own souls.

1. THE vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

Here is, 1. The name of the prophet, Isaiah; or Isaiahahu, for it is in the Hebrew, which is in the New Testament, is read Eiaias. His name signifies, the salvation of the Lord. A proper name for a prophet by whom God gives knowledge of salvation to his people, especially for this prophet, who prophesies so much of Jesus the Saviour, and the great salvation wrought out by him. He is said to be the son of Amoz; not Amoz the prophet, the two names in the Hebrew differ more than in the English; but, as the Jews think, of Amoz the brother, or son, of Amaziah king of Judah; a tradition as certain as that rule which they give, That where a prophet's father is named, he also was himself a prophet. The prophets, pupils and successors, are indeed often called their sons, but we have few instances, if any, of their own sons being their successors.

2. The nature of the prophecy; it is a vision, being revealed to him in a vision, when he was awake, and heard the words of God, and saw the visions of the Almighty, as Balaam speaks, (Num. xxiv. 4.) though perhaps it was not so illustrous a vision at first, as that afterwards, ch. vi. 1. The prophets were called seers, or seeing men, and therefore their prophecies are fittingly called visions. It was what he saw with the eyes of his mind, and foresaw as clearly by divine revelation, was as well assured of it, as fully apprised of it, and as much affected with it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Note, (1.) God's prophets saw what they spake of, knew what they said, and required our belief of nothing but what they themselves believed and were sure of. John vi. 69. 1 John i. 1. (2.) They could not but speak what they saw; because they saw how much all about them were concerned in it, Acts iv. 20. 2 Cor. iv. 13.

3. The subject of the prophecy; it was what he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, the country of the two tribes, and that city which was their metropolis, and about which there was the greatest difference between them. It is little indeed relating to Ephraim, or the ten tribes, of whom there is so much in the prophecy of Hosea. Some chapters there are in this book, which relate to Babylon, Egypt, Tyre, and some other neighbouring nations; but it takes its title from that which is the main substance of it, and it is therefore said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem; the other nations spoken of are such as were then used with them, and not as if God brings to them in a special manner, (1.) Instruction for it is the privilege of Judah and Jerusalem, that to them pertain the oracles of God. (2.) Reproof and threatening; for if in Judah, where God is known, if in Salem, where his name is great, iniquity be found, they, sooner than any other, shall be reckoned with for it. (3.) Comfort and encouragement in evil times; for the children of Zion shall be joyful in their king.
4. The date of the prophecy: he prophesied in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. By this it appears, (1.) That he prophesied long; especially if (as the Jews say) he was at last put to death by Manasseh, to a cruel death, being sown asunder; to which some suppose the apostle refers, Heb. xi. 37. From the year that king Uzziah died, (ch. vi. 1.) to Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery, was 47 years; how much more, and after, he prophesied. Thus it is certain that he was alive 60, and perhaps 80 years in all. It was an honour to him, and a happiness to his country, that he was continued so long in his usefulness: and we must suppose both that he began young, and that he held out to old age; for the prophets were not tied, as the priests were, to a certain age, for the beginning or ending of their ministration. (2.) That he passed through a variety of times. Isaiah was a good king, and Hezekiah a better, who, no doubt, gave encouragement to, and took advice from, this prophet, were patrons to him, and he privy-councillor to them; but between them, and when Isaiah was in the prime of his time, the reign of Ahaz was very proflane and wicked; then, no doubt, he was frowned upon at court, and, it is likely, forced to abscond; good men and good nations must expect bad times in this world, and prepare for them. Then religion was run down to that degree, that the doors of the house of the Lord were shut up, and idolatrous altars were erected in every corner of Jerusalem; and Isaiah, with all his divine eloquence and messages immediately from God himself, could not help it. The best men, the best ministers, cannot do the good they would do in the world.

2. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me: 3. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. 4. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corruptors! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. 5. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. 7. Your country is desolate, your cities are burnt with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. 8. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. 9. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

We will hope to meet with a brighter and more pleasant scene before we come to the end of this book: but truly here, in the beginning of it, every thing looks very bad, very black, with Judah and Jerusalem. What is the wilderness of the world, if the church, the vineyard, have such a dismal aspect as this?

1. The prophet, though he speaks in God’s name, yet, desiring to gain audience with the children of his people, addresses himself to the heavens and the earth, and bespeaks their attention; (v. 3.) O heavens, and give ear, O earth, and let my speech drop to you. It will be an appeal to heaven and earth, to angels, and then to the inhabitants of the upper and lower world; let them judge between God and his vineyard: can either produce such an instance of ingratitude? Note, God will be justified when he speaks, and both heaven and earth shall declare his righteousness, Mic. vii. 2. Ps. l. 6.

II. He accuses them with base ingratitude, a crime of the highest nature: call a man ungrateful, and you can call him no worse: let heaven and earth hear, and wonder at, 1. God’s gracious dealings with a perversely provoking people as they were; “I have nourished and brought them up as children; they have been well fed and well taught.” (Deut. xxxii. 6.) “I have magnified and exalted them,” (so some;) “not only made them grow, but made them great; not only maintained them, but preferred them; not only trained them up, but raised them high.” Note, We owe the continuance of our lives, and comforts, and all our advancements, to God’s fatherly care of us and kindness to us.

2. Their ill-natured conduct toward him, who was so tender of them; “They have rebelled against me,” or (as some read it) “they have reviled from me”; “they have been deserters, traitors, against my crown and dignity.” Note, all the instances of God’s favour to us, as the God both of our nature and of our nurture, aggravate our treacherous departures from him, and all our presumptuous oppositions to him: children, and yet rebels!

III. He attributes this to their ignorance and inconsideration: (v. 3.) The ox knows, but Israel does not. Observe, that this is the reason why God is displeased with them, which are not only brute creatures, but of the dullest sort: yet the ox has such a sense of duty, as to know his owner, and to serve him, to submit to his yoke, and to draw in it; the ass has such a sense of interest, as to know his master’s crib or manger, where he is fed, and to abide by it; he will go to that of himself, if he is turned loose. A fine pass is it, he says, that a brute is more wise, more judicious, and understanding by these silly animals; and is not only sent to school to them, (Prov. vi. 6, 7.) but set in a form below them, (Jer. viii. 7.) taught more than the beasts of the earth, (Job xxxiv. 11.) and yet knowing less. 2. The sottishness and stupidity of Israel. God is their Owner and Proprietor: he made us, and his we are, more than our cattle are ours. But, when he is shut up in knowledge, this is our Master’s crib yet many that are called the people of God, do not know, and will not consider this: but ask, “What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? He is not our owner; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him? He has no crib for us to feed at.” He had complained (v. 2.) of the obstinacy of their wills: They have rebelled against me; and (v. 7.) since they are gone away backward, it is as sure they have rebelled, because they do not know, they do not consider.” The understanding is dark
ISAIAH, I.

V. He laments the universal pravity and corruption of their church and kingdom; the disease of sin was epidemic, and all orders and degrees of men were infected with it; *Ah, sinful nation!* v. 4. The prophet bemoans those that would not bemoan themselves; Alas for them, wo to them! He speaks with a holy indignation at their degeneracy, and a dread of the consequences of it. See here. 

1. He takes up the subject of the whole matter, and shows the wickedness that there was in it, v. 4. (1.) The wickedness was universal; they were a sinful nation, the generality of the people were vicious and profane; they were so in their national capacity, in the management of their public treaties abroad, and in the administration of public justice at home, they were corrupt. Note, It is ill with a people when sin becomes national. (2.) It was very great and heinous in its nature. They were laden with iniquity; the guilt of it, and the curse incurred by that guilt, lay very heavy upon them; it was a heavy charge that was exhibited against them, which they could never clear themselves from; their wickedness was upon them as a talent of lead, Zech. v. 7, 8. And their sin, as it did easily beset them, and they were prone to it, was a weight upon them, Heb. xii. 1. (3.) They came of a bad stock; they were a seed of evildoers; treachery ran in the blood, they had it by kind, which made the matter so much the worse, more provoking and less curable; they rose up in their fathers' stead, and trod in their fathers' steps, to fill up the measure of their iniquity; (Numb. xxxii. 14.) they were a race and family of rebels. (4.) They were themselves debauched, did what they could to debauch others; they are not only corrupt children, born tainted, but children that are corrupters, that propagate vice, and infect others with it; not only sinners, but tempters, not only actuated by Satan, but agents for him. If those that are called children, God's children, that are looked upon as belonging to his family, be wicked and vile, their example is of the most malignant influence. (5.) They were not only debauchers of others, but debauchers of themselves; they defiled the course of their own lives, and allowed their own members to be led by the corruption of the whole head, and the whole body, to rob and murder their neighbors. (6.) They were not only wicked to each other, but wicked to God, they were deserters from their allegiance; *They have forsaken the Lord,* to whom they had joined themselves; they are gone away backward; are alienated or separated from God, have turned the back upon him, deserted their colours, and quitted their service; when they were urged forward, they ran backward, as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke, or a young stag that did not know it. (7.) They were not only wicked in their, corrupt course, but wicked in their conversation; they were inwardly wicked, during defiance of him; *They have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger,* wilfully and designately; they knew what would anger him, and that they did. Note, The backslidings of those that have professed religion, and relation to God, are in a peculiar manner provoking to him. 

2. How he illustrates it by a comparison taken from a sick and diseased body, all overspread with leprosy, or, like Job's, with sore boils, v. 5, 6. (1.) The distemper has seized the vitals, and so threatened to be mortal. Diseases in the head and heart are most dangerous, because they are the seat of life and soul; the head is sick, the heart, the whole heart, is faint; they were become corrupt in their judgment, the leprosy was in their head, they were utterly unclear; their affection to God and religion was cold and gone; the things which remained were ready to die away, Rev. iii. 2. (2.) It has overspread the whole body, and so becomes exceedingly noisome; *From the sole of your foot unto the crown of your head!* (3.) It has affected the whole system, the whole body; the peasant to the greatest peer, there is no soundness, no good principles, no religion, (for that is the health of the soul,) nothing but wounds and bruises, guilt and corruption, the sad effects of Adam's fall; noisome to the holy God, painful to the sensible soul; they were so to David, when he complained, (Ps. xxxviii. 5.) *My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness,* Ps. xxxvii. 5. 4. No attempts were made for reformation, or, if they were, they proved ineffectual; The wounds have not been closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment. While sin remains unrepented of, the wounds are unsheared, unwashed, the proud flesh in them not cut out, and while consequently, it remains unpardoned, the wounds are not mollified or closed up, the corruption and guilt and guiltiness of them is increased, and the preventing of their fatal consequences.

V. He sadly bewails the judgments of God, which they had brought upon themselves by their sins, and their incorrigibility under those judgments. 

1. Their kingdom was almost ruined, v. 7. So miserable were they, that both their towns and their lands were wasted, and yet so stupid, that they needed to be told this, and to have it showed them; *Look, and see how it is!* your country is desolate, the ground is not cultivated, for want of inhabitants, the villages being deserted, Judg. v. 7. And thus the fields and vineyards become like deserts, all *governed over with thorns*; (Prov. xxiv. 31.) your cities are burned with fire, by the enemies that invade you; (fire and sword commonly go together,) "as for the fruits of your land, which should be food for your families, strangers devour them; and, to your greater vexation, it is before your eyes, and you cannot prevent it; you starve, while your enemies surfeit on that which should be your maintenance. The overthrow of your country is as the overthrow of strangers; it is used by the invaders as one might expect it should be used by strangers." Jerusalem itself, which was as the daughter of Zion; (the temple built on Zion was neither, a nursing mother, to Jerusalem;) or Zion itself, the holy mountain, which had been dear to God as a daughter, was now lost, deserted, and exposed, as a *cottage in a vineyard,* which, when the vintage is over, nobody dwells in, or takes any care of, and looks as mean and despicable as a lodge, or hut, in a garden of cucumbers; and every person is afraid to come near it, if he chance to look at it, and view its effects out of it, as if it were a besieged city, v. 8. And some think it is the calamitous state of the kingdom, that is represented by a diseased body, v. 6. Probably, this sermon was preached in the reign of Ahaz, when Judah was invaded by the kings of Syria and Israel, the Edomites, and the Philistines, who slew many, and carried captives away. 

Note, National impiety and immorality bring national desolation. Canaan, the glory of all lands, mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth, both became a reproach and a ruin; and sin made them so, that great mischief-maker.

2. Yet they were not at all reformed, and therefore God threatens to take another course with them; (v. 3.) *Why should ye be stricken any
more, with any expectation of doing you good by it, when you increase revolts as your rebukes are increased: You will revolve more and more, as you have done;" as Azaz particularly did, who, in his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. Thus the physician, when he sees the patient's case desperate, troubles him no more with physic; and the father resolves to correct his child no more, when, finding him hardened, he determines to disinherit him. Note, (1.) There are those who are made worse by the methods God takes to make them better; the more they are stricken, the more they revolt; their corruptions, instead of being mortified, are irritated and exasperated, by their afflictions, and their hearts more hardened. (2.) God sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, ceases to correct those who have been long incorrigible, and whom therefore he designs to destroy. The reprobate silver shall be cast, not into the furnace, but to the dunghill, Jer. vi. 29, 30. See Ezek. xxiv. 13. Hos. iv. 14. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still.

VI. He comforts himself with the consideration of a remnant that should be the monuments of divine grace and mercy, notwithstanding this general corruption and desolation, v. 9. See here, 1. How near they were to an utter extermination; they were almost like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect both of sin and ruin, grown almost so bad, that there could be no more safety for them in their own light, than for Sodom and Gomorrah in their common calamity. This is quoted by the apostle, (Rom. ix. 27.) and applied to those few of the Jewish nation, who, in his time, embraced Christianity, when the body of the people rejected it, and in whom the promises made to the fathers were accomplished. Note, (1.) In the worst of times there is a remnant preserved from iniquity, and reserved for mercy, as Jacob and Joseph, and last among the Gentiles, the Lord, and his in the destruction of Sodom. Divine grace triumphs in distinguishing by an act of sovereignty. (2.) This remnant is often a very small one, in comparison with the vast numbers of revolving ruined sinners. Multitude is no mark of the true church; Christ's is a little flock. (3.) It is God's work to sanctify and save some, when others are left to perish in their impurity; it is the work of his power, as the Lord of hosts; except he had left us that remnant, there had been none left; the corrupters (v. 4.) did what they could to debauch all, and the devourers (v. 7.) to destroy all; and they would have prevailed, if God himself had not interposed to secure to himself a remnant, who are bound to give him all the glory. (4.) It is good for a people that have their eyes turned backward, to look back, and see how near they were to it, just upon the brink of it, to see how much they owed to a few good men that stood in the gap, and that that was owing to a good God, who left them these good men. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.

10. Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah: 11. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? said the Lord; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of goats. 12. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? 13. Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me: the new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14. Your new-moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to hear them. 15. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

Here, 1. God calls to them, (but calls in vain,) to hear his word, v. 10. 1. The title he gives them is very strange, Ye rulers of Sodom, and Ye people of Gomorrah. This intimates what a righteous thing it had been with God to make them like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of ruin; (v. 9.) because they had made themselves like Sodom and Gomorrah, in respect of sin. The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly, (Gen. xvi. 3.) and so were the men of Judah; when the rulers were bad, no wonder the people were so. Vice overpowered virtue, for it had the reputation, and figure, on the side; and it spoiled it, for it had the people, the men of number, on its side: the streams being thus strong, no less a power than that of the Lord of hosts could secure a remnant, v. 9. The rulers are boldly attacked here by the prophet, as rulers of Sodom, for he knew not how to give flattering titles; the tradition of the Jews is, that for this he was imprisoned long after, and yet that truth of his having cursed the gods, and spoken evil of the ruler of his people. 2. His demand upon them is very reasonable; "Hear the word of the Lord, and give ear to the law of our God; attend to that which God has to say to you, and let his word be a law to you." The following declaration of dislike to their sacrifices, would be a kind of new law to them; though really it was but an explication of the old law, but that spiritual regimen must be had; and it is required in the like, Ps. i. 7, 8. "Hear this, and tremble; hear it, and take warning." 11. He justly refuses to hear their prayers and accept their services, their sacrifices and burnt-offerings, the fat and blood of them, (v. 11.) their attendance in his courts, (v. 12.) their oblations, their incense, and their solemn assemblies, (v. 13.) their new-moons, and their appointed feasts, (v. 14.) their devotional addresses; (v. 15.) they are all rejected, because their hands were full of blood. Now observe, 1. There are many who are strangers, nay enemies, to the power of religion, and yet seem very zealous for the show and shadow and form of it. This sinful nation, this seed of evil-doers, these rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, brought not to the altars of false gods, (they are not here charged with that,) but to the altar of the God of Israel, sacrifices, a multitude of them, as many as the law required, and rather more, not only peace-offerings, which they themselves had their share of, but burnt-offerings, which were wholly consumed to the honour of God; nor did they bring the terrors, and lame, and sick, but fed beasts, and the fat of them, the best of the kind; they did not send others to offer their sacrifices for them, but came themselves to appear before God; they observed the instituted places, not in high-places, or groves, but in God's own courts; and the instituted times, the new-moons, and sabbaths, and appointed feasts, none of which

Vol. IV —C
ISAIAH, I. 10."

(2.) As odious and offensive, God did not only not accept them, but he did detect and abhor them. "They are your sacrifices, they are none of mine; I am full of them, even surfeited with them." He needed them not, (Ps. 1. 10.) did not desire them, had had enough of them, and more than enough. Their coming into his courts he calls treading them, or trampling upon them, their very attendance on his ordinances was construed into a contempt of them. "Their sacrifices being so full of blood, was an abomination to him, for it was burnt in hypocrisy, and with an ill design. Their solemn assemblies he could not away with, could not see them with any patience, nor bear the affront they gave him. The solemn meeting is iniquity; though the thing itself was not yet, as they managed it, it was. It is a vexation, (so some read it,) a provocation, to God, to have ordinances thus prostituted, to be offered by wicked people, but to wicked purposes; "My soul hates them, they are a trouble to me, a burthen, an incurrability; I am perfectly sick of them, and weary to bear them." He is never weary of hearing the prayers of the upright, but soon wearied of the costly sacrifices of the wicked. He hides his eyes from their prayers, as that which he has an aversion to, and is angry at. All things are shown, [1.] That sin is very hateful to God, so hateful that it makes even men's prayers and their religious services hateful to him. [2.] That dissembled piety is double iniquity. Hypocrisy in religion is of all things most abominable to the God of heaven. Jerom applies it to the Jews in Christ's time, who pretended a great zeal for the law and the temple, but made themselves and all their services abominable to God, by filling their hands with the blood of Christ and his apostles, and so filling up the measure of their iniquities.

16. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17. Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow. 18. Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Though God has rejected their services as insufficient to atone for their sins, while they persisted in them, yet he does not reject them as in a hopeless condition; but here calls upon them to forsake their sins, which he has determined to judge of by their sacrifices, and then all would be well. Let them not say that God picked quarrels with them; no, he proposes a method of reconciliation. Observe here,

1. A call to repentance and reformation; "If you would have your sacrifices accepted, and your prayers answered, you must begin your work at the right end; Be converted to my law," (so the Chaldee.) but begin by taking away the ends of the second table-duties, else expect not to be accepted in the acts of your devotion." As justice and charity will never atone for atheism and prejudices, so prayers and sacrifices will never atone for fraud and oppression; for righteousness toward men is such a branch of pure religion, as religion toward God is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. They must cease to do evil, must do no more
wrong, shed no more innocent blood; that is the
meaning of washing them, and making them clean, v. 16. It is not only sorrowing for the sin they had committed, but breaking off the practice of it for the future, and mortifying all those vicious affections and dispositions which incline to it. Sin is deluding to the soul; our business is to wash ourselves from it by repenting of it, and turning from it to God. We must put away not only that evil of our doings, which is before the eye of the world, by refraining from the gross acts of sin, but that which is before God’s eyes, the roots and habits of sin, that are in our hearts; those must be crushed and mortified, when the heart is healed. 2. They must learn to do well. This was necessary to the completing of their repentance. Note, It is not enough that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. (1.) We must be doing; not cease to do evil, and then stand idle. (2.) We must be doing good, the good which the Lord our God requires, and which will turn to a good account. (3.) We must do it well, in a right manner, and for a right end; and, (4.) We must learn to do well, we must take pains to get the knowledge of our duty, be inquisitive concerning it, in care about it, and custom ourselves to it, that we may readily turn our hands to our work, and become masters of this holy art of doing well;

and thereby learn particularly to those instances of well-doing, wherein they had been defective; to second-table-duties; “Seek judgment; inquire what is right, that ye may do it: be solicitous to be found in the way of your duty, and do not walk at all adventures; seek opportunities of doing good. Relieve the oppressed, those whom you yourselves have oppressed; ease them of their burdens, ch. lviii. 6. You have a more particular relief of those whom others do oppress, for that is your business; right those that suffer wrong; in a special manner concern yourselves for the fatherless and the widow, whom, because they are weak and helpless, proud men trample upon and abuse; do you appear for them at the bar, on the bench, as there is occasion; speak for those that know not how to speak for themselves, and they have not wherewith to gratify you for your kindness.” Note, We are truly honouring God when we are doing good in the world; and acts of justice and charity are more pleasing to him than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

II. A demonstration, at the bar of right reason, of the equity of God’s proceedings against them; “Come now, and let us reason together; (v. 18.) while your hands are full of blood, I will have nothing to do with you, though you bring me a multitude of sacrifices: but if you wash you, and make you clean, you are welcome to draw nigh to me; come now, and let us talk the matter over.” Note, Those, and those only, that break off their league with sin, shall be welcome to covenant and communion with God; he says, Come now, and let us reason together, in his courts. See Jer. iv. 8. Or rather thus; there were those among them who looked upon themselves as offenders by the slights God put upon the multitude of their sacrifices, as ch. lviii. 3. Therefore have we fasted, (say they,) and thou seest not? They represented God as a hard Master, whom it was hard to serve; or, as a King, whom it was hard to stand before; or, they represent us the debate the matter fairly, and I doubt not but to make it out that my ways are equal, but yours are unequal.” Ezek. xviii. 25. Note, Religion has reason on its side; there is all the reason in the world that we should do as God would have us to do. 2. The God of heaven condescends to reason the case with those who contradict him and find fault with his proceedings, for he will be justified when he speaks, Ps. ii. 4. The case needs only to be stated, (as it is here very fairly,) and it will determine itself. God shows here upon what terms they stood, (as he does Ezek. xviii. 21, 24.—xxxiii. 18, 19,) and then leaves it to them to judge whether they were not fair.

(3.) They cannot in reason expect any more than that, if they repent and reform, they should be restored to God’s favour, notwithstanding their former provocations; “This you may expect,” says God, “and it is very kind; who could have the face to disire it upon any other terms?” [1.] “It is very little that is required, only that you be willing and obedient, that you consent to obey;” so I read it; “...that in repentance and reformation you may acquire in that, and give yourself up in all things to be ruled by him that is infinitely wise and good.” Here is a penance imposed for their former stubbornness, nor the yoke made heavier, or bound harder, on their necks; only, “Whereas hitherto you have been perverse and refractory, and would not comply with that which was for your own good, now be tractable, be governable.” He does not say, “If you be perfectly obedient,” but, “If you will willingly so;” for if there be a willing mind, it is accepted. [2.] That is very great, which is promised here upon. First, That all their sins should be pardoned to them, and should not be mentioned against them; “Though they be as red as scarlet, and crimson, a double dye, first in the wool, and then again in the dye, and though the threads of actual transgression, though we have been often dipped by our many backslidings, into sin, and though we have lain long soaking in it, as the cloth does in the scarlet dye, yet pardoning mercy will thoroughly discharge the stain, and, being it purged as with hyssop, we shall be clean, Ps. l. 7. If we make ourselves clean by repentance and reformation, (v. 16.) God will make us white as snow.” Second, That they should have all the happiness and comfort they could desire; “Be but willing and obedient and you shall eat the good of the land, the land of promise; you shall have all the blessings of the new covenant, of the heavenly Canaan; all the good of that land.” They that go on in sin, though they dwell in a good land, cannot with any comfort eat the good of it, guilt imbibers all; but if sin be pardoned, creature-comforts become comforts indeed.

(2.) They cannot in reason expect any other than that, if they continue obstinate in their disobedience, they should be abandoned to ruin, and the sentence of the law should be executed upon them; what can be more just? (v. 22.) “If you refuse and rebel, if you continue in your ways against God and his court, and refuse the offers of divine grace, you shall be devoured with the sword; with the sword of your enemies, which shall be commissioned to destroy you, with the sword of God’s justice, his wrath, and vengeance, which shall be drawn against you; for this is that which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, which he which will make good, for the maintaining of his own honour.” Note, Those that will not be governed by God’s sceptre, will certainly and justly be devoured by his sword.

“And now life and death, good and evil, are thus set before you; Come and let us reason together. What have you to object against the equity of this, or against complying with God’s terms?”

21. How is the faithful city become a hat
lot: it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. 22. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: 23. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. 24. Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: 25. And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: 26. And I will restore thy judgments as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city. 27. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. 28. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. 29. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. 30. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. 31. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.

Here.

1. The woful degeneracy of Judah and Jerusalem is sadly lamented. See, 1. What the royal city had been; a faithful city, faithful to God and the interests of his kingdom among men; faithful to its nation and its public interests. It was full of judgment; justice was duly administered upon the thrones of judgment which were set there, the thrones of the house of David, Ps. cxxii. 5. Men were generally honest in their dealings, and abhorred to do an unjust thing; righteousness lodged in it, was constantly resident in its palaces and in all their dwellings, not called in now and then to serve a turn, but at home there. Note, Neither holy cities, nor royal ones, neither places where religion is professed, nor places where government is administered, are faithful to their trust, if religion do not dwell in them. 2. What it was now become: that benevolent virtuous spouse was now debauched, and became an adulteress; righteousness no longer dwelt in it. Terrae natae nequeat (there left the earth,) even murderers were unpunished, and lived undisturbed there; nay, the princes themselves were so cruel and oppressive, that they were become no better than murderers; an innocent man might better guard himself against a troop of banditti or assassins, than against a bench of such judges. Note, It is a great aggravation of the wickedness of any family or people, that their adversaries were famed for virtue and probity; and commonly those that thus degenerate, prove the most wicked of all others. Corruptio optimi est pes simmo—That which originally was the best, when corrupted, becomes the worst, Luke xi. 26. Eccl. iii. 16. See Ex. xxiii. 15-17.

This is illustrated, (1.) By similitudes; (v. 22.) Thy silver is become dross; this degeneracy of the magistrates, whose character is the reverse of that of their predecessors, is as great a reproach and injury to the kingdom, as the debasing of their coin would be, and the turning of their silver into dross. Righteous princes and righteous cities, are silver for the treasury; but unrighteous ones are as dross for the dunghill—How is the gold become dim! Lam. iv. 1. Thy wine is mixed with water, and so is become flat and sour. Some understand both these literally; the wine they sold was adulterated, it was half water; the money they paid was counterfeit, and did not answer all they dealt with. But it is rather to be taken figuratively. Righteousness was bestowed by God's princes; and religion and the word of God were cultivated by their priests, and made to serve what turn they pleased. Dross may shine like silver, and the wine that is mixed with water may retain the colour of wine, but neither is worth anything. Thus they retained a show and pretence of virtue and justice, but had no true sense of either. (2.) By some instances; (v. 23.) Thy princes, that should keep others in their allegiance to God, and submission to his law, are themselves rebellious, and set God and his law at defiance. They that should restrain thieves, proud and rich oppressors, those worst of robbers, and those that designedly cheat their creditors, who are no better, they are themselves the companions of thieves, connive at them, do as they do, and take greater pleasure in the calamities that befall them, because they are princes, and have power in their hands; they share with the thieves they protect in their unlawful gain, (Ps. l. 18.) and cast in their lot among them, Prov. i. 13, 14. [1.] The profit of their places is all their aim; to make the best hand they can of them, right or wrong. They love gifts, and follow after reward; they set their hearts upon their salaries, and pay and retain the officers whom they employ, and are greedy of them, and never think they can get enough; nay, they will do any thing, though ever so contrary to law and justice, for a gift in secret. Presents and gratuities will blind their eyes at any time, and make them pervert judgment: these they love, and are eager in the pursuit of, Hos. iv. 18. [2.] The duty of their places is none of their care; they ought to protect those that are injured, and take cognizance of the appeals made to them; why else were they preferred? But they judge not the fatherless, take no care to guard the orphans, nor does the cause of the widow come unto them; because the poor widow has no bribe to give, with which to make way for her, and to bring her cause on. These will have a great deal to answer for, who, when they are the patrons of the oppressed, are their greatest oppressors.

II. A resolution is taken up to redress these grievances; (v. 24.) Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, who has power to make good what he says, who has hosts at command for the executing of his purposes, and whose power is engaged for Israel. Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries. Aha. 1. We will cease to countenance, to respect, to take care of the wicked rulers that are cruel and oppressive, are God's enemies, his adversaries, and shall so be accounted of, and so dealt with. If the holy seed corrupt themselves, they are the worse of his own house. 2. They are a burden to the God of heaven, which is implied in his casing himself of them; the Mighty One of Israel, that can bear any thing, nay, that upholds all things, is offended at the burden men's iniquities, ch. xliii. 24. Amos ii. 3. God will find out a time and a way to ease himself of this burden, by avenging himself on those that thus bear hard upon his patience. He here speaks as one triumphing in the foresight of it. Ah, I will ease me. He will ease the earth of the burden under which it groans, (Rom. viii. 21, 22.) will ease his own name of the reproaches with which it is loaded.
He will be eased of his adversaries, by taking vengeance on his enemies; he will spur them out of his mouth, and so be eased of them, Rev. iii. 16. He speaks with pleasure of the day of vengeance being in his heart, ch. lix. 4. If God's professing people conform not to his image, as the Holy One of Israel, (v. 4.) they shall feel the weight of his hand as the Mighty One of Israel: his power, which was wont to be engaged for their adversaries, shall be engaged against them.

Two ways God will case himself of this grievance: (1.) By reforming his church and restoring good judges in the room of those corrupt ones. Though the church has a great deal of gross in it, yet it shall not be thrown away, but reformed; (v. 25.) "I will surely purge away thy dross; I will amend what is amiss." Vice and profaneness shall be suppressed; and out of the profaneness by reason of dross, and deprived of their power to do mischief." When things are ever so bad, God can set them to rights, and bring about a complete reformation; when he begins, he will make an end, will take away all the sin.

Observe, [1.] The reformation of a people is God's own work; and, if ever it be done, it is he that brings it about. He will turn the repentant sinner, (as he turned the repentant harlot,) that will wait for the reviving of religion, which I did, at first, for the planting of it." He can do it easily, with the turn of his hand; but he does it effectually, for what opposition can stand before the arm of the Lord revealed? [2.] He does it by blessing them with good magistrates, and good ministers of state; (v. 26.) "I will restore thy judges, as at the first, to put the lowest even regally, and magnify the Lord's name among the Gentiles; and thy commanders, to transact public affairs, as in the beginning;" either the same persons that had been turned out, or others of the same character.

[3.] He does it by restoring judgment and righteousness among them, (v. 27.) by planting in men's minds principles of justice, and governing their lives by those principles. Men may do much by external restraint, but God does it effectually by the influences of his Spirit, as a Spirit of Judgement, (ch. iv. 4.—xxviii. 6. See Ps. lxxxv. 10, 11. [4.] The reformation of a people will be the redemption of them and their converts, for sin is the worst captivity, the worst slavery; and the great and eternal redemption is that by which Israel is redeemed from all his iniquities; (Ps. cxxx. 8.) and the blessed Redeemer is he that turns away ungodliness from Jacob. (Rom. xi. 26.) and saves them from their sins, Mat. i. 21. All the redeemed of the Lord shall be converted, and their conversion is their redemption. Her converts, or, they that return of her, so the margin. God works deliverance for us, by preparing us for it with judgment and righteousness.

[5.] The reviving of a people's virtue, is the restoring of their honour; Afterward shall he be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city; First, Thou shalt be so; the reformation of the magistracy is a good step toward the reforming of the city and the country too. Secondly, Thou shalt have the praise of being so; and a greater praise there cannot be to any city, than to be called the city of righteousness, and to retrieve the ancient honour, which was lost, when the faithful city became a harlot, ch. i. 21.

[2.] By cutting off those that hate to be reformed, that they may not remain either as snares, or as scandals, to the faithful city. [1.] It is an utter ruin that is here threatened. They shall be destroyed and consumed, and not chastened and corrected only. The extinguishment of them will be necessary to the redemption of Zion. [2.] It is a universal judgment. He will destroy the whole assembly, and the sinners together; the openly profane, that have quite cast off all religion, and the hypocrites, that live wicked lives under the cloak of a religious profession—they shall both be destroyed together; for they are both alike an abomination to God, both those that contradict religion, and those that contradict themselves in their pretensions to it. And they that forsake the Lord, to whom they had for merly joined themselves, shall be consumed as the water in the conduit-pipe is soon consumed when it is cut off from the fountain. [5.] It is an inevitable ruin, there is nothing but ruin.

First, Their idols shall not be able to help them; the oaks which they have desired, and the gardens which they have chosen; the images, the dunghill-gods, which they have worshipped in their groves, and under the green trees, which they were fond of, and wedded to, for which they forsook the true God, and which they worshipped privately in their own gardens, even then when idolatry was in their face denounced. This was the practice of the transgressors and the sinners; but they shall be ashamed of it, not with a show of repentance, but of despair, v. 29. They shall have cause to be ashamed of them; for after all the court they have made to them, they shall find no benefit by them; but the idols themselves shall go into captivity, ch. xlvi. 1. Note, Though the name of these idols shall fly away, and the idolaters and idolatry be cut off, yet they shall be but repining confession for themselves. You were fond of the oaks and the gardens; but you yourselves shall be, 1. Like an oak without leaves, withered and blasted, and stripped of all its ornaments. Justly do those wear no leaves, that bear no fruit; as the fig-tree that Christ cursed. 2. Like a garden without water, that is neither rained upon, nor watered with the foot. Do they by their idolatry put off the fire of the Holy Ghost? (Cox. 15.) and consequently, is parted, and all the fruits of it gone to decay. Thus shall they be, that trust in idols, or in an arm of flesh, Jer. xvii. 5, 6. But they that trust in God never find him as a wilderness, or as waters that fail, Jer. iii. 31.

Secondly, They shall not be able to help themselves; (v. 31.) Even the strongest may be at times not only soon broken, and pulled to pieces, but easily catching fire; and his work, (so the margin reads it,) that by which he hopes to fortify and secure himself, shall be as a spark to his own tow, shall set him on fire, and he and his work shall burn together. His own counsels shall be his ruin; his own sin kindles the fire of God's wrath, which shall burn to the lowest hell, and none shall quench it. When the sinner has made himself as tow and tinder, and God makes himself to him as a consuming fire, what can prevent the utter ruin of the sinner?

Now all this is applicable, 1. To the blessed work of reformation, which was wrought in Hezekiah's time, after the abominable corruptions of the reign of Ahaz. Then good men came to be preferred, and the faces of the wicked were filled with shame.

2. To their return out of their captivity in Babylonia, which had thoroughly cured them of idolatry. 3. To the gospel-kingdom, and the pouring out of the Spirit, by which the New Testament church should be made a new Jerusalem, a city of righteousness.

4. To the second coming of Christ, when he shall thoroughly purge his floor, his field, shall gather the wheat into his barn, into his garner, and burn the chaff, the tares, with unquenchable fire.

CHAP. II.

With this chapter begins a new sermon, which is continued in the two following chapters. The subject of this discourse is Judah and Jerusalem, v. 1. In this chapter, the prophet speaks. 1. Of the glory of the Christians, Jerusalem, and the church-church, with the accession of many to it, (v. 2, 3.) and the great peace it should introduce to the world, (v. 4.) whence he infers the duty of the house of Jacob, v. 5. 2. Of the shame of the Jews, Jerusalem, as it then was, and as it would be after its rejecting of the gospel, and being rejected of
God. 1. Their sin was their shame, v. 6., 9. 2. God by his judgments would humiliate them, and so put an end to it. 17. Their shame should become a symbol of their confidence in their idols, and in an arm of flesh, v. 18., 22. And now which of these Jerusalem shall we be his desolators? That which is falling to the ground is God, which will be our everlasting honour, or that which is full of horses and chariots, and silver and gold, and such idols, which will, in the end, be our shame.

1. The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.

The particular title of this sermon, (v. 1.) is the same with the general title of the book; (ch. i. 1.) only that what is there called the vision, is here called the word which Isaiah saw, or the matter or thing, which he saw, the truth of which he had as full an assurance of in his own mind, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. Or, this word was brought to him in a vision, he saw something, when he received this message from God. St. John turned to see the voice that spake with him, Rev. i. 12.

This sermon begins with the prophecy relating to the last days, the days of the Messiah, when his kingdom should be set up in the world, at the latter end of the Mosaic economy. In the last days of the earthy Jerusalem, just before the destruction of the temple, the Messiah re-erected, Heb. xii. 22. Gal. iv. 26. Note, Gospel-times are the last days. For, 1. They were long in coming, were a great time waited for by the Old Testament saints, and came at last. 2. We are not to look for any dispensation of divine grace, but what we have in the gospel, Gal. i. 8., 9. 3. We are to look for the second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time, as the Old Testament saints did for his first coming. 4. "Come, ye nations, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of Jacob," says the "holy one," Isa. ii. 1. John ii. 18. 5. Now the prophet here foretells—

I. The setting up of the Christian church, and the planting of the Christian religion in the world. Christianity shall then be the mountain of the Lord's house; where that is professed, God will grant his presence, receive his people's homage, and grant instruction and blessing, as he did of old in the temple of Melchizedek. Hence, the gospel-church, incorporated by Christ's charter, shall then be the rendezvous of all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now it is here promised, 1. That Christianity shall be openly preached and professed; it shall be prepared so the margin reads it) in the top of the mountains, in the view and hearing of all. Hence Christ's disciples are compared to a city on a hill, which cannot be hid, Matt. v. 14. They had many eyes upon them. Christ himself spake openly to the world, John xvii. 20. What the apostles did, was not hid in former times. Acts xx. 26. It was the lighting of a beacon, the setting up of a standard. Its being every where spoken against, supposes that it was every where spoken of. 2. That it shall be firmly fixed and rooted; that it shall be established on the top of the everlasting mountains, built upon a rock, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, unless they could pluck up mountains by their roots. He that dwells shall be said to dwell on high, ch. xxxiii. 16. The Lord has founded the gospel-Zion. 3. That it shall not only overcome all opposition, but overtop all competition; it shall be exalted above the hills. This wisdom of God in a mystery shall outshine all the wisdom of this world, all its philosophy, and all its politics. The spiritual worship which it shall introduce, shall put down the idolatries of the heathen; and all other institutions in religion shall appear mean and desppicable, in comparison with this. See Ps. lxxxviii. 16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in.

II. The bringing in of the Gentiles into it; 1. The nations shall be admitted into it, even the uncircumcised, who were forbidden to come into the courts of the temple at Jerusalem; the partition-wall, which kept them out, shall be taken down. 2. All nations shall flow into it; having liberty of access, they shall improve their liberty, and multitudes shall embrace the Christian faith. They shall flow into it, as streams of water; which denotes the abundance of converts that the gospel should make, and their speed and cheerful-ness in coming into the church. They shall not be seduced into it, but shall naturally flow into it. The people shall be willing; all volunteers, Ps. cx. 5. To Christ shall the gathering of the people be, Gen. xlix. 10. See ch. iv. 4, 5.

III. The mutual assistance and encouragement which this confluence of converts shall give to one another. Their pious affections and resolutions shall be so intermixed, that they shall come in, in one full stream. As when the Jews from all parts of the country went to Jerusalem in a year to worship in the temple, they called on their friends in the road, and excited them to go along with them, so shall many of the Gentiles court their relations, friends, and neighbours, to join with them in embracing the Christian religion; (v. 3.) "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; through it, and around it, and against heart, yet it is the mountain of the Lord, who will assist the ascent of one another, and help one another's hands, and support one another's reputation;" not, "We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter," but, "Come, and let us go, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands, and support one another's reputation;" not, "We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter," but, "Come, and let us go for evermore," Ps. cxxxii. 1. Many shall say this; these that have had it said to them, shall say it to others. We will go, and do you as you will;" but, "Come, and let us go, let us go in concert, that we may strengthen one another's hands, and support one another's reputation; not, "We will consider of it, and advise about it, and go hereafter," but, "Come, and let us go for evermore," Ps. cxxxii. 1. Many shall say this; these that have had it said to them, shall say it to others.

Now see here, 1. What they promise themselves, in going up to the mountain of the Lord,
There he will teach us of his ways. Note, God's ways are to be learned in his church, in communion with his people, and in the use of instituted ordinances; the ways of duty, which he requires us to walk in, the ways of grace, in which he walks towards us. It is God that teaches his people, by his word and Spirit. It is worth while to take pains to go up to his holy mountain, to be taught his ways, for those who are willing to take that pains, shall never find it labour in vain. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, the Lord. 2. What they promise for themselves, and one another; "If he will teach us his ways, we will walk in his paths; if he will let us know our duty, we will by his grace and prudence to do it." Those who attend God's word with this humble resolution, shall not be sent away without their lesson.

IV. The means by which this shall be brought about; Out of Zion shall go forth the law, the New Testament law, the law of Christ; as, of old, the law of Moses from mount Sinai, even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is a law, a law of faith; it is the word of the Lord; it went forth from Zion, where the temple was built, and from Jerusalem. Christ himself began in Galilee, Matt. iv. 23. Luke xxiii. 5. But when he commissioned his apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, he appointed them to begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. See Rom. xv. 19. Though most of them had their home in Galilee, yet they must scatter to the four corners of the earth, to perform the Spirit, Acts i. 4. And in the temple on Mount Zion they preached the gospel, Acts v. 20. This honour was allowed to Jerusalem, even after Christ was crucified there, for the sake of what it had been. And it was by this gospel which took rise from Jerusalem, that the gospel-church was established through the depth of the mountains. This was the root of divine strength, that was sent forth out of Zion, Ps. cx. 2.

V. The erecting of the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world; He shall judge among the nations. He whose word goes forth out of Zion, shall by that word not only subdue souls to himself, but rule in them, v. 4. He shall, in wisdom and justice, order and govern the affairs of the world for the good of his church; he shall rebuke and restrain those that oppose his interest. By his Spirit working on men's consciences, he shall judge and rebuke, shall try men, and check them; his kingdom is spiritual, and not of this world.

VI. The great peace which should be the effect of the success of the gospel in the world, (v. 4.) They shall beat their swords into ploughshares; their instruments of war shall be converted into implements of husbandry; as, on the contrary, when war is proclaimed, ploughshares are beaten into swords, Joel iii. 10. Nation shall not then lift up sword against nation, as now they do, neither shall they learn war any more, for they shall have no more occasion for it. This does not make all war abate, for the Gentiles, who shall be converted, are prejudiced, Eph. ii. 11. But a prophecy that in the days of the Messiah there shall be no wars. The Jews urge this against Christians, as an argument that Jesus is not the Messiah, because this promise is not fulfilled. But, 1. It was in part fulfilled in the peaceableness of the time in which Christ was born, when wars were in a great measure ceased; witness the taxing, Luke ii. 1. The design and tendency of the gospel are to make peace, and to slay all enmities. It has in it the most powerful obligations and inducements to peace; so that one might reasonably have expected it should have had this effect, and it would have had it, if it had not been for those lusts of men, from which come wars and fightings. 3. Jews and Gentiles were reconciled, and brought together, by the gospel, and there were no more such wars between them as had been; for they became oneShepherd under one shepherd, Eph. ii. 15.

The gospel of Christ, as far as it prevails, disposes men to be peaceable, softens men's spirits, and sweetens them; and the love of Christ, shed abroad in the heart, constrains them to love one another.

5. The primitive Christians were famous for brotherly love; their very adversaries took notice of it. 6. We have reason to hope that this promise shall yet have a more full accomplishment in the latter times of the Christian church, when the Spirit shall be poured out more plentifully on high. Then there shall be on earth peace. Who shalllive when God shall judge the nations? But this is neither in due time, for he is not a man that he should be.

Lastly, Here is a practical inference drawn from all this; (v. 5.) O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord. By the house of Jacob is meant either, 1. Israel according to the flesh. Let them be provoked by this to a holy emulation. Rom. xi. 14. "Seeing the Gentiles are thus ready, and resolved for God, thus forward to go up to the house of the Lord, let us stir up ourselves to go too. Let it never be said that the sinners of the Gentiles were better Jews to the holy mountain, than the house of Jacob." Thus the zeal of some should provoke many, Or, 2. Spiritual Israel, all that are brought to the God of Jacob. Shall there be such great knowledge in gospel times, (v. 5.) and such great peace! (v. 4.) And shall they so quietly enjoy privileges? Come, then, and let us live accordingly. Whatever others do, come, O come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. (1.) Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this knowledge. Will God teach us his wars? will he show us his glory in the face of Christ? Let us then walk as the children of light. The day, Eph. v. 8. 1 Thess. v. 8. Rom. xiii. 12. (2.) Let us walk circumspectly in the light of this peace. Shall there be no more war? Let us then go on our way rejoicing, and let this joy terminate in God, and be our strength, Neh. viii. 10. Thus shall we walk in the beams of the Sun of righteousness.

6. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people, the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are sooth sayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots. 8. Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made. 9. And the mean man boweth down, and the great man humblyth himself: therefore forgive them not.

The calling in of the Gentiles was accompanied with the rejection of the Jews; it was their fall, and the diminishing of them, that was the riches of the Gentiles; and the casting off of them, that was the reconciling of the world; (Rom. xi. 12-15.) and it should seem that these verses have reference to that, and are designed to justify God therein; and yet, probably, they are primarily intended for the convincing and awakening of the man of that generation in which the prophet lived; it being usual with the prophets to speak of the things that then were, both in mercy and judgment, as types of the things that should be hereafter. Here is,

1. Israel's doom; this is set forth in two words,
God, who thus forsakes him and their own mercies for living vanities.

3. God encouraged them to put their confidence in him, and assured them that he would be their Wealth and Strength; but, distracting his power and promise, they made gold their hope, and furnished themselves with horses and chariots, and relied upon them for their safety, v. 7. God had expressly forbidden even their kings to multiply horses to themselves, and greatly to multiply silver and gold, v. 6. But they despised his counsels, and put him off with the most contemptible shift, and thought to use them only as a means to amuse themselves in the enjoyment of their own lusts.

4. God, therefore, in his just punishment, and the mouth of his anger, should be again, and with great severity. God, therefore, in his just punishment, and the mouth of his anger, should be again, and with great severity, their devastations, and by a fit of the plague, or by a natural calamity, it should be seen that their horses and chariots could not molest them, v. 8.

5. God had advanced them; he had put honour upon them, but they basely diminished and disparaged themselves; v. 9. The mean man boweth down to his idol; a thing below the meanest that have any spark of reason left them. Sin is a disreputation worse than any; but the meanest man should not be counted upon, who, under a pretence of seeking after the lowest rank, becomes the mean of men to bow down to his superiors, but it ill becomes him to bow down to the stock of a tree, ch. xli. 19. Nor is it only the illiterate and poor-spirited that do this, but even the great man forgets his grandeur, and humbles himself to worship idols, defies men no better than himself, and consecrates stones so much baser than himself. Idolaters are said to dedicate themselves even to hell, ch. lxv. 9. Why, certainly, the Lord will not be such an idolator himself, think the service of the true God below them, and will not stoop to it; and yet will humble themselves to bow down to an idol! Some make this a threaten- ing, that the mean men shall be brought down, and the great men humbled, by the judgments of God, when they come with commission.

10. Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. 11. The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.

12. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty.
and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low; 13. And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan. 14. And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up. 15. And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, 16. And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. 17. And the loveliness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. 18. And the idols he shall utterly abolish. 19. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 20. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles, and to the bats; 21. To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. 22. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

The prophet here goes on to show what desolations would be brought upon their land, when God had forsaken them; which may refer particularly to their destruction by the Chaldeans first, and afterwards by the Romans; or it may have a general respect to the method God takes to awaken and humble proud sinners, and to put them out of concitement with that which they delighted in, and depended on, more than God.

We are here told, that sooner or later, God will find out a way,

1. To startle and awaken secure sinners, who cry peace to themselves, and bid defiance to God and his judgments; (v. 16.) "Enter into the rock; God shall hide thee as the coves of the earth, the darkest, and the deepest, places; they shall call to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and rather crush them than not cover them, Hos. x. 8. It was so particularly at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, (Luke xxii. 36.) and of the persecuting pagan powers, Rev. vi. 16. And all, for fear of the Lord and of the glory of his majesty, were upon him then to be a consuming fire, and themselves as stabling before him, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth, to shake the wicked out of it, (Job xxxviii. 13.) and to shake all these earthly props and supports which they have bowed themselves up with, to shake them from under them. Note, 1. With God is terrible majesty, and the glory of it is such as, sooner or later, will oblige us all to flee before him. 2. Those that will not fear God, and flee to him, will be forced to fear him, and flee from him to a refuge of lies.

3. It is folly for those that are pursued by the wrath of God, to think to escape it, and to hide or to shelter themselves from it. 4. The things of the earth are things that will be shaken; they are subject to concussions, and hastening towards a dissolution. 5. The shaking of the earth is, and will be, a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on things of the earth. 6. The shaking of the earth is, and will be, a terrible thing to those who set their affections wholly on the caves of the earth, when the earth itself is shaken; there will be no shelter then but in God, and in things above.

11. To humble and abuse proud sinners, that look big, and think highly of themselves, and scornfully of all about them; (v. 11.) "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled; the eyes that aim high, the countenance in which the pride of the heart shone, these shall be cast down, and those things which they were proud of shall be ashamed of. It is repeated again; (v. 17.) "The lofty looks of man shall be bowed down. Note, Pride will, one way or other, have a fall. Men's haughtiness will be brought down, either by the breaking down of God's enemies, or the fall of the evil of their pride, and clothing them with humility, or by the providence of God depriving them of all these things they were proud of, and laying them low. Our Saviour often laid it down for a maxim, that he who exalts himself shall be abased; he shall either abuse himself in true repentance, or God will abuse him, and pour contempt upon him. Now here we are told,

1. Why this shall be done; because the Lord alone will be exalted. Note, Therefore proud men shall be vilified, because the Lord alone will be magnified. It is for the honour of God's power to humble the proud; by this he proves himself to be God, and disproves Job's pretensions to rival with him; (Job xxi. 11–14.) Behold every one that is proud, and abuse him, then will I also confound unto thee. It is likewise for the honour of his justice; proud men stand in competition with God, who is jealous for his own glory, and will not suffer men either to take that to themselves, or give it to another, which is due to him only; they likewise stand in opposition to God, they resist him, and therefore he resists them; for he will be exalted among the heathen, Ps. xlii. 10. And there is a day coming in which all shall be exalted, when he shall put down all opposing rule, finitude, and power, 1 Cor. xvi. 24.

2. How this shall be done; by humbling judgments, that shall mortify men, and bring them down; (v. 12.) "The day of the Lord of hosts, the day of his wrath and judgment, shall be upon every one that is proud, and therefore he now laughs at his insolence, because he esteems that his day is cut out of the Lord, and will be upon them ere they are aware, Ps. xxxvii. 13. This day of the Lord is here said to be upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up. Jerem observes that the cedars are said to praise God, (Ps. xxviii. 9.) and are trees of the Lord, (Ps. civ. 16.) of his planting; (Isa. xli. 19.) and yet here God's wrath fastens upon the cedars, which denominates that his day is cut out of the Lord, and that the most of the greatest men, shall be saved, and some perish. It is brought in as an instance of the strength of God's voice, that it breaks the cedars; (Ps. xxviii. 5.) and here the day of the Lord is said to be upon the cedars, those of Lebanon, that were the strongest and staitest; upon the oaks, those of Bashan, that were the strongest and staitest; and (v. 14.) upon the natural elevations and fortresses, the high mountains, and the hills that are lifted up, that overtop the valleys, and seem to

Vol. iv.—D
push the skies; and (v. 15.) upon the artificial fastnesses, every high tower, and every fenced wall. Understand these.

(1.) As representing the proud people themselves, that are like the cedars and the oaks, in their own account, rooted in the highest hills, and not to be stirred by any storm, and looking on all around them as shrubs; these are the high mountains and the lofty hills, that seem to fill the earth, that are gazed on by all, and think themselves immovable, but lie most obnoxious to God's thunder-strokes; Periaptique summos fulmina montes—The highest hills are most exposed to lightning. And before the power of God's wrath these mountains are scattered, and these hills bow and melt like wax, Hab. iii. 6. Ps. lxxviii. 8. Those vaunting men, who are as high towers in which the noisy bells are hung, on which the thundering murdering cannon are planted, these fenced walls, that fortify themselves with their native hardiness, and intrench themselves in their fastnesses, they shall be brought down.

(2.) As particularizing the things they are proud of, in which they trust, and of which they make their boast. The day of the Lord shall be upon those very things which they put their confidence in as their strength and security; he will take from them all their armour wherein they trusted. Did the inhabitants of Lebanon glory in their cedars, and those of Bashan in their oaks, such as no country perhaps in the world have, they are to be confounded. The day of the Lord shall be upon those cedars, those oaks, and the houses built of them. Did Jerusalem glory in the mountains that were round about it, as its impregnable fortifications, or in its walls and bulwarks? These should be levelled, and laid low in the day of the Lord.

Beside those things that were for their strength and safety, they were proud, [1.] Of their trade abroad; for the day of the Lord shall be upon all the ships of Tarshish, they shall be broken as Je-hoshaphat's were, shall founder at sea, or be shipwrecked in the harbour. Zebulun was a haven of ships, but should now no more rejoice in his going out. When God is bringing ruin upon a people, he sinks all the branches of their revenue. [2.] Of their ornaments at home; but the day of the Lord shall be upon all pictures and pictures of pictures, (so we understand it,) or the curious pieces of painting they brought home in their ships from other countries, perhaps from Greece, which afterward was famous for painters. Upon every thing that is beautiful to behold, so some read it. Perhaps they were the pictures of their relations, and, for that reason, pleasant, or of their gods, which to the idolaters were delectable things; or they admired them for the fineness of their colours or strokes. There is no harm in making pictures, or in adorning our rooms with them, provided they transgress not either the second or the seventh commandment. But to place our pictures among our pleasant things, to be fond of them and proud of them, to spend that upon them that should be laid out in charity, and to set our hearts upon them, it is not upon painted men, who, like Pharaoh, exalt themselves against him, but much more upon all pretended deities, who are rivals with him for divine honours; they shall be abolished, utterly abolished; their friends shall desert them, their enemies shall destroy them, so that, one way or other, an utter riddance shall be made of them. See here, 1.

The vanity of false gods; they cannot secure them, for great are they from being able to secure their worshippers. 2. The victory of the true God over them, for great is the truth, and will prevail. They shall be brought before the ark, and Ball before the Lord God of Elijah. The gods of the heathen shall be famished, (Zeph. ii. 11.) and by degrees shall perish, Jer. x. 11. The rightful Sovereign shall triumph over all pretenders.

And as God will abolish idols, so their worshippers shall abandon them; either from a gracious conviction of their vanity and falsehood, (as Ephraim, when he said, What have I to do any more with idols?) or from a late and sad experience of their inability to help them, and a woful despair of relief by them, v. 20. When men are themselves frightened by the judgments of God into the holes of the rocks and the caves of the earth, and find that they do thus in vain shift for their own safety, they shall cast their idols, which they had made their gods, and hoped to make their friends in the time of need, to the moles and to the bats, any whither out of sight, that, being freed from the incumbrance of them, they may go into the cliffs of the rocks, for fear of the Lord, v. 21. Note, (1.) Those that will not be reasoned out of their sins, sooner or later shall be frightened out of them. (2.) God can make men sick of those idols that they have been most fond of; even the idols of silver, and the idols of gold, which the most proud men make silver and gold their idols, money their god, but the time may come when they may feel it as much their burden as ever they made it their confidence, and may find themselves as much exposed by it as ever they hoped they should be guarded by it, when it tempts their enemy, sinks their ship, or carries their flight; there was a time when the mariners threw the waves, and even the wheat, into the sea. 5. Acts xxvii. 38. and the Syrants cast away their garments for haste, 2 Kings vii. 15. Or men may cast it away out of indignation at themselves for leaning upon such a broken reed. See Ezek. vii. 19. The idolaters here throw away their idols, because they are ashamed of them, and of their own folly in trusting to them; or because they are ashamed of the face that is given to the spurious-temple, their idolatrous temples; or because judgments of God are abroad; as the thief throws away his stolen goods, when he is searched for or pursued. (3.) The darkest holes, where the moles and the bats lodge, are the fittest places for idols, that have eyes, and see not; and God can force men to cast their own idols there, (ch. xxx. 22.) when they are ashamed of the oaks which they have deserved, ch. i. 29. Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel, Jer. xlviii. 13. (4.) It is possible that sin may be both loathed and left, and yet not truly repented of; loathed, because surfeited on; left, because there is no opportunity of committing it; yet not repented of out of any love to God, but only out of a slavish fear of his wrath.

V. 23-25. To them those that have trusted in an arm of flesh, ashamed of their confidence; (v. 22.) "Cease ye from man. The providances of God concerning you shall speak this aloud to you, and therefore take warning beforehand, that you may prevent the uneasiness and shame of a disappointment; and consider," 1. How weak man is; His breath is in his nostrils, puffed out every moment, and gone for good and all. Man is a dying creature, and may die quickly; our nostrils, in which our breath is, are of the outward parts of the body; what is there is like one standing at the door, ready to depart, may, the doors of the nostrils are always open, the breath in them may slip away, we are aware, in a moment. Wherein is man then to be accounted of? Alas, no reckoning is to be made of him,
for he is not what he seems to be, what he pretends to be, what we fancy him to be. Man is like to vanity, nay, he is vanity, he is altogether vanity, he is less, he is lighter, than vanity, when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. 2. And this are they that cease from man; it is our duty, it is our interest, to do so. *Put not your trust in man, nor make even the greatest and mightiest of men your confidence; cease to do so. Let not your eye be to the power of man, for it is finite and limited, derived and depending; it is not from him that your judgment proceeds: let not him be your fear, let not him be your hope; but look up to the power of God, to which all the powers of men are subject and subordinate; dread his wrath, secure his favour, take him for your Help, and let your hope be in the Lord your God."

CHAP. III.

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on to foretell the desolations that were coming upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, both that by the Babylonians, and that which completed their ruin by the Romans; with some of the grounds of God's controversy with them. God threatens, 1. To deprive them of all the supports, both of their life and of their government, v. 1. 2. To cast them into confusion and disorder, v. 4, 5, 11. 3. To deny them the blessings of magistracy, v. 6. 4. To strip the daughters of Zion of their ornaments, v. 17. 5. To lay all wasting and destruction on the land, v. 26. 6. To leave them to the sins that provoked God to deal thus with them, v. 9. 7. Their defiance of God, v. 8. 8. Their impudence, v. 9. 3. The abuse of power to oppression and tyranny, v. 13. - 15. The pride of the daughters of Zion, v. 16. In the midst of the chapter, the prophet is directed how to apply himself to particular persons. (1.) To assure good people that it should be well with them, notwithstanding those general calamities, v. 10. (2.) To assure wicked people that, however God might, in judgment, remember mercy, yet it should go ill with them, v. 11. 9. 10. That the nations of the earth, at this day, would hearken to the rebukes and warnings which this chapter gives!

1. FOR behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water. 2. The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient. 3. The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. 4. And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. 5. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable. 6. When a man shall take hold of his brother, of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand: 7. In that day shall he swear, saying, I will not be a healer: for in my house is neither bread nor clothing: make me not a ruler of the people. 8. For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had given a necessary caution to all, not to put confidence in man, or any creature; he had also given a general reason for that caution, taken from the frailty of human life, and the vanity and weakness of human powers: here he gives a particular reason for it—God was now about to ruin all their creature-confidence, so that they should meet with nothing but disappointments in all their expectations from them, v. 1. 9. The stay and the staff shall be taken away; all their supports, of what kind soever, all the things they trusted to, and looked for help and relief from. Their church and kingdom were grown old, and going to decay, and they were (after the manner of aged men, Zech. viii. 4.) leaning on a staff; now God threatens to take away their staff, and then they must fall of course; to take away the support both of the city and country, of Jerusalem and of Judah, which are indeed states to one another, and if one fail, the other feels from it.

He that does this, is the Lord, the Lord of hosts; Adon, the Lord that is himself the Stay or Foundation; if that Stay depart, all other stays certainly break under us, for he is the Strength of them all. He that is the Lord, the Ruler, that has authority to do it, and the Lord of hosts, that has ability to do it, he shall take away the stay and the staff. St. Jerom refers this to the sensible decay of the Jewish nation, after they had crucified our Saviour, Rom. xi. 9, 10. I rather take it as a warning to all nations not to provoke God: for if they make him their Enemy, he can, and will, thus make them miserable. Let us view the particulars:

1. Was their plenty a support to them? It is so to any people; bread is the staff of life: but God can take away the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; and it is just with him to do so, when fulness of bread becomes an iniquity, (Ezech. xxvi. 49.) and that, which was given to be provision for the life, is made provision for death. He can take away the bread and the water, by withholding the rain, Deut. xxxviii. 23, 24. Or, if he allow them, he can take away the stay of bread and the stay of water, by withholding this blessing, by which man lives, and not by bread only, and which is the staff of bread; (Matt. iv. 4.) and then the bread is not nourishing, the water not refreshing, Hag. i. 6. Christ is the bread, and the water, and the staff of life; if he be your Stay, we shall find that a good part not to be taken away, John vi. 27, ch. iv. 14.

2. Was their army a support to them—their generals and commanders, and military men? These shall be taken away: either cut off by the sword, or so discouraged with the defeats they meet with, that they shall throw up their commissions, or resolve to act no more: or they shall be dishonoured by sickness, or despair, so as to be unfit for business; the mighty man, and the man of war, and even the inferior officer, the captain of fifty, shall be removed. It beeds ill with a people when their valour is lost, and their valiant men. Let not the strong man therefore glory in his strength, nor any people trust too much to their mighty men; but let the strong man, in humility and lowliness, by the city of the terrible nations fire him, who can make them weak and despiseful, ch. xxv. 3.

3. Were their ministers of state a support to them—their learned men, their politicians, their clerks, their wisps and virtues? These also should be taken away; the judges, who were skilled in the laws, and expert in administering justice, and the priests, whom they used to consult; in difficult cases, the prudent, who were celebrated as men of sense and sagacity above others, and were assistants to the judges; the diviners, (so the word is,) these who used unlawful arts, who, though rotten stays, yet were stayed on; but it may be taken, as we rest it, in a good sense; the ancients, elders in age, in
office, the honourable man, the gravity of whose aspect commands reverence, and whose age and experience make him fit to be a counsellor. Trade is one great support to a nation, even manufactures and handicraft trades; and therefore when the old stay is to be broken, the cunning artificer too shall be taken away; and the last is the eloquent orator, the man skilful of speech, who in some cases may do good service, though he be none of the prudent or the ancient, by putting the sense of others in good language; Moses cannot speak well, but Aaron can.

God threatens to take these away, 1. To disable them for the service of their country; making the judgment from the hand of God fall upon them, and the understanding of the aged, Job xii. 17, &c. Every creature is that to us, that God makes it to be: and we cannot be sure that those who have been serviceable to us, shall always be so. 2. To put an end to their days; for princes are therefore not to be trusted in, because their breath goeth forth, Ps. cxlv. 3. 4. Note, The removal of useful men by death, in the midst of their usefulness, is a very threatening symptom to any people.

IV. Was their government a support to them? It ought to be so, it is the business of the sovereign to bear up the pillars of the land, Ps. lxxxv. 3. But it is here threatened that this stay should fail them. When the mighty men and the prudent are removed, Children shall be their princes; children in age, who know not what they are doing. The care is not for those who shall be clashing with one another, and making a prey of the young king and his kingdom; children in understanding and disposition, childish men, such as are babes in knowledge, no more fit to rule than a child in the cradle, these shall rule over them, with all the folly, fickleness, and frowardness, of a child. And, 2: Why, land, when thy king is such a one! Es. lv. 2.

V. Was the union of the subjects among themselves, their good order, and the good understanding and correspondence that they kept with one another, a stay to them? Where this is, a people may do better, though their princes be not such as they should be; but it is here threatened that God would send an evil spirit among them too, (as Judg. ix. 23) which would make them, 1. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. Then Hono homi igitur—Man becomes a wolf to man. Jusque data est liber—The guest and the host are in danger from each other. 2. Insolent and disorderly towards their superiors. It is as ill an omen to a people as can be, when the rising generation among them are generally untractable, rude, and insolent; and when the child becomes a reproach against the ancient; whereas he should rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, Lev. xix. 32. When young people are conceited and pert, and carry it scornfully toward their superiors, it is not only a reproach to themselves, but of ill consequence to the public; it dishonours the offices of government, and weakens the hands that hold them. It is like to end with reproach upon reproach, when judges are insulted by the mob, and their powers set at defiance. These have a great deal to answer for, who do this.

VI. Is it some stay, some support, to hope that, though matters may be now ill managed, yet others may be raised up, who may manage better? Yet this expectation also shall be frustrated, for the case shall be so desperate, that no man of sense or substance will meddle with it.

1. The government shall go a begging, v. 5. Here, 1. It is taken for granted that there is no way of redressing all these grievances, and bringing things into order again, but by good magistrates, who shall be invested with power by common consent, and shall exact that power for the good of the community. And it is probable that this was, in many places, the true origin of government: men found it necessary to unite in a subscription to one end, or was thought fit for such a trust, in order to the holding together, the maintenance of the public, that they must either be ruled or ruined. Here therefore is the original contract; "Be thou our ruler, and we will be subject to thee, and let this ruin be under thy hand, to be repaired and restored, and then to be preserved and established, and the interests of it advanced, ch. viii. 12. Take care to protect us by the sword of war from being injured from abroad, and by the sword of justice from being injurious one to another, and we will bear faith and true allegiance to thee." (2) The case is represented as very deplorable, and things were come to a sad pass; for, 1. Children being their princes, every man will think himself fit to prescribe who shall be a magistrate, and will be for preferring his own relations; to mix not what their counsels should be, it would be left entirely to them to nominate the rulers, as it ought to be. 2. Men will find themselves under a necessity even of forcing power into the hands of those that are thought to be fit for it; a man shall take hold by violence of one to make him a ruler, perceiving him ready to resist the motion; may, he shall urge it upon his brother; whereas commonly, they are not wont to think that the rule of our superiors; witness the envy of Joseph's brethren. 3. It will be looked upon as ground sufficient for the preferring of a man to be a ruler, that he has clothing better than his neighbours; a very poor qualification to recommend a man to a place of trust in the government: it was a sign that the country was much impoverished, when it was a rare thing for men to wear clothes that were fit for them, and it was not thought fit that the rule should be affor to buy himself an alderman's gown, or a judge's robe; and that the people were very unthinking, when they had so much respect to a man in gay clothing, with a gold ring, (Jam. ii. 2, 3.) that, for the sake thereof, they would make him their ruler. It had been some sense to have said, "Thou hast wisdom, integrity, experience; be thou our ruler," but it was a jest to say, "Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler." A poor wise man, though in vile raiment, delivered a city, Eccl. ix. 15. We may allude to this, to show how desperate the case of fallen man was, when our Lord Jesus was pleased to become our Brother, and, though he was not courted, offered himself to be our Ruler and Saviour, and to take this ruin under his hand. 4. These magistrates, when they come into office, will swear themselves in, because, though they are taken to be men of some substance, yet they know themselves unable to bear the charges of the office, and to answer the expectations of those that chose them, v. 7. He shall swear, (shall lift up the hand, the ancient ceremony used in taking an oath,) I will not be a healer, make not me a ruler. Note, Rulers may sometimes be deceived, and good rulers will be very sensible to unite their subjects, and not widen the differences that are among them; those only are fit for government, that are of a meek, quiet, humble spirit: they must also heal the wounds that are given to any of the interests of their people, by suit able applications. But why will he not be a ruler? Because in my house is neither bread nor clothing.
that God contended with them; if they rev-  

eved them- 

selves, let them look a little further, and they will  

see that they must thank themselves: We unto  

their souls! For they have rewarded evil unto  

themselves. Also for their souls! (so it may be read,  

in a way of Lamentation,) for they have procured  

evil to themselves, v. 9. Note, I. The condition  

of sinners is woeful and very deplorable. 2. It  

is the soul that is damned and condemned by sin;  

sinners may have their goods, and let their goods  

stand at the same time there may be a woe to their  

souls. 3. Whatever evil befalls sinners, it is of  

their own procuring, Jer. ii. 19.

That which is here charged upon them, is,  

(1.) That the shame which should restrain them  

from their sins, was quite thrown off, and they were  

grown impudent, v. 9. This hardens men against  

oppression, and ripens them for ruin, as much as  

any thing: The show of their countenance doth witness  

against them, that their minds are vain, and lewd,  

and malicious; their eyes speak it plainly, that they  

cannot cease from sin, 2 Pet. ii. 14. One may look  

them in the face, and guess at the despicable  

wickedness that is in their hearts: They declare  

their sin as Sodom; so impetuous, so impious, are  

their lusts, and so perfect a show of vice that it  

perfectly calls all the remaining sparks of virtue  

extinguished in them. The Sodomites declared  

their sin, not only by the exceeding greatness of it,  

(Gen. xiii. 13.) so that it cried to heaven, (Gen.  

xviii. 20.) but by their shameless owning of it  

which was most shameful; (Gen. xix. 5.) and thus  

Judah and Jerusalem did: they were so far from  

concealing it, that they gloried in it, in the bold  

attempt they made unto it, and the victory they  

gained over their own convictions: they had a whore’s  

forehead, (Jer. iii. 5.) and could not blush, (Jer. vi.  

15.) Note, Those that are grown impudent in sin,  

are ripe for ruin; they that are past shame, (we say,)  

are past grace, and then past hope.

(2.) That their guides, who should direct them  

in the right way, put them out of the way, v. 12.  

“They who lead, (the princes, priests, and  

prophets,) mislead them, they cause thee to err.”  

Either they preached to them that which was false  

and corrupt, or if they preached that which was true  

and good, they contradicted it by their practices:  

and the people would sooner follow a bad example  

than a good exhortation: thus they destroyed the  

way of their paths, pulling down with one hand  

what they build up with the other. Qui te beatificat—  

They that call thee blessed, cause thee to  

er; so some read it. Their priests applauded  

them, as if nothing was amiss among them; cried,  

Peace, peace, to them, as if they were in no  

danger; and thus they caused them to go on in their  

errors.

(3.) That their judges who should have patron-  

ized, and protected the oppressed, were themselves  

the greatest oppressors, v. 14. 15. The elders of  

the people, and the princes, who had learning,  

and could not but know better things, who had great  

estates, and were not under the temptation of neces-  

sity to encroach upon these about them, and who  

were men of honour, and should seem to do a base  

thing, yet they have eaten up the vineyard. God’s  

vineyard, which they were appointed to be the  

dressers and keepers of, burnt; so the word  
signifies; they did as ill by it as its worst enemies  
could do, Ps. lxxx. 16. Or the vineyards of the  

poor; they wrested them out of their possession,  

as Jezebel did Naboth’s; or devoured the fruits  
of them, fed their lusts with that which should  
have been the necessities of the poor, of incumbent  
families, the spoil of the poor was heaped up in  

their houses: when God came to search for stolen goods,  
there he found it, and it was a witness against them.
was to be had, and they might have made restitution, but would not. God reasons with those great men, 

"What mean ye, that ye are wrong in your people in pieces? What cause have ye for it? What good does it do you? Or, "What hurt have they done you? Do you think you have power given you for such a purpose as this?" Note, There is nothing more accountable, and yet nothing which more certainly be accounted for, than the injuries and abuses that are done to God's people by the wicked, and especially oppressors. "Ye grapple the face of the poor; ye put them into as much pain and terror as if they were grounded in a mill, and as certainly reduce them to dust by one act of oppression after another. Or, "Their faces are bruised and crushed with the blows you have given them; you have not only ruined their estates, but given them personal abuses." Our Lord Jesus was smitten on the face, Matt. xvi. 67.

11. The management of this controversy: 1. God himself is the Prosecutor; (v. 13.) The Lord stands up to plead, or he sets himself to debate the matter, and he stands to judge the people, to judge for those that were oppressed and abused; and he will enter into judgment with the princes, v. 14. Note, The greatest men cannot exempt or excuse themselves from the scrutiny and sentence of God's judgment, nor demur to the jurisdiction of the courts of heaven. 2. The indictment is proved by the notorious evidence of the fact; "Look upon the oppressors, and the showing of their countenances witnesses against them; (v. 9.) look upon the oppressed, and you see how their faces are battered and abused," v. 15. 3. The controversy is already begun, in the change of the ministry; to punish those that had abused their power to bad purposes, God sets those over them, that had not sense to use it to any good purpose; Children are their oppressors, and women rule over them, (v. 12.) men that have as weak judgments, and strong passions, as women and children: this was their sin, that their rulers were such, and it became a judgment upon them.

11. The distinction that shall be made between particular persons, in the prosecution of this controversy; (v. 10, 11.) Say to the righteous, It shall be well with thee. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. He had said, (v. 9.) they have rewarded evil to themselves; and to prove that, he here shows that God will render to every man according to his works. Had they been righteous, it had been well with them; but if it be ill with them, it is because they are wicked, and will be so. Thus God stated the matter to Cain, to convince him that he had no reason to be angry, Gen. iv. 7. Or it may be taken thus; God is threatening national judgments, which will ruin the public interests. Now, 1. Some good people might fear that they should be involved in that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets comfort them against those fears; When the whole stay of bread is taken away, yet in the day of famine they shall be satisfied, they shall eat the fruit of their doings; they shall have the testimony of their consciences for them, that they kept themselves pure from the common iniquity, and therefore the common calamity is not the same thing to them that it is to others; they brought no fuel to the flame, and therefore are not themselves fuel for it. 2. Some wicked people might hope that they should escape that ruin, and therefore God bids the prophets shake their vain hopes; "Woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; (v. 11.) to him the judgments shall have a sting, and there shall be wormwood and gall in the affliction and misery." There is a wo to wicked people, and though they may think to shelter themselves from public judgment, yet it shall be ill with them; it will grow worse and worse with them if they resist, nor absent, and the worst of all will be last; for the reward of his hands shall be done to him, in the day when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body.

16. Moreover, the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walked with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking, and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their caul, and their round tires like the moon, 19. The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers. 20. The bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the earrings, 21. The rings, and nose-jewels. 22. The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crispings, pins. 23. The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails. 24. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell, there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle, a rent: and instead of well-set hair, baldness: and instead of a smoother, a girding of sackcloth! and burning instead of beauty. 25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. 26. And her gates shall lament and mourn: and she, being desolate, shall sit upon the ground.

The prophet's business was to show all sorts of people what they had contributed to the national guilt, and what share they must expect in the retribution; the prophets shake their vain hopes, and warns the daughters of Zion, tells the ladies of their faults: and Moses, in the law, having denounced God's wrath against the tender and delicate woman, (the prophets being a comment upon the law, Deut. xxxviii. 6.) he here tells them how they should smart by the calamities that were coming upon them. Observe, The prophet expressly applies the prophetic oracles upon the daughters of Zion, v. 16. The prophet expressly vouches God's authority for what he said, lest it should be thought it was unbecoming him to take notice of such things, and should be ill-received by the ladies; The Lord saith it. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, let them know that God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the lofty and vanity of proud women, and his law takes cognizance
even of their dress. Two things they here stand noticed for, heightness and wantonness; directly contrary to that modesty, shame-facedness, and sobriety, with which women ought to adorn themselves, 1 Tim. ii. 9. They discovered the disposition of their mind by their gait and gesture, and the lightness of their carriage. They are naughty, for they walked with stretched-fourth necks, that they may seem to be tall, and one less willing to set so much the sale of their foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy; they make a tinkling with their feet, having, as some think, chains, or little bells, upon their shoes, that made a noise; they go as if they were fettered; so some read it; like a horse trampled, that he may learn to pace. Thus Agag came delicately, 1 Sam. xv. 32. Such a nice air, such a precisely graceful air upon that which is natural, and ridiculous in the human form, but as it is an evidence of a vain mind, it is offensive to God. And two things aggravated it here, (1.) That these were the daughters of Zion the holy mountain, who should have behaved with the gravity that becomes women professing godliness. (2.) That it should seem, by the connexion, they were the wives and daughters of the princes who spoiled and oppressed the poor, (c. 14, 15.), that they might maintain this pride and luxury of their families.

2. The punishments threatened for this sin; and they answer the sin, as face answers to face in a glass, v. 17, 18.

(1.) They walked with stretched-fourth necks, but God will smile with a scab the crown of their head, which shall lower their crests, and make them ashamed to show their heads, being obliged by it to cut off their hair. Note, Loathsome diseases are often sent as the just punishment of pride, and are sometimes the immediate effect of lewdness, the flesh and the body being consumed by it.

(2.) They cared not what they laid out in furnishing themselves with great variety of fine clothes; but God will reduce them to such poverty that they may not have clothes sufficient to cover their nakedness, but their uncomeliness should be exposed through their rags.

(3.) They were extremely fond and proud of their ornaments; but God will strip them of those ornaments, when their houses should be plundered, their treasures rifled, and they themselves led into captivity, and deprived of all, and will make them strip of all they have, and use them as servants use their masters, and would have been the keeper of their wardrobe, or had attended them in their dressing-room. It is not at all material to inquire what sort of ornaments these respectively were, and whether the translations rightly express the original words; perhaps a hundred years hence the names of some of the ornaments that the prophet here specifies many of the ornaments which they used, as particularly as he alter, and so do the names of them; and yet the mention of them is not in vain, but is designed to expose the folly of the daughters of Zion; for, (1.) Many of these things, we may suppose, were very odd and ridiculous, and if they had not been in fashion, would have been hooted at. They were fit toys for children to play with, than ornaments for grown people to go to mount Zion in. (2.) Those things that were decent and convenient, as the linen, hoods, and the veils, needed not to have been provided in such abundance and variety. It is necessary to have apparel, and that all should have it according to their rank; but what occasion was there for so many changeable suits of apparel, (v. 22,) that they might not be seen two days together in the same suit? "They must have (as the hemily against excess of apparel speaks) one gown for the day, another for the evening; one hat for the short; one for the walking-day, another for the holy-day; one of that colour, another of that colour; one of cloth, another of silk or damask; one dress above dinner, another after; one of the Spanish fashion, another Turkey, and never content with sufficient." Which, as it is an evidence of pride and vain curiosity, so must needs spend a great deal, in gratifying a base lust, that they ought to be rather put to work in outworks of pitty and charity; and it is well if they forget nothing of the poor or poor creditors defrauded, to support it. (3.) The enumeration of these things intimates what care they were in about them, how much their hearts were upon them, what an exact account they kept of them, how nice and critical they were about them, how insatiable their desire was of them, how much of their comfort was bound up in them. A man can count his silver pieces, though they were ever so many, (Jer. ii. 32,) but would report them as readily, and talk of them with as much pleasure, as if they had been things of the greatest moment. The prophet does not speak of these things as in themselves sinful; they may lawfully be had and used, but as things which they were proud of, and should therefore be deprived of.

4. They were very nice and curious about their clothes; but God would make those bodies of theirs which they were at such expense to beautify and make easy, a reproach and burden to them; (v. 24.) Instead of sweet smell (those tablets, or boxes of perfume, houses of the soul or breath, as they are called, v. 20. margin) there shall be stink, garments grown filthy, with being long worn, or from some loathsome disease, or plasters for the cure of it; instead of a rich embroidered girdle, used to make the clothes sit tight, there shall be a rent, a rending of the clothes for grief, or old rotten clothes rent into rags; instead of well-set hair, curiously plaied and powdered, there shall be baldness, the hair being plucked off or shaven, as was usual in times of great affliction, (cf. xxv. 2. Jer. xvi. 6,) or in great servitude, Ezek. xxviii. 17. instead of the scarf, or sash, a girding of sackcloth, in token of deep humiliation; and burning instead of beauty. Those that had a good complexion, and were proud of it, when they are carried into captivity, shall be tamed and sun-burnt; and it is observed, that the best faces are soonest injured by the weather. From all this let us learn, (1.) Not to be too much curious about our apparel, nor to affect that which is gay and costly, or to be proud of it. (2.) Not to be secure in the enjoyment of any of the delights of sense, because we know not how soon we may be stripped of them, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

5. They designed by these ornaments to charm the gentlewomen, and win their affections, (Prov. vii. 16, 17,) but they shall be none to be envied by them, (v. 23.) Nor shall they affect that which is gay and thy might in the war. The fire shall consume them, and then the maidens shall not be given in marriage; as it is, Ps. lxxviii. 63. When the sword comes with commission, the mighty commonly fall first by it, because they are most forward to venture. And when Zion's guards are cut off, no marvel that Zion's gates lament and mourn, (v. 26.) the enemies having made themselves masters of the city, and the city itself, being desolate, being emptied or sw. pt., shall sit upon the ground, like a disseolate
widow. If sin be harboured within the walls, lamentation and mourning are near her gates.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A threatening of the poverty and scarceness of men, (v. 1.) which ought quite enough have been a fearful picture of the foregoing chapter, to which it has a plain reference. 2. A promise of the restoration of Jerusalem's peace and purity, righteousness and safety, in the days of the Messiah, v. 2. 6. The part of the chapter, where we have the prophecy of a sovereign relief, in reference to the terrors of the law, and the desolations made by sin.

1. And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

It was threatened (ch. iii. 25.) that the mighty men should fall by the sword in war; and it was threatened as a punishment to the women that affected gaiety, and a loose sort of conversation. Now here we have the effect and consequence of that great slaughter of men;

1. That, though Providence has so wisely ordered that, communio amnbus—an average of years, there is nearly an equal number of males and females born into the world, yet through the devastations made by war, there should severely be less of both kinds: this may not be attended as a rebuke of those who are always the pioneers of the children of men, or the first among those who are the first in the transgression, so, to balance that, there are deaths peculiar to men; those by the sword in the high places of the field, which perhaps devoured more than childbed does. Here it is foretold, that such multitudes of men should be cut off, that there should be seven women to one man.

2. That, by reason of the scarcity of men, though marriage should be kept up, for the raising of recruits, and the preserving of the race of mankind upon earth, yet the usual method of it should be quite altered; that whereas men ordinarily, make their court to the women, the women should now take hold of the men, foolishly fearing (as Lot's daughters did, when they saw the ruin of Sodom, and knew that it might be farther than it did) that in a little time there would be none left; (Gen. xix. 31.) and that, whereas women naturally hate to come in sharers with others, seven should now, by consent, become the wives of one man; and that, whereas, by the law, the husband was obliged to provide food and raiment for his wife, (Exod. xxi. 10.) which with many would be the most powerful argument against multiplying wives, these would have the opportunity to find themselves, they will eat bread of their own earning, and wear apparel of their own working; and the man they court shall be at no expense with them, only they desire to be called his wives, to take away the reproach of a single life. They are willing to be wives upon any terms, though ever so unreasonable; and perhaps the rather, because in the reprobation of their husbands, they find a kindess to them to have a husband for their protection.

St. Paul, on the contrary, in the time of distress, thinks the single state preferable, 1 Cor. vii. 26. It were well if this were not introduced here partly as a reflection upon the daughters of Zion, that, notwithstanding the humiliation providences they were under, (ch. iii. 18.) they remained unshamed, and, instead of the reproach of the virginity, the reproach of the husband, if God was contending with them for it, all their care was to get them husbands—that modesty, which is the greatest beauty of the fair sex, was forgotten, and with them the reproach of vice was nothing to the reproach of virginity; a sad symptom of the irrecoverable desolations of virtue.

2. In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left is in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem:

4. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

By the foregoing threatenings, Jerusalem is brought into a very deplorable condition; every thing looks melancholy; there the sun breaks out from behind the cloud; many exceeding great and precious promises we have in these verses, giving assurance of comfort which may be discerned through the troubles, and of happy days which shall come after them. And these certainly point at the kingdom of the Messiah, and the great redemption to be wrought out by him, under the power and type of the restoration of Jerusalem by the reforming reign of Hezekiah after Ahaz, and the return of their captivity in Babylon; to both which it may have some reference, but chiefly to Christ.

It is here promised, as the issue of all these troubles,

1. That God will raise a righteous Branch, which shall produce fruits of righteousness; (v. 3.)

In that day, that same day, at that very time when Jerusalem shall be destroyed, and the Jewish nation extinguished and dispersed, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up; and then shall be the reviving of the church, when every one shall fear the utter ruin of it.

1. Christ himself shall be exalted; he is the Branch of the Lord, the Man, the Branch: it is one of his prophetic names, our Servant, the Branch, (Zech. iii. 8.—xi. 12.) the Branch of righteousness, (Jer. xxiii. 5.—xxxiii. 15.) a Branch out of the stem of Jesse (ch. xi. 1.) and that, as some think, is alluded to when he is called a Nazarene, Matt. vii. 23. Here he is called the Branch of the Lord, because planted by his power, and flourishing to his praise. The ancient Chaldee Paraphrase here reads The Branch of the Messiah of the Lord. He shall be the Beauty, and Glory, and Joy. (1.) He shall himself be advanced to the joy set before him, and the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. He that was a Reproach of men, and whose visage was marred more than any man's, is now, in the upper world, beautiful and glorious, as the sun in his strength, admired and adored by all. (2.) He shall be beautiful and glorious in the esteem of all believers, shall gain an interest in the world, and a name among men, above every name. To them that believe he is precious, he is an Honour, (1 Pet. ii. 7.) the Fairest of ten thousand, (Cant. v. 10.) and altogether glorious. Let us rejoice that he is so, and let him be so to us.
2. His gospel shall be embraced. The gospel is the fruit of the Branch of the Lord; all the graces and comforts of the gospel spring from Christ. But it is called the fruit of the earth, because it sprang up in this world, and was calculated for the present state. And Christ compares himself to corn that grows amongst thistles, that falls into the ground, and dies, and so brings forth much fruit, John xii. 24. The success of the gospel is represented by the earth's yielding her increase, (Ps. cvi. 6.) and the planting of the Christian church is God's sowing it to himself in the earth, Hos. ii. 23. We may understand it of both the persons, and the things, that are the products of the gospel; they shall be excellent and comely, and be very acceptable to them that are escaped of Israel, of that remnant of the Jews, which was saved from perishing with the rest in unbelief, Rom. xi. 6. Note, If Christ be precious to us, his gospel will be so, and all its truths and promises; his church will be so, and all that belong to it. These are the good fruit of the earth, in comparison with which, all other things are but weeds. It will be a good evidence to us, that we are of the chosen remnant, distinguished from the rest that are called Israel, and marked for salvation, if we are brought to see a transcendent beauty in Christ and holiness, and the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. As a type of this blessed day, Jerusalem, after Sennacherib's invasion, and after the destruction of the temple of the Lord; and, he blessed with the fruits of the earth: compare ch. xxxvii. 31, 32. The remnant shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. And if by the fruit of the earth here we understand the good things of this life, we may observe, that those have peculiar sweetness in them to the chosen remnant, who, having a covenant-right to their lot, and a covenant-privilege of the earth, have the Branch of the Lord for their portion. If the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious in our eyes, even the fruit of the earth also will be excellent and comely, because then we may take it as the fruit of the promise, Ps. xxxvii. 16. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

II. That God will reserve to himself a holy seed; (v. 3.) when the generality of those that have a part in the earth shall be cut off, as withered branches, by their own unbelief, yet some shall be left. Some shall remain, some shall still cleave to the church, when its property is altered, and it is become Christian; for God will not quite cast off his people, Rom. xi. 1. There is here and there one that is left: now, 1. This is a remnant according to the election of grace, (as the apostle speaks, Rom. xi. 5.) such as are written among the living, marked in the counsel and foreknowledge of God for life and salvation; written to life, (so the word is,) designed and determined for it unalterably; for What I have written, I have written. Those that are kept alive in killing, dying times, were written for life in the book of Divine Providence: and shall we not suppose those who are reserved to destruction, as much as were written in the Lamb's book of life? Rev. xvii. 8. As many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed, to the salvation of the soul, Acts xiii. 48. Note, All that were written among the living, shall be found among the living, every one; for of all that were given to Christ, he shall lose none. 2. It is a remnant under the dominion of grace; for every one that is saved shall be written among the living; and it is to be found by left, shall be called holy, shall be holy, and shall be accepted of God accordingly. Those only that are holy, shall be left, when the Son of man shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends: and all that are chosen to salvation, are chosen to sanctification. See 2 Thess. ii. 13. Eph. i. 4.

III. That God will reform his church, and will rectify and amend whatever is amiss in it. v. 8. Then the remnant shall be called holy, when the Lord shall have washed away their filth, washed it from among them by cutting off the wicked persons, washed it from within them by purging out the old things. They shall not be called so, till they are in some measure made so. Gospel-times are times of reformation, (Heb. ix. 10.) typified by the reformation in the days of Hezekiah, and that after the captivity, to which this promise relates. Observe, 1. The places and persons to be reformed. Jerusalem, though the holy city, needed reformation: and, being the royal city, the reformation of it would have a good influence upon the whole kingdom. The removers of Zions also must be reformed, the women in a particular manner, whom he had reproved; ch. iii. 16. When they were decked in their ornaments, they thought themselves wondrous clean; but, being proud of them, the prophet calls them their filth, for no sin is more abominable to God than pride: or by the daughters of Zion may be meant the country, towns, and villages, which were related to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, and which needed reformation. 2. The reformation itself; the filth shall be washed away, for wickedness is filthiness, particularly bloodshed, for which Jerusalem was infamous, (2 Kings xxii. 16.) and which defiles the land more than any other sin. Note, The reformation of a city is the cleansing of it; and, as various customs and fashions are suppressed, and the city is decked in more comely attire, so the place is made clean and sweet, which before was a dunghill; and this is not only for its credit and reputation among strangers, but for the comfort and health of the inhabitants themselves. 3. The Author of the reformation; The Lord shall do it: reformation-work is God's work; if any thing be done to purpose, it is he that is doing. But how by the judgment of his providence may the salvation work, and be attended and consumed; but it is by the Spirit of his grace that they are reformed and converted. This is work that is done, not by might, or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, (Zech. iv. 6.) working both upon the sinners themselves that are to be reformed, and upon magistrates, ministers, and others that are to be employed as instruments of reformation, (as the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of understanding.) As a Spirit of judgment, enlightening the mind, enlarging the conscience, as a Spirit of wisdom, guiding us to deal prudently, (Isa. li. 13.) as a discerning, distinguishing Spirit, separating between the precious and the vile. (2.) As a Spirit of burning, quickening and invigorating the affections, and making men zelously affected in a good work. The Spirit works as fire, Mat. iii. 11. An ardent love to Christ and souls, and a flaming zeal against sin, will carry men on with resolution in their endeavours to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. See Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16.

IV. That God will protect his church, and all that belong to it: (v. 5, 6.) when they are purified from the corruption of the old things, they shall no longer be exposed, but God will take a particular care of them; the old things that are sanctified are well fortified, for God will be to them a Guide and a Guard.

1. Their tabernacles shall be defended, v. 5. (1.) Their dwelling-places; the tabernacles of their rest, their own houses, where they worship God, and live, and with their families. That blessing which is theirs, when the more merciful uses of the church are not to be rejection to it, Prov. iii. 33. In the tabernacles of the righteous shall the voice of rejoicing and salvation be, Ps. cxviii. 15. Note, God takes particular cognizance and care of the dwelling-places of his people, of every one of them, the poorest cottage as well as the stately palace. When iniquity is far from the tabernacle, the Almighty shall be its
Defence, Job xxii. 23, 25. (2.) Their assemblies or tabernacles of meeting for religion in worship. No mention is made of a people, for the promise points at a time when not one stone of that shall be left upon another; but all the congregations of Christians, though but two or three meet together in Christ’s name, shall be taken under the special protection of Heaven: they shall no more be scattered, no more disturbed, nor shall any weapon formed against them prosper. Note, We ought to reckon it great mercy, if we have liberty to worship God in public, free from the alarms of the sword of war or persecution.

Now this writ of protection is drawn up, [1.] In a similitude taken from the safety of the camp of Israel, when they marched through the wilderness. God will give to the Christian church as real proofs, though not so sensible of his care of them, as he gave to them then. The Lord will again create a cloud and smokes by day, to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, to enlighten and warm the air, which, in the night, is cold and dark. See Exod. xiii. 21. Neh. ix. 19. This pillar of cloud and fire interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, Exod. xiv. 19. Note, Though miracles are ceased, yet God is the same to the New Testament church, that he was to Israel in the old; the very same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. [2.] In a similitude taken from the outside cover of rams’ skins and badgers’ skins, that was upon the curtains of the tabernacle, as if every dwelling-place of mount Zion and every assembly were as dear to God as that tabernacle was: Upon all the glory shall be a defence, to save it from wind and weather. Note, The church on earth has its covering, its gospel-truths and ordinances, the scriptures and the ministry, the church’s glory; and upon all this glory there is a defence, and ever shall be, for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. If God himself be the Glory in the midst of it, he will himself be a Wall of fire round about it, impenetrable, and immoveable. Grace in the soul is the glory of it, and those that have it, are kept by the power of God as in a most strong hold. 1 Pet. ii. 6.

2. Their tabernacle shall be a defence to them, v. 6. God’s tabernacle was a pavilion to the saints, Ps. xxxvii. 5. But when that is taken down, they shall not want a covert; the divine power and goodness shall be a tabernacle to all the saints, God himself will be their Hiding-place, (Ps. xxxiii. 7.) they shall be at home in him, Ps. xci. 9. He will himself fold them to them shall be punished with famine, v. 8. xxii. 22.) and his name a strong tower. Prov. xxvii. 10. He will be not only a Shadow from the heat in the day-time, but a Covert from storm and rain. Note, In this world we must expect change of weather, and all the inconveniences that attend it; we shall meet with storm and rain in this lower region, and at other times the heat of the day, no less burdensome: but God is a Refuge to his people, in all weathers.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God’s name, shows the people of God their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins, and the judgments which were likely to be brought upon them for their sins; and to this end he draws up a picture under the similitude of an unfruitful vineyard, representing the great favours God had bestowed upon them, their disappointing of his expectations from them, and the rain they had thereby deserved, v. 1. 10. By an enumeration of the sins that did abound among them, with a threatening of punishments that should answer to the sins: 1. Covetousness, and goodness of worldly wealth, v. 8, 10. 2. Rioting, revelling, and drunkenness, (v. 11, 12, 22.) which shall be punished with captivity and all the miseries that attend it, v. 13. 17. 3. Presumption in sin, and defying the justice of God, v. 18. 19. 4. Confounding the distinctions between virtue and vice, and so undermining the principles of religion, v. 20. 5. Self-conceit, v. 21. 6. Perturbing justice; for which, and the other instances of reigning wickedness among them, a great and total desolation is threatened, which shall lay all waste, (v. 24, 25.) and which should be effected by a foreign invasion, (v. 26., 30.) referring perhaps to the havoc made not long after by Sennacherib’s army.

1. NOW will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; 2. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. 3. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. 4. What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes! 5. And now, go to: I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedges thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: 6. And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged: but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. 7. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

See what variety of methods the great God takes to awaken sinners to repentance, by convincing them of sin, and showing them their misery and danger, by reason of it: to this purport he speaks sometimes in plain terms, and sometimes in parables, sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse, as here: We have tried to reason with you, (v. i. 25.) now let us put your case into a poem, inscribed to the honour of my Well-beloved. God the Father dictates it to the honour of Christ his well-beloved Son, whom he has constituted Lord of the vineyard. The prophet sings it to the honour of Christ too, for he is his Well-beloved. The Old Testament prophets were friends of the Bridegroom: Christ is God’s beloved Son, and our beloved Saviour: whatever it may say of the song of the church, must be intended for his praise, even that which (like this) tends to our shame. This parable is put into a song, that it might be the more moving and affecting, might be the more easily learned, and exactly remembered, and the better transmitted to posterity; and it is an exposition of the song of Moses, (Deut. xxxiii.) showing that, what he then foretold, was now fulfilled. Jerem says, Christ, the Well-beloved, did, in effect, sing this mournful song, when he beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it, (Luke xix. 41.) and had reference to it in the parable of the vineyard: (Matt. xxvi. 33.) only here the fruit was in the vine, there in the husbandman. Here is,

1. The great things which God had done for the Jewish church and nation: when all the rest of the
world lay in common, not cultivated by divine revelation, that was his vineyard, they were his peculiar property; his people were his vine; himself; the soil they were planted in was extraordinary; it was a very fruitful hill, the horn of the son of oils; so it is in the margin. There was plenty, a cornucopia and there was dainty, they did there eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and so were furnished with abundance of good things to honour God with in sacrifices and free-will offerings. And in another place it is: "Observe further, what God did for this vineyard: 1. He fenced it; took it under his special protection, kept it night and day under his own eye, lest any should hurt it, ch. xxvii. 2, 3. If they had not themselves thrown down their fence, no intruder could have been made upon them, Ps. cxxv. 2.—cxxx. 4. 2. He gathered the stones out of it, that, as nothing from without might damage it, so nothing within might obstruct its fruitfulness. He offered his grace to take away the stony heart. 3. He planted it with the choicest vine. set up a pure religion among them, gave them a most excellent law, instituted ordinances very proper for the keeping up of their acquaintance with God, Jer. ii. 21. 4. He built a tower in the midst of it, either for defence against enemies, or for the preservation of the vineyard to lodge in; or rather, for the owner of the vineyard to sit in, to take a view of the vines, (Cant. vii. 12.) a summer-house. The temple was this tower, about which the priests lodged, and where God promised to meet his people, and gave them the tokens of his presence among them, and pleasure in them. 5. He made a wine-press thereon, set up his altar, to which the sacrifices, as the fruits of the vineyard, should be brought.

II. The disappointment of his just expectations from them; He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and a great deal of reason he had for that expectation. Note, God expects vineyard-fruit from those that enjoy vineyard-privileges; not leaves only, as Mark xi. 13. A bare profession, though ever so green, will not serve; there must be more than buds and blossoms; good purposes and good beginnings are good things, but not enough, there must be fruit; a good heart and a good life; vineyard-fruit, thoughts and affections, words and actions, agreeable to the Spirit, which is the fatness of the vineyard, (G. d. v. 22, 23.) answerable to the ordinances, which are the dressings of the vineyard, and accepted of God in the wine-press of the soul, according to the season. Such fruit as this God expects from us, grapes, the fruit of the vine, with which they honour God and man; (Judg. xiii. 13.) and his expectations are neither high nor hard, but righteous and very reasonable. Yet see how his expectations are frustrated; it brought forth wild grapes; not only no fruit at all, but bad fruit, worse than none; grapes of Sodom, Deut. xxxii. 32. 1. Wild grapes are the fruits of the corrupt nature; fruit according to the crab-stock, not according to the engrafted branch; from the root of bitterness, Heb. xii. 15. Where grace does not work, corruption will. 2. Wild grapes are hypocritical performances in religion, that look like grapes, but are sour or bitter; and are so far from being pleasing to God, as they stink in his nostrils; Isa. i. 11. Counterfeit grapes are wild grapes. 3. An appeal to themselves, whether, upon the whole, God must not he justified, and they condemned, v. iii. 4. And now the case is plainly stated, v. inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. This implies that God was blamed about it; there was a controversy between them and him, but the equity was so plain on his side, that we could venture to put the decision of the controversy to their own consciences; "Let any inhabitant of Jerusalem, any man of Judah, that has but cause to blame me concerning my vineyard, come and show me, and I will shew him the dealings of my hands." All are sensible the way of God is just, and that he will judge the world aright; and to speak his mind impartially in this matter. Here is a challenge to any man to show, 1. Any instance wherein God had been wanting to them; What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done it? He speaks of the external means of fruitfulness, and such as might be expected from the dresser of a vineyard, from the engrafting of the right stock, and the keeping up the fruits of the vineyard; but there is still some nature of the vine. What ought to have been done more? (so it may be read.) They had every thing requisite for instruction and direction in their duty, for the quickening of them to it, and putting of them in mind of it; no inducements were wanting to persuade them to it, but all arguments were used, proper to work either upon hope or fear; and they had all the opportunities they could desire for the performance of their duty, the new-moons, and the sabbaths, and solemn feasts; they had the scriptures, the lively oracles, a standing ministry in the priests and Levites, beside what was extraordinary in the prophets. No nation had statutes and judgments so righteous. 2. Nor could any tolerable excuse be offered for their walking thus contrary to God; "Wherefore, what reason can be given why it should bring forth wild grapes, when I looked for grapes?" Note, The wickedness of those that profess religion, and enjoy the means of grace, is the most unreasonable, unaccountable thing in the world, and the whole blame of it must lie upon the sinners themselves; if they scorn it, they alone shall bear it, and shall not have a word to say for themselves in the judgment of the great day. God will prove his own ways equal, and the sinner's ways unequal. 4. Their doom read, and a righteous sentence passed upon them for their bad conduct toward God; (v. 3, 6.) And now go to; since nothing can be offered in excuse of the crime, or arrest of the judgment, I will tell you what I am now determined to do to my vineyard. I will be vexed and troubled with it no more; since it will be good for nothing, it shall be good for nothing; in short, it shall cease to be a vineyard, and be turned into a wilderness; the church of the Jews shall be unchurched, their charter shall be taken away, and they shall become "no-ammim—not my people." 1. They shall no longer be distinguished as a peculiar people, but become, in comparison with others, of all nations; and then it will soon be eaten up, and become as bare as other ground. 2. They mingled themselves with the nations, and therefore were justly scattered among them. They shall no longer be protected as God's people, but left exposed. God will not only suffer the wall to go to decay, but he will break it down, will remove all their defences from them; and then they become an easy prey to their enemies, who had long waited for an opportunity to do them a mischief, and will now treat them down, and trample upon them. 3. They shall no longer have the face of a vineyard, the form and shape of a church and commonwealth, but shall be leveled and laid waste. This was fulfilled when Jerusalem for their sakes was ploughed as a field, Mic. iii. 12. No more shall she rejoice among others, nor shall she be "lamented among her neighbours," Mic. iii. 12. But she shall be "digered, and set up by the enemy; and the city shall be shamed, and it shall return to her own people;" Mic. xi. 1. She shall be "buried with her dead;" Mic. vii. 12. She shall be "taken among the heathen, and her sons and daughters shall be reproved;" Jer. xxvii. 11. She shall be "set as a monument of shame to all her neighbours;" Zech. xi. 6.
understanding, all grown over with thorns. 5. That which completes its wo, is, that the dews of heaven shall be held, i.e., that the key of the clouds will command them that they rain no rain upon it; and that alone is sufficient to turn it into a desert. Note, God, in a way of righteous judgment, denies his grace to those that have long received it in vain. The sum of all is, that they who would not bring forth good fruit, should bring forth none. The curse of barrenness is the punishment of the sin of barrenness. A.R.D. 11. This had its accomplishment, in part, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldaens, its full accomplishment in the final rejection of the Jews, and has its frequent accomplishment in the departure of God's Spirit from those persons who have long resisted him, and striven against him, and the removal of his gospel from those places that have long been a reproach to it, while it has been an honour to them. It is no loss to God to lay his vineyard waste; for he can, when he pleases, turn a wilderness into a fruitful field; and when he does thus dismantle a vineyard, it is but as he did by the garden of Eden, which, when man had by sin forfeited his place in, was soon levelled with common soil.

V. The explanation of this parable, or a key to it. 7; where we are told, 1. What is meant by the vineyard of God, the body of the people, incorporated in one church and commonwealth; and what by the vines, the pleasant plants, the plants of God's pleasure, which he had been pleased in, and delighted in doing good to; they are the men of Judah; these he had dealt graciously with, and from them he expected suitable returns. 2. What is meant by the grapes that were expected, and the wild grapes that were procured; they looked for judgment and righteousness, that the people should be honest in all their dealings, and the magistrates should strictly administer justice; this might reasonably be expected among a people that had such excellent laws and rules of justice given them; (Deut. iv. 8.) but it was quite otherwise; instead of judgment there was the cruelty of the oppressors, and instead of righteousness the cry of the oppressed; every thing was carried on in malevolence and noise, and not by equity, and according to the merits of the case. It is said with a people, when wickedness has usurped the place of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. It is very sad with a soul, when, instead of the grapes of humility, meekness, patience, love, and contempt of the world, which God seeks for, there are the wild grapes of pride, passion, discontent, malice, and contempt of God; instead of the grapes of praying and praising, the wild grapes of cursing and swearing, which are a great offence to God. Some of the ancients apply this to the Jews in Christ's time, among whom God looked for righteousness, that they should have received and embraced Christ, but beheld, a cry, that cry, Cruelly him, crucify him.

8. Wo unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! 9. In mine ears, said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth, many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. 10. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of a homer shall yield an ephah. 11. Wo unto them that rise early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! 12. And the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in their feet; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. 13. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge; and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. 14. Therefore he hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. 15. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. 16. But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God, that is holy, shall be sanctified in righteousness. 17. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.

The world and the flesh are the two great enemies that we are in danger of being overpowered by; yet we are in no danger, if we do not ourselves yield to them. Eagerness of the world, and indulgence of the flesh, are the two sins against which the prophet in God's name, here denounces war; these sins abounded then among the men of Judah, and were some of the wild grapes that they brought forth, (v. 4.) for which God threatens to bring ruin upon them; they are sins which we have all need to stand upon our guard against, and dread the consequences of.

I. Here is a wo to those who set their hearts upon the wealth of the world, and place their happiness in that, and increase it to themselves by indirect and unlawful means, (v. 8.) who join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place more for any body to live by them; could they succeed, they would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, would monopolize possessions and prerogatives, and engross all profits and employments to themselves. Not that it is a sin for those who have a house and a field, if they have wherewith to purchase another; but their fault is, 1. That they are inordinate in their desires to enrich themselves, and make it their whole care and business to raise an estate as if they had nothing to do, nothing to seek, nothing to do in this world, but that. They never know when they have enough, but the more they have, the more they would have; and, like the daughters of the horseleech, they cry, Give, give; they cannot enjoy what they have, nor do good with it, being so intent on contriving and studying to make it more. They must have variety of houses, master-houses, and a sumptuous house in their man's house, or field, be convenient to their leases Nadaboth's vineyard to Ahab's, they must have that too, or they cannot be easy. Their fault is, 2. That they are herein careless of others, may, and injurious to them; they would live so as to let nobody live but themselves; so that their insatiable covetings be gratified, they matter not what becomes of all about them: what encroachments they make upon their neighbour's rights, what hardships they put upon those that have power over, or advantage against, or what base and wicked arts they use to heap up treasure to themselves. They would swell so big as to fill all space, and yet are still unsatisfied.

Eccl. v. 10. As Alexander, who, when he landed he had conquered the world, went because he had not another world to conquer: Defuncta terra, non
imperfect avaritiam—If the whole earth were mono-

fossilized, awe or would thirst for more. What, will you be placed alone in the midst of the earth? (so some read it.) Will you be so foolish as to desire it, when we have so much need of the services of others, and of their goodness. Will you be so foolish as to expect that the earth should be forsaken for us, (Job xvi. 4.) when it is by mul-

titudes that the earth is to be replenished? An oppor-
tuer vos solos tanta terra creata est?—Was the wide world created merely for you? Lyra.

Now that which is threatened, as the punishment of this sin, is, that neither the houses nor the fields they were become good, should turn to any other use. for this, Is. xix. 9, 10. God whispered it to the prophet in his car, as he speaks in a like case; (ch. xxix. 14.) It was revealed in mine car by the Lord of hosts; (as God told Samuel a thing in his car, I Sam. ix. 13.) he thought he heard it still sounding in his cars; but he proclaims it as he ought to do, upon the house-
tops, Matt. x. 27. (1.) That the houses they were so well of, should be untenantless, should stand long empty, and so should yield them no rent, and go out of repair: Many houses shall be desolate, the people that should dwell in them being cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, or carried into captivity; or, trade being dead, and poverty coming upon the country like an armed man, those that had been house-keepers, were forced to become lodgers, or shift for them as they could. But now householders would not invite tenants, and (there being a scarcity of tenants) might be taken at low rates, shall stand empty without inhabitants. God created not the earth in vain: he formed it to be inhabi-
ted, ch. xlv. 18. But men's projects are often frustra-
ted, and what they frame, answers not the in-
tention. We have a saying, That fools build houses for what they never may live in, but it becomes no man to live in. God has many ways to empty the most populous cities. (2.) That the fields they were so fond of should be unfruitful; (v. 10.) Ten acres of vineyard shall yield only such a quantity of grapes as will make but one bath of wine, which was about eight gallons; and the seed of an homer, a bushel's sowing of ground, shall yield but an ephah of meal, but half an ephah in a tenth part of an homestead. They are troubled through the barrenness of the ground, or the unsownableness of the weather, they should not have more than a tenth part of their seed again. Note, Those that set their hearts upon the world, will justly be disappointed in their expectations from it.

11. Here is a wo to those that dot upon the plea-
sures and delights of sense, v. 11, 12. Sensuality ruins men as certainly as worldliness and opposi-
tion. As Christ pronounced a wo against those that are rich, so also against those that laugh now, and are full, (Luke vi. 24, 25.) and fare sumptuously,


Observe, 1. Who the sinners are against whom this wo is denounced; (1.) They are such as are given to drink, as husbands and tradesmen do to follow their employ-

ments; as if they were afraid of losing time from which they make it. Make it. They place their hearts upon it, and overcharge themselves with it. They rise early to follow strong drink, as husbandsmen and tradesmen do to follow their employ-

ments; as if they were afraid of losing time from which this is the greatest mispending of time. Whereas commonly they that are drunk, are drunken in the night, when they have despached the work of the day, as the Lord hath said, and given up themselves to the service of the flesh; for they sit at their cups all day, and continue till night, till wine inflame them— inflame their lusts; chambering and wantonness follow upon rioting and drunkenness—a inflame their passions; for who but such have contemtions and wounds without cause? Prov. xxiii. 29—35. They make a perfect trade of drinking

nor do they seek the shelter of the night for this work of darkness, as men ashamed of it, but count it a pleasure to riot in the day-time. See 2 Pet. ii. 13. (2.) They are such as are given to mirth; they have their feasts, and they are so merily disposed, as if they cannot dine or sup without music, musical instruments of all sorts, like David, (Amos vi. 5, like Solomon; (Eccl. vi. 8.) the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, must accompany the wine, that every sense may be gratified to a nicety: they take the timbrel and harp, Job xxii. 12. The use of mu-

sic is lawful in itself; but when it is excessive, when we set our hearts upon it, misspend time in it, so that it crowds our spiritual and divine pleasures, and draws us away from the heart; God then it turns into sin to us. (3.) They are such as are not so much their mind to any thing that is serious; they regard not the work of the Lord, they observe not his power, wisdom, and goodness, in these creatures which they abuse, and subject to vanity, nor the beauty of his providence, in giving them these good things which they make the food and fuel of their lusts. God's judgments have already seized them, and they are under the tokens of his displeasure, and they regard not, they consider not the hand of God in all these things; his hand is lifted up, but they will not see, because they will not disturb them-

selves in their pleasures, nor think what God is doing with them.

2. What the judgments are, which are denounced against them, and in part executed. It is here foretold,

(1.) That they should be disdained; the land should spue out these drunkards; (v. 13.) My peo-
ple (so they called themselves, and were proud of it) are therefore gone into captivity, are as sure to go, as if they were gone already, because they have no knowledge; how should they have knowledge, given up by their excess in drink? how would they use the means and tools of themselves? They set up for wits, but, because they regard not God's controversy with them, nor take any care to make their peace with him, they may truly be said to have no knowledge; and the reason is, because they will have none; they are inconsiderate and wilful, and therefore destroyed for lack of knowledge.

(2.) That they should be impoverished, and come to want that which they had wasted and abused to excess; Even their glory are men of famine, subject to it, and slain by it; and their multitude are dried up with thirst; both the great men and the common people are ready to perish for want of bread and water; this is the effect of the failure of the corn, (v. 10.) for the king himself is served of the field, (v. 9.) and bread and waters are called upon to weep, because the new wine is cut off from their mouth, (Joel i. 5.) and not so much because now they want it, as because, when they had it, they abused it. It is just with God to make men want that for necessity, which they have abused to excess.

(3.) That their wages should be cut off by famine and want; (v. 14.) Therefore he shall have raised himself; Tophet, the common burying-place, proves too little; so many are there to be buried, that they shall be forced to enlarge it: the grave has opened her mouth without measure, never saying, It is enough, Prov. xxx. 15, 16. It may be understood of the place of the damned; luxury and sensuality fill those regions of darkness and horror; there they are terminated, all wars, all gluttons; a god of their belly, Luke xvi. 23. Phil. iii. 19.

(4.) That they should be humbled and abased, and all their honours laid in the dust. This will be done effectually by death and the grave; Their glory shall descend, not only to the earth, but into it; it shall not descend after them, (Ps. xlix. 17.) to stand
him in any stead on the other side death, but it shall die and be buried with them; poor glory, which will thus wither! Did they glory in their numbers? Their multitude shall go down to the pit, Ezek. xxxi. 18.—xxix. 32. Did they glory in the figure they made? Their pomp shall be at an end; their shouts with which they triumphed, and were attended. Did they glory in their might? Death will turn it into mourning; he that rejoices and thereobs, and never knows what it is to be serious, shall go thither where there is weeping and wailing. Thus the mean man and the mighty man meet together in the grave, and under mortifying judgments. Let a man be ever so high, death will bring him low, ever so mean, death will bring him lower; in the prospect of which, the eyes of the lofty shall now be humbled, and becomes those to look low, that most shortly be laid low.

3. What the fruit of these judgments shall be.

(1.) God shall be glorified, y. 16. He that is the Lord of hosts, and the holy God, shall be exalted and sanctified in the judgment and righteousness of these dispensations. His justice must be owned, in bringing these low that exalted themselves; and here they are, y. 17. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner; the meek ones of the earth, who follow the Lamb, who were persecuted, and put into fear by those proud oppressors, shall feed quietly, feed in the green pastures, and there shall be none to make them afraid. See Ezek. xxxiv. 14. When the enemies of the church are cut off, then have the church's rest; they shall feed at their pleasure; so some read it. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in abundant peace. Those shall feed according to their order or capacity; so others reads it; as they are able to hear the word, that bread of life.

(3.) The country shall be laid waste, and become a prey to the neighbours; the waste places of the fat ones, the possessions of those rich men that lived at their ease, those shall be eaten by strangers that were nothing akin to them. In the captivity, the poor of the land were left for dressers and husbandmen, (2 Kings xxv. 12.) these were the lambs, that feed in the pastures of the fat ones, which were laid in common for strangers to eat. When the church of the Jews, those fat ones, was laid waste, their privileges were transferred to the Gentiles, who had been long strangers; and the lambs of Christ's flock were welcome to them.

18. Wo unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope! 19. That say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it! 20. Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21. Wo unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! 22. Wo unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: 23. Which justify the wicked for reward, and (take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! 24. Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. 25. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the bills did tremble, and their carcases were torn in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. 26. And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly. 27. None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: 28. Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: 29. Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it 30. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea; and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow; and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.

Here are,

1. Sins described, which will bring judgments upon a people; and this perhaps is not only a charge drawn up against the men of Judah, who lived at that time, and the particular articles of that charge, though it may relate primarily to them; but it is rather intended for warning to all people, in all ages, to take heed to their sins, as destructive both to particular persons and to communities, and driving men to God's wrath and his righteous judgments.

Those that are here said to be in a woful condition,

1. Who are eagerly set upon sin, and violent in their shalul pursuits; (v. 18.) who draw iniquity with cords of vanity, who take as much pains to take the credit of their wickedness, as those that draw in a team, who put themselves to the stretch for the gratifying of their inordinate appetites, and to humour a base lust, of fer violence to nature itself. They think themselves as sure of compassing their wicked projects, as if they were pulling it to them with strong cart-rope: but they will find themselves disappointed, for they will prove cords of vanity, which will break when they come to any stress; for the righteous Lord will cut in sunder the cords of the wicked, Ps. cx. xiv. 4.

Job iv. 8. Prov. xxii. 8. They are by long custom
and confirmed habits, so harden’d in sin, that they cannot get clear of it: those that sin through infirmity, are drawn away by sin; those that sin presumptuously, draw to it, in spite of the oppositions of Providence and the checks of conscience. Some by sin understand the punishment of sin; they will God’s judgments upon their own heads, as it was with them in the days of old.

2. Who set the justice of God at defiance, and challenge the Almighty to do his worst; (v. 19.) They say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work; this is the same language with that of the scoffers of the last days, who say, Where is the promise of his coming? And therefore it is, that, like them, they draw iniquity with cords of vanity, are violent and perversely walk in the falsehood of their own devices, and make the threefold cursing of the word briers to frighten fools and children. (3.) If God should appear against them, as he has threatened, yet they think themselves able to make their part good with him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he, I Cor. x. 22. "We have heard his word, but it is all talk; let him hasten his work, and shall shift for ourselves well enough." Note, These epithets persist in sin, consider not the power of God’s anger.

3. Who confound and overthrow the distinctions between moral good and evil, who call evil good, and good evil, (v. 20.) who not only live in the omission of that which is good, but condemn it, argue against it, and, because they will not practice it themselves, run it down in others, and fasten invidious epithets upon it; they not only do that which is evil, but justify it, and applaud it, and recommend it to others as safe and good. Note, (1.) Virtue and piety are good, for they are light and sweet, they are pleasant and right; but sin and wickedness are evil, they are darkness, all the fruit of ignorance and mistake, and will be bitterness in the latter end. (2.) These do a great deal of wrong to God, and re judge and cast out his ways amongst the souls of others, who missee present these, and put false colours upon them, who call drunkenness good fellowship, and covetousness good husbandry, and, when they persecute the people of God, think they do him good service, and, on the other hand, who call seriousness ill-natured, and sober singularity ill-breeding, who say all manner of evil falsely concerning the ways of godliness, and do what they can to form in men’s minds prejudices against them; and this in defiance of evidence as plain and convincing as that of sense, by which we distinguish, beyond contradiction, between light and darkness, and that which to the taste is sweet and bitter.

4. Who, though they are guilty of such gross mistakes as these, have a great opinion of their own judgments; and yet, with all their wisdom, and what they think their understanding; (v. 21.) they are wise in their own eyes; they think themselves able to discover and to make the reproofs and convictions of God’s word, and to evade and elude both the searches and the reach of his judgments; that they can outwit Infinite Wisdom, and countertermine Providence itself. Or, it may be taken more generally; God resists them, those particular arguments are rejected of their own wisdom, and lean to their own understanding; such must become fools, that they may be truly wise, or else, at their end, they shall appear to be fools before all the world.

5. Who gloried in it as a great accomplishment, that they were able to bear a great deal of strong liquor without being overcome by it; (v. 22.) Who are mighty to drink wine, and use their strength and vigour, not in the service of their country, but in the service of their lusts. Let drunkards know from this scripture, that, (1.) They ungratefully abuse the daily strength, which God has given them for good purposes, and thereby weaken it. (2.) It will not excuse them from the guilt of drunkenness, that they can drink hard, and yet keep their feet. (3.) Those who boast of their drinking down others, glory in their shame. (4.) How light soever men make of their drunkenness, it is a sin which will certainly lay them open to the wounds and shame of the law.

6. Who, as judges, perverted justice, and went counter to all the rules of equity, v. 23. This followed upon the former; they drink, and forget the law, (Prov. xxxi. 5.) and err through wine, (ch. xxxvii. 7.) and take bribes, that they may have wherewithal to maintain their luxury. They justify the wicked for reward, and find some pretence or other to clear him from his guilt, and shelter him from the punishment of the law; and, through them, transgressors buy their liberty, and take away their righteousness from them, overrule their pleas, deprive them of the means of clearing up their innocency, and give judgment against them. In causes between man and man, might and money would at any time prevail against right and justice; and he who was ever so plainly in the wrong, with a small bribe would carry the case, and recovers costs. In criminal causes, though the prisoner ever so plainly appeared to be guilty, yet, for a reward, they would acquit him; if he were innocent, yet, if he did not feem them well, way, if they were fee’d by the malicious prosecutor, or they themselves had spleen against him, they would condemn him.

11. The judgments described, which these sins would bring upon them. Let not these expect to live easily, who live thus wickedly; for the righteous God will take vengeance, v. 24—30. Where we may observe,

1. How complete this ruin will be, and how necessarily and unavoidably it will follow upon their sins. He had compared this people to a vine, (v. 7.) well-fixed, and which, it was hoped, would yield the best fruit. But when the Lord searched it, and perverted it, it was as a tree in ruins. The rewards it was received in vain, and then the root became rottenness, being dried up from beneath, and the blossom would of course blow off as dust, as a light and worthless thing, Job xviii. 16. Sin weakens the strength, the root, of a people, so that they are easily rooted up; it defaces the beauty, the blossoms, of a people, and takes away the hopes of fruit, the sin of the lustfulness is punished with the plague of unfruitfulness. Sinners make themselves as stubble and chaff, combustible matter, proper fuel to the fire of God’s wrath, which then, of course, devours and consumes them, as the fire devours the stubble, and nobody can hinder it, or cares to hinder it. Chaff is consumed, unhelpt and unpitied.

2. How just the ruin will be: Because they have corrupted; (v. 25.) because they have cast away the fruitfulness, and God does not reject men for every transgression of his law and word; but, when his word is despised, and his law cast away, what can they expect, but that God should utterly abandon them?

3. Whence this ruin should come: (v. 25.) it is destruction from the Almighty. (1.) The justice of God appoints it; for that is the anger of the Lord.
which is kindled against his people, his necessary vindication of the honour of his holiness and authority. (2.) The power of God effects it; he hath stretched forth his hand against them; that hand which had many a time been stretched out for them against their enemies, is now stretched out against them, at full length, and in its full vigour; and who knows the power of his anger? Whether they are sensible of it or not, it is God that has smitten them, has blasted their vine, and made it wither.

3. The consequences and continuance of this ruin. When God comes forth in wrath against a people, the hills tremble, fear seizes even their great men, who are strong and high; the earth shakes under men, and is ready to sink; and as this seems dreadful, (what does more so than an earthquake?) so what sight can be more frightful than the carcasses of men torn with dogs, or thrown as dung (so the margin reads) in the midst of the streets? This intimates that great multipudes should be slain, not only soldiers in the field of battle, but the inhabitants of their cities put to the sword in cold blood, and that the survivors should neither have hands nor hearts to bury them. This is very dreadful, and yet such is the merit of sin, that, for all this, God's anger is not turned from them. All this is foretold, as if it were written any of the stabbings and chaff be for it; and his hand, which he stretched forth against his people to smite them, because they do not by prayer take hold of it, nor by reformation submit themselves to it, is stretched out still.

3. The instruments that should be employed in bringing this ruin upon them; it should be done by the incursion of a foreign enemy, that should immense waste; no particular enemy is named, and therefore we are to take it as a prediction of all the several judgments of this kind which God brought upon the Jews, Sennacherib's invasion soon after, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans first, and at last by the Romans; and I think it is to be looked upon also as a threatening of the like desolation of those countries which harbour and countenance those sins mentioned in the foregoing verses: it is an exposition of those woes.

When God designs the ruin of a provoking people,

(1.) He can send a great way off for instruments to be employed in it; he can raise forces from afar, and summon them from the end of the earth to attend his service, v. 5. Those who know him most are most likely to be chosen to fulfill his counsel, when, by reason of their distance, they can scarcely be supposed to have any ends of their own to serve. If God set up his standard, he can incline men's hearts to enlist themselves under it, though perhaps they know not why or wherefore. When the Lord of hosts is pleased to make a general muster of the forces he has at his command, he has a great army in an instant, fez. 11. No, (1.) Those who will do God's work must not loiter, must not linger, nor shall they when his time is come.

(2.) He can make them come into the service with incredible expedition; Behold, they shall come with speed. (2.)[1] Those who defy God's judgments, will be ashamed of their insolence when it is too late; they said scornfully, (v. 19.) Let him make speed, let him hasten his work, and they shall find, to their terror and confusion, that he will; in other words, Behold, they are come.

(2.) He can employ them on the service with amazing readiness and fury. This is described here in very elegant and lofty expressions, v. 27—

30. [1.] Though their marches be very long, yet none among them shall be weary, so desirous shall they be to engage, that they shall forget their weariness, and make no complaints of it. [2.] Though the way be rough, and perhaps embarrassed by the usual policies of war, yet none among them shall stumble, but all the difficulties in their way shall easily be got over. [3.] Though they be forced to keep constant march, none shall slumber, but their intent shall be upon their work, in prospect of having the plunder of the city for their pains. [4.] They shall not desire any rest or relaxation; they shall not put off their clothes, nor loose the girdle of their loins, but shall always have their belts on, and swords by their sides. [5.] They shall not meet with the least hindrance to retard their march, or oblige them to halt; not a foot of ground shall be broken, which they must stay to mend, as Josh. ix. 13. [6.] Their arms and ammunition shall all be fixed, and in good posture; their arrows sharp, to wound deep, and all their bows bent, none unstrung, for they expect to be seen in action. [7.] Their horses and chariots of war are all fit for service; their horses so strong, so hardly, that their hoofs shall be like flint, far from being bowed or made tender, by their long march; and the wheels of their chariots not broken, or battered, or out of repair, but swift like a whirlwind, turning round so strongly upon their axle-trees. [8.] All the soldiers shall be bold and daring; (v. 29.) their roaring, or shouting, before a battle, shall be like a lion, who with his roaring animates himself, and terrifies all about him. They who would not hear the voice of God shall hear the voice of his prophets, and shall say they will roar like the roaring of the sea in a storm; it rears, and threatens to swallow up, as the limb rars, and threatens to tear in pieces. [9.] There shall not be the least prospect of relief or succour; the enemy shall come in like a flood, and there shall be none to lift up a standard against him; he shall seize the prey, and none shall deliver it, we shall be able to deliver it, nay, none shall so much as dare to attempt the deliverance of it, but shall give it up for lost. Let the distressed look which way they will, every thing appears dismal; for if God bring upon us, how can any creature smite? First, Look round about, for this hand of mercy shall be a hand of light, and the joy of the whole earth, and behold, darkness and sorrow, all frightful, all mourning, nothing hopeful. Secondly, Look up to heaven, and there the light is darkened, where one would expect to have found it. If the light is darkened in the heavens, how great is that darkness! If God hide his face, no marvel the heavens hide theirs, and appear gloomy, Job xxxix. 29. It is our wisdom, by keeping a good conscience, to keep all clear between us and heaven, that we may have light from above, when clouds and darkness are round about us.

CHAP. VI.

Hitherto, it should seem, Isaiah had prophesied as a can didate, having only a virtual and implicit commission but here we have him (if I may so speak) solemnly and dainly, and set apart to the prophetic office by a more express explicit commission, and in his hands. Perhaps, having seen little success of his ministry, he began to think of giving it up; and therefore God saw fit to renew his commission here in this chapter, in such a manner as might elevate and encourage his zeal. He employs the same style of operation of it, though he seemed to labour in vain. In this chapter, we have, I. A very awful vision which Isaiah saw of the glory of God, (v. 1—4.) the terror it put him into, (v. 5—6.) and the relief given him against that terror by an assurance of the pardon of his sins, v. 6, 7. II. A very awful com-
mission which Isaiah received to go as a prophet, in God's name, (v. 8,) by his preaching to harden the unpenitent in sin, and riper the riper; (v. 9,) and to voice the reproofs of the mouth of the rest, of a remnant, v. 13. And it was as to an evangelical prophet, that these things were show-
ed him, and said to him.

1. In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. 3. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. 4. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

The vision which Isaiah saw when he was, as is said of Samuel, established to be a prophet of the Lord, (1 Sam. iii. 20.) was intended, 1. To confirm his faith, that he might himself be abundantly satisfied with the truth of those things which should afterwvards be made known to him. Thus God opened the communications of himself to him: but such visions needed not to be afterward repeated, upon every revelation. Thus God appeared at first as a God of glory to Abraham, (Acts vii. 2.) and to Moses, Exod. iii. 2. Ezekiel's prophecies, and St. John's, begin with visions of the divine glory. 2. To sway upon his affections, that he might be possessed of such a reverence of God, as would both quicken him, and fix him, to his service. They who are to teach others the knowledge of God, ought to be well acquainted with him themselves.

The vision is dated, for the greater certainty of it; it was in the year that king Uzziah died, who had reigned, for the most part, as prosperous and well as any of the kings of Judah, and reigned very long, above fifty years: about the time that he died, Isaiah saw this vision of God upon a throne; for when the breath of princes goes forth, and they return to their earth, this is our comfort, that the Lord shall reign for ever, Ps. cxxxvi. 3, 4, 10. Israel's king dies, but Israel's God still lives. From the mortality of great and good men, we should take occasion to look up with confidence of faith to the King eternal, immor-
tal. King Uzziah died under a cloud, for he was shut up as a leper till the day of his death: as the lives of princes have their periods, so their glory is often eclipsed; but as God is everlasting, so his glory is everlasting. King Uzziah dies in a hospital, but the King of kings still sits upon his throne.

What the prophet here saw is revealed to us, that he might have faith in the things which are fixed in the future, and be enabled, as in a glass, to behold the glory of the Lord: let us turn aside therefore, and see this great sight with humble reverence.

1. See God upon his throne, and that throne high and lifted up, not only above other thrones, as it transcends them, but over other thrones, as it rules and commands them. Isaiah saw not Jehovah—there was one that had seen that (no man has seen that, or can see it,) but Adonai—his dominion; he saw the Lord Jesus; so this vision is explained, (John xii. 41.) that Isaiah now saw Christ's glory, and spake of him, which is an incontrovertible proof of the divinity of our Saviour. He it is, who, when, after his resurrection, he sat down on the right hand of God, did but sit down where he was before, John xvii. 5. See the rest of the Eternal Mind: Isaiah saw the Lord sitting, Ps. xxix. 10. See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch; he sits upon a throne, a throne of glory, before which we must worship, a throne of government, under which we must submit. There is no throne in the world, to which we may condescend.

This throne is high, and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

2. See his temple, his church on earth, filled with manifestations of his glory. His throne being erected at the door of the temple, as princes sat in judgment at the gates, (v. 3.) his train, the skirts of his robes, filled the temple, the whole world; for it is above the earth's horizon, and as such it fills the temple, so the earth is his footstool; or, rather, the church, which is filled, enriched, and beautified, with the tokens of God's special presence.

3. See the bright and blessed attendants on his throne, in and by whom his glory is celebrated, and his government served; (v. 2.) Above the throne, as it were hovering about it, or nigh to the throne, bowing before it, with an eye to it, the seraphim stood, the holy angels, who are called seraphims—burners; for he makes his ministers a flaming fire, (Ps. civ. 4.) they burn in love to God, and zeal for his glory against sin, and he makes use of them as instruments of his wrath, when he is a consuming Fire to his enemies. Whether they were only two or four, or (as I rather think) an innumerable company of angels, who had each of them six wings, Exod. xvi. 11. Note, It is the glory of the angels, that they are seraphim, have heat proportionable to their light, have abundance, not only of divine knowledge, but of holy love.

Special notice is taken of their wings, (and of no other part of their appearance,) because of the use they made of them; which is designed for instruction to us. They had each of them six wings, not extended upward, (as those whom Ezekiel saw, ch. i. 11.) but, 1. Four were made use of for covering, as the wings of a bird, (for we are) sitting, are; with the two upper wings, next the head, they covered their faces; and with the two lower wings they covered their feet, or lower parts. This bekeaks their great humility and reverence in their attendance upon God, for he is greatly feared in the assembly of those kings, Ps. lv. 7. They not only cover their feet, these members of the body which are least honorable, (1 Cor. xii. 23.) but even their faces; though angels' faces, doubtless, are much finer than those of the children of men, (Acts vi. 15.) yet, in the presence of God, they cover them, because they cannot bear the dazzling lustre of the divine glory, and because, being conscious of an infinite distance from the divine perfection, they are ashamed to show their faces before the holy God, who charges even his angels with folly, if they should offer to vie with him, Job iv. 18. If angels be thus reverent in their attendance on God, with what godly fear should we approach his throne! Else we do not the will of God as the angels do it. Moses, when he went from the face of the Lord and took the vail off his face, 2 Cor. iii. 18. 2. Two were made use of for flight; when they are sent on God's errands, they fly swiftly, (Dan. ix. 21.) more swiftly with their own wings than if they flew on the wings of the wind. This teaches us to do the work of God with cheerfulness and expedition. Do angels come upon the wing from heaven, to minister to the earth, and shall not men soar upon the wing from earth to heaven, to share with them in their glory? Luke xx. 36.

IV. Hear the anthem, or song of praise, which the angels sing to the honour of him that sits on the throne, v. 3. Observe, 1. How this song was sung; with zeal and fervency they cried aloud; and with unanimity they cried one to another, or with one another; they sang alternately, but in concert, and
without the least jarring voice to interrupt the harmony. 2. What the song was; it is the same with that which is sung by the four living creatures, Rev. iv. 8. Note. (1.) Praising God always was, and will be, to eternity, the work of heaven, and the constant employment of blessed spirits above, Ps. lxxxiv. 4. (2.) The church above is the same in its praises; there is no change of times, or notes, there.

Two things the seraphim here give God the praise of: [1.] His infinite perfections in himself. Here is one of his most glorious titles praised; he is the Lord of hosts, of their hosts, of all hosts; and one of his most glorious attributes, his holiness, without which his being the Lord of hosts, or, (as it is in the parallel, the Lord God Almighty,) could not be, so much as it is, the matter of our joy and praise; for power, without purity to guide it, would be a terror to mankind. None of all the divine attributes are celebrated in scripture so as this is; God's power was spoken twice, (Ps. lxi. 11.) but his holiness thrice, Holy, holy, holy. This speaks, First, The zeal and fervency of the angels, in venerating God, was as much as could be expected of them, and therefore repeat the same again. Secondly, The particular pleasure they take in contemplating the holiness of God; this is a subject they love to dwell upon, to harp upon, and are loath to leave. Thirdly, The superlative excellency of God's holiness above that of the purest creatures. He is holy, thrice holy, infinitely holy, originally, perfectly, and eternally, so. For He may believe there are three persons in the Godhead, Holy Father, Holy Son, and Holy Spirit; (for it follows, (v. 8.) Who will go for us?) or, perhaps, to that which was, and is, and is to come; for that title of God's honour is added to this song, Rev. iv. 8. Some make the angels here to applaud the equity of that sentence which God was now about to pronounce upon the Jewish nation. Herein he was, and is, and will be, holy; his ways are equal. [2.] The manifestation of these to the children of men; the earth is full of his glory, of the glory of his power and purity; for he is holy in all his works, Ps. cxliv. 17. The Jews thought the glory of God should be confined to their land; but it is here intimated, that, in gospel-times, (which are pointed to in this chapter,) the glory of God should fill all the earth; the glory of his holiness which is in his person, and of his other attributes; this, then, filled the temple, (v. 1.) but, in the latter days, the earth shall be full of it. V. Observe the marks and tokens of terror with which the temple was filled, upon this vision of the divine glory, v. 4. 1. The house was shaken; not only the door, but even the posts of the door, which were firmly fixed, moved at the voice of God, who called to judgment, (Ps. l. 4.) at the voice of the angel, who praised him. There are voices in heaven sufficient to drown all the noises of the many waters in this lower world, Ps. xciii. 3, 4. This violent concussion of the temple was an indication of God's wrath and displeasure against the people for their sins; it was an earnest of the destruction of it and the city, by the Lord at the first, and afterwards by the Romans, and it was designed to strike an awe upon us. Shall walls and posts tremble before God, and shall not we tremble? 2. The house was darkened; it was filled with smoke, which was as a cloud spread upon the face of his throne; (Job xxvi. 9.) we cannot take a full view of it, nor order our speech concerning it, by reason of darkness. In the temple above there will be no smoke, but every thing will be seen clearly; there God dwells in light. Here he makes darkness his pavilion, 2 Chron. vi. 1.

5. Then said I, Wo is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for nine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. 6. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; 7. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me.

Our curiosity would lead us to inquire further concerning the seraphim, their songs, and their services; but here we leave them, and must attend to what passed between God and his prophet; secret things belong not to us, the secret things of the world of spirits. These things revealed the power of the prophets, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

I. The consternation that the prophet was put into by the vision which he saw of the glory of God; (v. 5.) Then said I, Wo is me! I should have said, "Blessed art thou, who hast been thus highly favoured, highly honoured, and dignified, for a time, that this glory of this world of spirits, things revealed to the prophets, which concern the administration of God's kingdom among men. Now here we have,

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new; for the sinfulness of sin is its contrariety to the holy nature of God, and, upon that account, especially, it should appear both hateful and frightful to us. The impurity of our lips ought to be the grief of our souls, for by our words we shall be justified or condemned. (2.) That we dwell among those who are so too. We have reason to lament it, that not we ourselves only are polluted, but that the nature and race of mankind are so, the disease is hereditary and epidemical; which is so far from lessening our guilt, that it should rather increase our grief, especially considering that we have not done what we might have done for the cleansing of the pollution of other people's lips; no, we have rather, in fear of God, have reason to be abused, as Joseph in Egypt learned the courtier's oath, Gen. xlii. 16. "I dwell in the midst of a people, who by their impudent sinnings are pulling down desolating judgments upon the land, which I, who am a sinner, too justly may expect to be involved in."

2. What gave occasion for these sad reflections at this time; Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. He saw God's sovereignty to be incontestable, he is the King; and his power irresistible, he is the Lord of hosts: these are comfortable truths to God's people, and yet they ought to strike an awe upon us. Note, These are such good words, and comfortable words, with which the angel answered him, v. 6, 7. One of the seraphim immediately flew to him, to purify him, and so to pacify him. Note, 1. God has strong consolations ready for holy mourners: they that humbly assist themselves in penitential shame and fear shall soon be encouraged and exalted; they that are struck down with the visions of God's glory, shall soon be raised up again with the visits of his grace; he that tears will heal. 2. Angels are ministering spirits for the good of the saints, for their spiritual good. Here was one of the seraphim dispatched, who, by attending on the throne of God's glory, to be a messenger of his grace to a good man; and so well pleased was he with the office that he came flying to him. To our Lord Jesus himself, in his agony, there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him, Luke xxii. 43.

Here is, (1.) A comfortable sign given him of the purging away of his sin. The seraph brought a live coal from the altar, and touched his lips with it: not to hurt them, but to heal them; not to cantelize, but to cleanse them; for there were purifications by fire, as well as by water, and the filth of Jerusalem was purged by the spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. The blessed Spirit works as fire, Matt. iii. 11. The seraph, being himself kindled with a divine fire, put life into the prophet, to make him z Điểm chung, for the way to purge the lips from the uncleanness of sin, is, to fire the soul with the love of God. This live coal was taken off from the altar, either the altar of incense, or that of burnt-offerings; for they had both of them fire burning on them continually. Nothing is powerful to cleanse and comfort the soul, but what is taken from Christ's satisfaction, and the intercession he ever lives to make in the virtue of that satisfaction. It must be a coal from his altar, that must put life into us, and be our peace; it will not be done with strange fire.

(2.) An explication of this sign. Lo, this hath touched thy lips, to assure him of that the iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. The guilt of thy sin is removed by pardoning mercy, the guilt of thy tongue-sins; thy corrupt disposition to sin is removed by renewing grace; and therefore nothing can hinder thee from being accepted with God as a worshipper, in concert with the holy angels, or from being employed for God as a messenger to the world. Those only who are the fittest for God should speak by us, if we never heard him speaking to us, or that we should be accepted as the mouth of others to God, if we never spoke to him heartily for ourselves? Observe here,

1. The counsel of God concerning Isaiah's mission. God is here brought in, after the manner of men, deliberating and advising with himself; What shall I send? Whom shall I send? for us? God needs not either to be counselled by others, or to consult with himself, he knows what he will do; but thus would he show us that there is a counsel in his whole will, and teach us to consider our ways, and particularly, that the sending forth of ministers is a work not to be done but upon mature deliberation.

Observe, (1.) Who it is that is consulting; it is the Lord; God in his glory, whom he saw upon the throne high and lifted up. It puts an honour upon the ministry, that, when God would send a prophet to speak in his name, he appeared in all the glories of the upper world: ministers are the ambassadors of the King of kings; how mean soever they are, he who sends them is great; it is God in three persons, three persons he wills for. As Gen. i. 26. Let us make man—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; they all concur, as in the creating, so in the redeeming, and governing, of man. Ministers are ordained in the same name into which all Christians are baptized.

(2.) What the consultation is; Whom shall I send? And who will go? Some think it refers to the particular message of wrath against Israel, v. 9, 10. But who will be willing to go on such a marvellously grand, and on which they will go in the bitterness of their souls? Ezek. iii. 14. But I rather take it more largely, for all those messages which he was intrusted to deliver, in God's name, to that people, in which that hardening work was by no means the primary intention, but a secondary effect of them, 2 Cor. iii. 16. Whom shall I send? Intimating that the business was such as required a chosen and well-accomplished messenger, Jer. xlii. 19. God now appeared, attended with holy angels, and yet asks, Whom shall I send? For he would send them a prophet from among their brethren, Heb. ii. 5. Note, [1.] It is the unspeakable favour of God to us, that he is pleased to send us his mind by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, and who, in themselves concerned in the messages they bring
They are workers together with God, who are sinners and sufferers together with us. [3.] It is a rare thing to find one who is fit to go for God, and to carry his messages to the children of men; Whom shall I send? Who is sufficient? Such a degree of courage for God, and concern for the souls of men, as is necessary to make a man faithful, and withal such an insight into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as is necessary to make a man skilful, are seldom to be met with. Such an interpreter of the mind of God is one of a thousand, Job xxxiii. 23. [3.] None are allowed to go for God but those who are sent by him; he will own none but those whom he appoints, Rom. x. 15. It is Christ's work to put men into the ministry, 1 Tim. i. 1; and it is his own. Then said I, Here am I, send me. He was to go on a melancholy errand; the office seemed to go a begging, and every body declined it, and yet Isaiah offered himself to the service. It is an honour to be singular in appearing for God, Judges v. 7. We must not say, 'I would go, if I thought I should have good success'; but, 'I will go, and leave the success to God; here am I, send me.' Isaiah had been himself in a melancholy case, (5.) full of doubts and fears; but now that he had the assurance of the pardon of his sin, the clouds were blown over, and he was fit for service, and forward to it. What he says bespeaks, (1.) His readiness; 'Here am I; a volunteer, not pressed into the service.' Behold me; so the word is. God says to us, Behold me, (ch. lxv. 1.) and, Here am I, (ch. lxvi. 9.) even before we call; let he do call. (2.) His resolution; 'Here I am, ready to encounter the greatest difficulties. I have set my face as a flint.' Compare this with ch. l. 4—7. (3.) His referring himself to God; 'Send me whither thou wilt; make what use thou pleasest of me. Send me; Lord, give me commission and full instruction; send me, and then, no doubt, thou wilt stand by me.' It is a great comfort to those whom God sends, that they go for God, and may therefore speak in his name, as having authority; and be assured that he will bear them out.

9. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. 10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. 11. Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate; 12. And the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. 13. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a tei-tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them when they cast their leaves, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.

God takes Isaiah at his word, and here sends him on a strange errand, to foretell the ruin of his people; and even to express it for God, to prophesy that which, by their abuse of it, would be to them a contrary unto death unto death. And this was to be a type and figure of the state of the Jewish church, in the days of the Messiah, when they should obstinately reject the gospel, and should, therefore, be rejected by God. These verses are quoted in part, or referred to, six times in the New Testament; which intimates, that, in gospel-times, these spiritual judgments would be most frequently inflicted; and though they make the least noise, and come not with observation, yet they are of all other the most dreadful. Isaiah is here given to understand these four things:

1. That the generality of the people to whom he was sent, would turn a deaf ear to his preaching, and wilfully shut their eyes against all the discoveries of the mind and will of God he had to make to them; (v. 9.) 'Go, and tell this people, this foolish nation, how stupid and sotish they are.' Isaiah must preach to them, and they will hear him indeed, but that is all; they will not heed him, they will not understand him, they will not take any pains, nor use that application of mind which is necessary to the understanding of him; they are prejudiced against that which is the true intent and meaning of what he says, and therefore they will not understand him, or pretend they do not. They see indeed; (for the vision is made plain on tables, so that he who runs may read it;) but they perceive not their own concern in it; it is to them as a tale that is told. Note, There are many who hear the sound of God's word, but do not feel the power of it.

2. That forasmuch as they would not be made better by his ministry, they should be made worse by it; they that were wilfully blind, should be judicially blinded; (v. 10.) 'They will not understand or perceive thee, and therefore shall be instrumental to make their heart fain, senseless, and sensined, and so to make their ears yet more heavy, and to shut their eyes the closer; so that, at length, their recovery and repentance will become utterly impossible; they shall no more see with their eyes the danger they are in, the time they are upon the brink of, or the way of escape from it; they shall no more hear with their ears the warnings and instructions that are given them, nor understand with their heart the things that belong to their peace, so as to be converted from the error of their ways, and thus be healed.' Note. (1.) The conversion of sinners is the healing of them, (2.) Right understanding is necessary to conversion; (3.) God, sometimes, in a way of righteous judgment, gives men up to blindness of mind and strong delusions, because they would not receive the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. (4.) Even the word of God oftentimes proves a means of doing this. The evangelical prophet himself makes the heart of this people fat, not only by pronouncing the sentence upon them, in God's name, and seals them under it, but as his preaching had a tendency to it, rocking some asleep in security, to whom it was a lovely song, and making others more outrageous, to whom it was such a reproach, that they were not able to hear it. Some looked upon the word as a privyiece, and their convictions were smothered by it; (Jer. vii. 4.) others not to be put out, nor to be abated, and their corruptions were exasperated by it.

3. That the consequence of this would be their utter ruin, v. 11, 12. The prophet had nothing to object against the justice of this sentence, nor does he refuse to go upon such an errand, but asks, 'Lord, how long?' (an abrupt question.) 'Shall it always be thus? Must I and other prophets, at all times labor for God, with this sentence upon them, in God's name, and live in constant danger, until it be never better?' Or, (as should seem by the answer.) 'Lord, what will it come to at last? What will it be in the end here?' In answer to which, he was told that it should issue in the final destruction.
of the Jewish church and nation. When the word of God, especially the word of the gospel, has been thus abused by them, they shall be unchurched, and, consequently, undone. Their cities shall be uninhabited, and their country-houses too; the land shall be untilled, desolate with desolation, as it is in the desert. The people who should replenish the habitations and cultivate the ground, being all cut off by sword, famine, or pestilence, and those who escape with their lives being removed far away into captivity, so that there shall be a great and general forsaking in the midst of the land; that populous country shall become desert, and that glory of all lands shall be abandoned. Note, Spiritual judgments bring losses upon persons and places. This was in part fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, when the land, being left desolate, enjoyed her sabbaths seventy years; but the foregoing predictions being so expressly applied in the New Testament to the Jews in our Saviour's time, doubtless this point at the destruction of that people by the Romans, in which it had a complete accomplishment; and the effects of it that people and that land remain under to this day.

4. That yet a remnant should be reserved to be the monuments of mercy, v. 13. This was so in the last destruction of the Jewish nation; (Rom. xi. 5.) At this present time there is a remnant, for so it was written, ch. vii. 3. There is a certain number, but a very small number, in comparison with the multitude that shall perish in their unbelief; it is that which under the law, was God's proportion; they shall be consecrated to God as the tithes were, and shall be for his service and honour. Concerning this tithe, this saved remnant, we are here told, (1.) That they shall return, (ch. vii. 3.) their sin shall be acknowledged, and shall return out of captivity to their own land. God will turn them and they shall be turned. (2.) That they shall be eaten, shall be accepted of God, as the tithe was, which was meat in God's house, Mal. iii. 10. The saving of this remnant shall be meat to the faith and hope of those that wish well to God's kingdom. (3.) That they shall be like a timbrel in the hands of him, which has life, though it has no leaves; as a tallow-candle, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, even then when they cast their leaves: so this remnant, though they may be stript of their outward prosperity, and share with others in common calamities, yet they shall recover themselves as a tree in the spring, and flourish again; though they fall, they shall not be utterly cut down, there is hope of a tree, though it be cut down, that it will sprout again, Job xiv. 7. (4.) That this distinguished remnant shall be the stay and support of the public interests: the holy seed in the soul is the substance of the man; a principle of grace, reigning in the heart, will keep life there; he that is born of God, has his seed remaining in him, 1 John iii. 9. So also the holy seed in the land of the Jews, kept alive in religion, being one by one dissolved, and bears up the falloils of it, Ps. Ixxv. 3. See ch. i. 9. Some read the foregoing clause with this, thus: As the support at Shallecheth is in the elms and the oaks, so the holy seed is the substance thereof; as the trees that grow on either side of the causey (the raised way, or terrace-walk, that leads from the king's palace to the temple, (1 Kings vii. 3.) the gate of Shallecheth, 1 Chron. xxv. 16.) support the causey by keeping up the earth, which would otherwise be crumbling away; so the small residue of religious, serious, praying, people, are the support of the state, and help to keep things together, and save them from going to decay. Some make the holy seed to be Christ; the Jewish nation was therefore saved from utter ruin, because out of it, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come, Rom. ix. 5. Destroy it not, for that blessing was in it, (6.) xxxv. 8.) and when that blessing was come, it was soon destroyed. Now the consideration of this is designed for the support of the prophet in his work. Though far the greater part should perish in their unbelief, yet so some of his word should be a savour of life unto life. Ministers do not wholly lose their labour, if they be but instrumental to save one poor soul.

CHAP. VII.

This chapter is an occasional sermon, in which the prophet sings both of mercy and judgment to those that did not perceive or understand either; he piped unto them, but they danced not; mourned unto them, but they wept not. Here is, 1. The condemnation that Ahaz was upon an attempt upon the confederate forces of Syria and Israel against Jerusalem, v. 1, 2. II. The assurance which God, by the prophet, sent him for his encouragement, that the attempt should be defeated, and Jerusalem should be preserved, v. 3, 9. III. The confirmation of this by a sign which God gave to Ahaz, when he refused to ask one, referring to Christ, and our redemption by him, v. 10, 16. IV. A threatening of the great desolation that God would bring upon Ahaz and his kingdom, by the Assyrians, notwithstanding their escape from this present storm, because they went on still in their wickedness, v. 17, 25. And this is written both for our comfort and for our admonition.

1. AND it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up towards Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. 2. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederated with Ephraim: and his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. 3. Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field: 4. And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. 5. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 6. Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: 7. Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass, 8. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. 9. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

The prophet Isaiah had his commission renewed in the year that king Uzziah died, ch. vi. 1. Jotham his son reigned, and reigned with sixteen years: 5
that time, no doubt, Isaiah prophesied as he was commanded, and yet we have not in this book any of his prophecies dated in the reign of Jotham; but this which is put first, was in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham. Many excellent useful sermons he preached, which were not left and published upon record; for if all that was memorable had been written, the world could not have contained the books of his prophecies. When stream of the reign of Jotham, the Lord began to send against Judah, Rezin and Pekah, 2 Kings xv. 37. But now, in the second or third year of the reign of Ahaz, encouraged by their former successes, they entered into an alliance against Judah; because Ahaz, though he found the sword over his head, began his reign with idolatry, God delivered him into the hand of the king of Aram, v. 39. (2 Chron. xxviii. 5.) and a great slaughter they made in his kingdom; (v. 6, 7.) flushed with this victory, they went up toward Jerusalem, the royal city, to war against it, to overset it, and make themselves masters of it; but it proved, in the issue, that they could not gain their point. Note, The sin of a land brings foreign invasion upon it, and betrays the most advantageous posts and passes to the enemy. And God sometimes makes one wicked nation a scourge to another; but judgment ordinarily begins at the house of God. 

II. The great distress that Ahaz and his court were in, when they received advice of this design; It was told the house of David that Syria and Ephraim had signed a league against Judah, v. 2. This degenerate royal family is called the house of David, to put us in mind of that article of God's covenant with David, If his children forsake my law, I will chasten their transgression with the rod; but my loving-kindness will I not utterly take away; which is remarkably fulfilled in this chapter, Ps. lxxxix. 30. News being brought that the two armies of Syria and Israel were joined, and had taken the field, the court, the city, and the country, were trembling at the terror of this event, the king was moved with fear, and then no wonder that the heart of his people was so, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind; they were tossed and shaken, and put into a great disorder and confusion, were wavering and uncertain in their counsels, hurried hither and thither, and could not fix in any steady resolution; they yielded to the storm, and gave up all for gone, concluding it in vain to make any resistance. Now that which caused this fright, was, the sense of guilt, and the weakness of their faith: they had made God their Enemy, and knew not how to make him their Friend, and therefore their fears tyrannized over them; while those whose consciences are kept void of offence, and whose hearts are fixed, trusting in God, need not be afraid of evil tidings; those, v. 13. But the wicked flee at the shaking of a leaf. Lev. xxvi. 36. 

III. The orders and directions given to Isaiah to go and encourage Ahaz in his distress; not for his own sake, (he desired to hear nothing from God but words of terror, which might add affliction to his grief,) but because he was a son of David, and kindred to the house of David, and therefore, from a sense of that relation, he must not be forgotten; and for his people's sake, who must not be abandoned, but would be encouraged if Ahaz were. Observe, 1. God appointed the prophet to meet Ahaz, though he did not send to the prophet to speak with him, nor desire him to inquire of the Lord for him; (v. 3.) Go to meet Ahaz. Note, God is often found of those who seek him not, much more will he be found of those who seek him diligently; he speaks comfort to many who not only are not worthy of it, but do not so much as inquire after it. 2. He ordered the prophet not to go alone, but with a little son with him, because he carried a sermon in his name, Shall a remnant shall return. The prophets sometimes recorded what they preached, in the significant names of their children, (as Hos. i. 4, 6, 9.) therefore Isaiah's children are said to be for signs, ch. viii. 18. This son was so called, for the encouragement of those of God's people who were cautious and fearful, and that they should not turn, at least a remnant of them, which is more than we can pretend to merit: yet, at this time, God was better than his word: for he took care not only that a remnant should return, but the whole number of those whom the confederate forces of Syria and Israel had taken prisoners, 2 Chron. xxviii. 13. 3. He directed him where he should find Ahaz, how to meet with him and the image of his house, and the temple and chapel, but at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, where he was, probably, with many of his servants about him, contriving how to order the water-works, so as to secure them to the city, or deprive the enemy of the benefit of them, (ch. xxvii. 9, 11.) 2 Chron. xxxiii. 3, 4.) or giving some necessary directions for the fortifying the city as well as they could, and perhaps finding every thing in a very bad posture of defence, the conduit out of repair, as well as other things gone to decay, his fears increased, and he was now in greater perplexity than ever; therefore, Go meet him there. Note, God sometimes sends comforts to his people very seasonably, and, what time they are most afraid, encourages them to trust in him. 4. He put words in his mouth, else the prophet would not have known how to bring a message of good to such a bad man, a sinner in Zion, that ought to be afraid; but God intended it for the support of faithful Israelites. 

(1.) The prophet must rebuke their fears, and advise them by no means to yield to them, but keep their temper, and preserve the possession of their own souls; (v. 4.) Take heed, and be quiet. Note, We must not think, because the enemy we may be quiet, it is necessary that we take heed and watch against these things that threaten to disquiet us. Fear not with this amazement, this fear, that weakens, and has torment; neither let thy heart be tender, so as to melt and fall within thee; but pluck up thy spirits, have a good heart on it, and be courageous; let not fear betray the success of the enemy, and make him think they may take his little; but if united, he must not look them in the face, or make head against them. No, says the prophet, they are two tails of smoking firebrands; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fire-balls; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire, put together, burn the more violently; but they are only driven against the wood, and they shall be put out by the wind. Note, Those who expect God should help them, must help themselves, Ps. xxviii. 14. (2.) He must teach them to despise their enemies, not in pride, or security, or incogitancy, (nothing more dangerous than to so despise an enemy,) but in faith and dependence upon God. Ahaz's fear called them two powerful politic princes, for either of which reason and religion offer for the support; but if united, he must not look them in the face, or make head against them. No, says the prophet, they are two tails of smoking firebrands; they are angry, they are fierce, they are furious, as firebrands, as fire-balls; and they make one another worse by being in a confederacy, as sticks of fire, put together, burn the more violently; but they are only driven against the wood, and they shall be put out by the wind. Note, Those who expect God should help them, must help themselves, Ps. xxviii. 14.
and Rezin king of Syria but a smoke; (and such are all the enemies of God's church, smoking brat, that will soon be quenched;) nay, they are but tails of smoking firebrands, in a manner burnt out already; their force is spent, they have consumed themselves with the heat of their own anger; you may put your faith on them, and tread them out. The two kingdoms of Syria and Israel were now near expiring. 

Note, The more we have an eye to God as a consuming Fire, the less reason we shall have to fear men, though they are ever so furious, nay, we shall be able to despise them as smoking firebrands.

(3.) He must assure them that the present design of these high allies (so they thought themselves) against them shall certainly be defeated, and come to nothing, v. 5—7. 

[1.] That very thing which Ahaz thought most formidable, is made the ground of their defeat—and that was the depth of their designs and the height of their hopes; Therefore they shall be baffled and sent back with shame, because they have taken evil counsel against thee, which is an offence to God; these firebrands are a smoke in his nose, (ch. lxv. 5.) and therefore must be extinguished.

First, They are very sly and malicious, and therefore they shall not prosper. Judah had done them no wrong, they had no pretence to quarrel with Ahaz; but, without any reason, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it. Note, Those that are vexatious, cannot expect to be prosperous; they say, Those that love me are far from unrighteousness, (Prov. xiv. 12.) and consequently, They are very secure, and confident of success; they will vex Judah by going up against it; yet that is not all, they do not doubt but to make a breach in the wall of Jerusalem, wide enough for them to march their army in at; or they count upon dissecting or dividing the kingdom into two parts, one for the King of Israel, the other for the king of Syria, which was the same as to divide it. And one vice no more, as it were, was set in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal; some obscure person; it is uncertain whether a Syrian or an Israelite: so sure were they of gaining their point, that they divided the prey before they had caught it. Note, Those that are most scornful, are commonly less successful, for surely God scorns the scornful. 

(4.) God himself gives them his word that the attempt should not take effect; (v. 7.) Thus saith the Lord God, the sovereign Lord of all, who brings the counsel of the heathen to nought, Ps. xxxiii. 10. He saith, It shall not stand, neither shall come to pass; their measures shall all be broken, and they shall not be able to bring to pass their enterprise. Note, whatever stands against God, or thinks to stand without him, cannot stand long. Many purposes, but God disposes; and who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, if the Lord command it not, or counterfeit it? Lam. iii. 37. See Prov. xix. 21. 

(4.) He must give them a prospect of the destruction of these enemies, at last, that were now such a terror to them. [1.] They should neither of them enlarge their dominions, nor push their conquests, nor make the head of Damascus to be more ominous, and the head man of Damascus to be Rezin; this he glories in, and this let him be content with, v. 8. The head city of Ephraim has long been Samaria, and the head man in Samaria is now Pekah the son of Remaliah; these shall be made to know their own, their bounds are fixed, and they shall not pass them, to make themselves masters of the land; not less than to put Jerusalem in their prey. Note, As God has appointed men the bounds of their habitation, (Acts xxi. 26.) so has he appointed princes the bounds of their dominion, within which they ought to confine themselves, and not encroach upon their neighbours' rights. (2.) Ephraim, which perhaps was the more malicious and forward enemy of the two, should shortly be quite rooted out, and should be so far from seizing other people's lands, that they should not be able to hold their own. Interpreters are much at a loss how to contemplate the sixty-five years within which Ephraim shall cease to be a people; for the captivity of the ten tribes was but eleven years after this; and some make it a mistake of the transcriber, and think it should be read, within six and five years, just eleven. But it is hard to allow that. Others make it to be sixty-five years from the time that the prophet Amos first foretold the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes; and some late interpreters make it to look as far forward as the last captivity of the ten tribes by Esarhaddon, which was about sixty-five years after this; then Ephraim was so broken, that it was no more a people. Now it was the greatest folly in the world for them to be ruining their neighbours, who were themselves marked for ruin, and so near to it. See what a prophet told them at this time, when they were tripping up the Lord your God? (2 Chron. xxviii. 10.) Are there not with you, even with you, sin against the Lord your God? 

(3.) He must urge them to mix faith with those assurances which he had given them; (v. 9.) If I will not believe what is said to you, surely we shall not be established; your shaken and disordered state shall not be established, your unquiet unsettled spirit shall not; though the things told you are very above your courage, yet they will not be so to you, unless you believe them, and be willing to take God's word. Note, The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the quieting and composing of the mind in the midst of all the toils of this present time, 2 Chron. xx. 20. 

10. Moreover, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, 11. Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God: ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. 12. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. 13. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? 14. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good: 16. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings. 

Here, 1. God, by the prophet, makes a gracious offer to Ahaz, to confirm the foregoing predictions, and his faith in them, by such sign or miracle as he should choose; (v. 10, 11.) Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God. See here the divine faithfulness and veracity; God tells us nothing but what he is able and ready to prove. See his wonderful censures to the children of men, in that he is so willing to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, Heb. vi. 17. He considers our frame, and that living in a world of sense, we are apt to require sensible proofs, which therefore he has favoured us with in sacramental signs and seals. 

Ahaz was a bad man, yet God is called the Lord his God, because he was a child of Abraham and David, and of the covenants made with them. See
now gracious God is even to the evil and unthankful: Ahaz is bid to choose his sign, as Gideon about the fleece; (Judg, vi. 37.) let him ask for a sign either in the air, or earth, or water, for God's power is the same in each. 

II. Ahaz judged this gracious offer, and (which is not mannerly towards any superior) kicks at the courteous, and puts a slight upon it. (v. 12.) I will not ask: The true reason why he would not ask was, that he was unwilling to expose himself to the suspicion of dependence upon the Assyrians, their forces, and their gods; for, he would not thus far be beholden to the God of Israel, or lay himself under obligations to him. He would not ask a sign for the confirming of his faith, because he resolved to persist in his unbelief, and would indulge his doubts and distrusts; yet he pretexts a pious reason, I will not tempt the Lord; as if it were a temptation of God to do what God himself invited and directed him to do. Note, A secret disaffection to God is often disguised with the specious colours of respect to him; and those who are recorded that they will not trust God, yet pretend that they will not tempt him.

III. The prophet reproves him and his court, him and the house of David, the whole royal family, for their contempt of prophecy, and the little value they set upon or regarded of every encouragement he gave: if it is a small thing for you to weary men by your oppression and tyranny, with which you make yourselves burdensome and odious to all mankind? But will you weary my God also, with the affronts you put upon him? As the unjust judge that neither feared God nor regarded man, Luke xiii. 2. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words, Mal. iii. 17. Nothing is more grievous to the God of heaven than to be distracted; Will ye weary my God? Will ye suppose him to be tired and unable to help you, or to be weary of doing you good? Whereas the youths may faint and be weary, you may have tired all your friends, the Creator of the ends of the earth faints not, neither is weary, ch. xl. 30, 31. Or thus, in affronting the prophets, you think you put a slight only upon men like yourselves, and consider not that you affront God himself, whose messengers they are, and put a slight upon him, who will resent it accordingly. The prophet here calls God his God, with a great deal of pleasure; Ahaz would not say, He is my God, though the prophet had invited him to say so, (v. 11.) The Lord thy God; but Isaiah will say, He is mine. Note, Whatever others do, we must avouch the Lord for ours, and acknowledge him as our God.

IV. The prophet, in God's name, gives them a sign; You will not ask a sign, but the unbelief of man shall not make the promise of God of no effect; The Lord himself shall give you a sign, (v. 14.) a double sign:

1. A sign in general of his good-will to Israel and to the house of David; you must conclude that he is your God, and that you are in his family, for though you have broken of your God, how great soever your present distress and danger are; for of your nation, of your family, the Messiah is to be born, and you cannot be destroyed while that Blessing is in you; which shall be introduced, (1.) In a glorious manner; for whereas he has been often told that he should be born among you, I am now further to tell you, (v. 1.) he shall be born of a virgin which will signify both the divinity; power, and purity; and the respect with which he shall be brought into the world; that he shall be an extraordinary person, for he shall not be born by ordinary generation, and that he shall be a holy thing, not stained with the common pollution of the human nature, therefore inestimably fit to have the throne of his father David given him. Now this, though it was to be accomplished above 500 years after, was a most encouraging sign to the house of David, (and to them, under that title, this prophecy is directed, v. 13.) and an assurance that God would not cast them off. Ephraim did indeed eny Judah, (ch. xii. 13.) and sought the ruin of that kingdom, but could not prevail, for the sceptre should never depart from Judah till the coming of Shiloh, Gen. xlix. 10. Those whom God designs for the great salvation, may take that for a sign to them, that they shall not be swallowed up by their enemies. Now this was a further sign of God's favour to the house of David and the tribe of Judah; for he that intended to work this great salvation among them, no doubt would work for them all those other salvations which were to be the types and figures of this, and as it were preludes to this. Here is a sign for you, not in the depth, or in the height, but in the prophecy, in the promise, in the covenant made with David, which you are all of you, the sons of David, to be called Immanuel, God with us; let that word comfort you, (ch. viii. 10.) God is with us, and (v. 8.) that your land is Immanuel's land. Let not the heart of the house of David be moved thus, (v. 2.) nor let Judah fear the setting up of the son of Tabeth, (v. 6.) for nothing can cut off the outline on the Son of David that shall be Immanuel. Note, The strongest confirmations, in time of trouble, are those which are borrowed from Christ, our relation to him, our interest in him, and our expectations of him and from him.

Of this child it is further foretold, (v. 15.) that though he shall not be born like other children, but of a virgin, yet he shall be really and truly man, and shall be nursed and brought up like other children; Butter and honey shall he eat, as other children do, particularly the children of that land which flowed with milk and honey. Though he be conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, yet he shall not therefore be fed with angels' food, but, as it becomes him, shall be in all things made like unto his brethren, Heb. ii. 17. Nor shall he, through born thus by extraordinary generation, be a man immediately, but, as other children, shall advance gradually from infancy, childhood, and youth, to that of manhood, and, growing in wisdom and stature, shall at length wax strong in spirit, and come to maturity, so as to know how to refuse the evil and choose the good. See Luke ii. 49, 52. Note, Children are fed when they are little, that they may be taught and instructed when they are grown up; they have their maintenance in order to their education.

2. Here is another sign in particular of the speed, destruction of these potent princes that were now a terror to Judah, v. 16. Before this child, so it should be read; this child which I have now in my arms, (he means not Immanuel, but Shear-jashub his own son, whom he was ordered to take with him for a sign, v. 3.) before this child shall there be no great mountain between Israel and Judah, (and those who saw what his present stature and forwardness were, would easily conjecture how long that would be,) before this child will be three or four years older, the land that thou abhorrest, these confederate forces of Israelites and Syrians, whom thou hast such an enmity to, and standest in such dread of, shall be forsaken of both their kings, both Pekah and Rezin; who were in so close an alliance, that they seemed as if they were the kings
but of one kingdom. This was fully accomplished, for within two or three years after this, Hosea composed against Pekah, and slew him, (2 Kings xv. 30.) and before that, the king of Assyria took Damascus, and slew Rezin, 2 Kings xvi. 9. Nay, there was a present event, which happened immediately, and which this child carried the prediction of in his name, which was a pledge and earnest of this further event. Shear-jashub signifies, the remnant shall return, which doubtless points at the wonderful return of those 200,000 captives which Pekah and Rezin had carried away, who were brought back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Read the story, 2 Chron. xxviii. 8-15. The prophetic naming of this child, having thus had its accomplishment, no doubt this, which was further added concerning him, should have its accomplishment likewise, that Syria and Israel should be deprived of both their kings. One mercy from God encourages us to hope for another, if it engages us to prepare for another.

17. The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah: even the King of Assyria. 18. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria: 19. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. 20. In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep: 22. And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land. 23. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were 1 thousand vines at a thousand silverings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. 24. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. 25. And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

After the comfortable promises made to Ahaz as a branch of the house of David, here follow terrible threatenings against him, as a degenerate branch of that house; for though the loving-kindness of God shall not be utterly taken away, for the sake of David and the covenant made with him, yet his iniquity shall be chastened with the rod, and his sin with stripes. Let those that will not mix faith with the promises of God, expect to hear the alarms of his threatenings.

Vol. IV.—G

I. The judgment threatened is very great, v. 17. It is very great, for it is general; it shall be brought upon the prince himself, (high as he is, he shall not be out of the reach of it,) and upon the people, the whole body of the nation, and upon the royal family, upon all thy father's house; it shall be a judgment entailed on posterity, and shall go along with the blood and sin of the transgressors, and be as a curse and a scourge, pursued by men, and hunting them down, and destroying them; and yet, though it be a regular judgment, yet the heaven and earth shall see it, and be astonished at it; and the earth shall be moved at it; and a solitude, and desolation, and destruction, and disorder, and confusion, and darkness, shall follow it, and shall be the event, days that have not come; so dark, so gloomy, so melancholy, as never were the like since the revolt of the ten tribes, when Ephraim departed from Judah, which was indeed a sad time to the house of David. Note, The longer men continue in sin, the sorcer punishments they have reason to expect, if the Lord that will bring these days upon them, for here I am, saith the Lord, who can resist or escape the judgments he brings?

II. The enemy that should be employed as the instrument of this judgment, is the king of Assyria. Ahaz reposed strong confidence in that prince for help against the confederate powers of Israel and Syria, and minded the less what God said to him by his prophet for his encouragement, because he built much upon his promises to him, and of his case, and had mainly promised to be his servant, if he would send him some succours; he had also made him a present of gold and silver, for which he drained the treasures both of church and state, 2 Kings xvi. 7, 8. Now God threatens that that king of Assyria, whom he made his stay instead of God, should become a scourge to him. He was so specially; for when he came to his, he strengthened him not; the reed not only brake under him, but ran into his hand, and pierced it, (2 Chron. xxviii. 20.) and from thenceforward the kings of Assyria were, for a long time, grieving thorns to Judah, and gave them a great deal of trouble. Note, The creature that we make our hope, commonly becomes our hurt; the king of Assyria, not long after this, made himself master of the ten tribes, carried them captive, and laid their country waste, so as fully to answer the prediction here; and perhaps it may refer to that, as an explanation of v. 8, where it is foretold that Ephraim shall be broken, that it shall not be a people; and it is easy to suppose that the prophet, at v. 17. turns his aspect to the kingdom of Israel, denouncing God's judgments against him for invading Judah. But the expositors universally understand it of Ahaz and his kingdom. Now observe, 1. Summons given to the invaders; (v. 18.) The Lord shall whistle for the fly and the bee: See ch. v. 26. Enemies that seem as contemptible as a fly or a bee, and are as easily crushed; yet, when God passes, they shall do his work as effectually as lions and young lions. Though they are as far distant from one another as the rivers of Egypt and the land of Assyria, yet they shall actually meet to join in this work, when God commands their attendance; for when God has work to do, he will not be at a loss for instruments to do it with.

2. Possession taken by them, v. 19. It should seem as if they were in no condition to make resistance; they find no difficulties in forcing their way, but come and rest all of them in the desolate valleys, which the inhabitants had deserted, upon the first alarm, and left them a cheap and easy prey to the invaders; they shall come and rest in the low grounds like swarms of flies and bees, and shall rend themselves impregnable by taking shelter in the holes of the rocks, as bees often do; and show themselves formidable by appearing for it shall be put forth for them, and all their thorns and all bushes; so generally shall the land be overspread with them. These bees shall knit upon the thorns and bushes, and there rest undisturbed.

3. Great desolations made, and the country generally depopulated; (v. 20. The Lord shall have
the hair of the head, and beard, and feet; he shall sweep all away, as the leper, when he is cleansed, shall sweep off his garment. This shall be a token for them, a token for them, according to all that the razer which is hired; which God has hired, as if he had none of his own; but what he hires, and whom he employs in any service for him, he will pay for: see Ezek. xxxix. 18, 19. Or which Ahaz has hired for his assistance. God will make that to be an instrument of his destruction, which he hired into his service. Note, Many are beaten with thorns, and those very thorns they turn against, rather than to the arm of the Lord, and which they were at a great expense upon; when by faith and prayer they might have found cheap and easy succour in God.

4. The consequences of this general depopulation:

(1.) The flocks of cattle shall be all destroyed; so that a man who had herds and flocks in abundance, shall be stripped of them all by the enemy; and shall with much ado save for his own use a young cow and two sheep; a poor stock. (v. 21.) yet he shall think himself happy, having in any least.

(2.) The few cattle that are left, shall have such a large compass of ground to feed in, that they shall give abundance of milk, and very good milk, such as shall produce butter enough, v. 22. There shall also be such want of men, that the milk of one cow and two sheep shall serve a whole family, which used to keep abundance of servants, and consume a great deal, but is now reduced.

(3.) The breed of cattle shall be destroyed; so that they who used to eat flesh, (as the Jews commonly did,) shall be necessitated to confine themselves to butter and honey; for there shall be no flesh for them, and the country shall be so depopulated, that there shall be butter and honey enough for the few that are left in it.

(4.) Good land, that used to be let well, shall be all overrun with briers and thorns; (v. 23.) where there used to be a thousand vines planted, for which the tenants used to pay a thousand shekels, or pieces of silver, yearly rent, there shall be nothing but briers and thorns, no profit either for landlord or tenant; all being laid waste by the army of the invaders. Note, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness; and it is just with him to turn vines into briers, if we, instead of bringing forth grapes to him, bring forth wild grapes, ch. v. 4.

(5.) The instruments of husbandry shall be turned into instruments of war, v. 24. The whole land being become briers and thorns, the grounds that now abound with sickles and pruning-hooks, shall gather in the fruits, they shall now come to with arrows and bows, either to hunt for wild beasts in the thickets, or to defend themselves from the robbers, that lurk in the bushes seeking for prey, or to kill the serpents and venomous beasts that are hid there. This bespeaks a very sad change of the face of that pleasant land. But what melancholy change is there for which sin will not make it a populous land.

(6.) There where briers and thorns are wont to be of use, and to do good service, even in the hedges, for the defence of the enclosed grounds, they shall be plucked up, and all laid in common. There shall be briers and thorns in abundance, there where they should not be, but none where there should be, v. 25. The hils that shall be digged with the mattock, which sin will not make it a populous land, shall be kept off with the fear of briers and thorns, shall now be thrown open; the hedges broken down for the bear out of the wood to waste it, Ps. lxxx. 12, 13. It shall be left at large for oxen to run in, and lesser cattle.

See the effect of sin and the curse: it has made the earth a forest of thorns and thistles, except as it is forced into some order by the constant care and labour of man: and see what folly it is to set our hearts upon possession of lands, be they ever so fruitful, ever so pleasant; if they lie ever so little neglected and uncultiatated, or if they be abused by a wasteful use of above their just price, or if they be more defiled by war, they will soon become frightful deserts. Heaven is a paradise not subject to such changes.

CHAP. VIII.

This chapter, and the four next that follow it, (to ch. 13.) are all one continued discourse or sermon; the scope of which is, to show the great destruction that should now shortly be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, and the great disturbance that should be given to the kingdom of Judah by the king of Assyria, and that both were for their sins; but rich provision is made of comfort for those that fear God, in those dark times, referring especially to the days of the Messiah. In this chapter we have, I. A prophetic description of the great destruction of the dominions of Syria and Israel by the king of Assyria, v. 1. 4. II. Of the desolations that should be made by that proud, victorious prince, in the land of Israel and Judah, v. 5. 8. III. Great encouragement given to the people of God in the midst of those destructions; they are assured, 1. That the enemies shall not gain their point against them, v. 9, 10. 2. That if they keep up the fear of God, and keep down the fear of man, they should find God their Refuge, (v. 11, 14.) and, while others stumbled, and fell into despair, they should be enabled to wait on God, and should see themselves reserved for better times, v. 12. 14. They shall have a perfect victory over their enemies, who should all, at their peril, not to consult with familiar spirits, for they would thereby throw themselves into despair, but to keep close to the word of God, v. 19., 22. And these counsellors and these comforts, will still be of use to us in time of trouble.

M MOREOVER the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2. And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jechoniah. 3. And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the Lord unto me, Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz: 4. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and My mother, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria. 5. The Lord spake also unto me again, saying, 6. Forsaketh as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son: 7. Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: 8. And he shall pass through Judah: he shall overflow and go over: he shall reach even to the neck: and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

In these verses we have a prophecy of the successes of the king of Assyria against Damascus, Samaria, and Judah; that the two former should be laid waste by him, and the last greatly frightened. Here we have,

1. Orders given to the prophet to write this prophecy, and publish it to be seen and read of all men, and to leave it upon record, that when the time came to pass, they might know that God had put it to him; for that was one end of the prophecy, John xiv. 29. He must take a great roll, which would
contain those five chapters, fairly written in words at length; he must write in it all that he had foretold concerning the king of Assyria's invading the country; he must write with his man's pen, in the usual way and style of writing, as that it might be legible and intelligible by all. See Hab. ii. 2. Write the vision and make it plain. They that speak iniquity against the Lord shall be ashamed, and confounded: they shall be as nothing, and their work shall be spoiled, (ch. xxxiii. 1.) for the Lord is righteous, and those that are troublesome shall be troubled.

2. That forasmuch as there were many in Judah, that were secretly in the interests of Syria and Israel, and should be disaffected to the house of David; God would chastise them also by the king of Assyria, who should create a great deal of vexation to Judah, and to all the Jews, for a while; (Isa. x. 19, 20.)

Observe, (1.) What was the sin of the disaffected party in Judah; (v. 6.) This people, whom the prophet here speaks to, refuse the waters of Shiloh that go softly, despite their own country and the government of it, and love to run it down, because it does not make so great a figure, and so great a noise in the world, as some other kings and kingdoms do. They refuse the comforts which God's prophets offer them from the word of God, speaking to them in a still small voice, and make nothing of them; but they rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son, who were the enemies of their country, and were now actually invading it; they cried them up as brave men, magnified their policies and strength, applauded their conduct, were well-pleased with the designs, and determined on the execution of their designs, and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers does many a state foster in its bosom, that eat its bread, and yet adhere to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests, if they but seem to totter.

(2.) The judgment which God would bring upon them for this sin. The same king of Assyria, that would lay Ephraim and Syria waste, should carry over to his designs, and resolved to desert and go over to them. Such vipers does many a state foster in its bosom, that eat its bread, and yet adhere to its enemies, and are ready to quit its interests, if they but seem to totter. He shall reach even to the neck; he shall advance so far as to lay siege to Jerusalem, the head of the kingdom, and nothing but that shall be kept out of his hands; for that was the holy city. Nete, in the greatest deluge of trouble, God can, and will, keep the head of his people above water.
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but who is he that saith,

and it came to pass, if the

Lord commandeth it not? What

sets itself aside against

God, and his cause, and
calls a thinglicit, and God is

with us," (this

refers to the name of Immanuel—God with us); "the

Messiah is to be born among us, and a people
designed for such an honour cannot be given up to

terrible ruin; we have now the special presence of

God with us in his temple, his oracles, his

promises, and these are our defence. God is with us,

he is our
code, to take our part, and fight for us; and if God

be for us, who can be against us?" Thus does

the daughter of Zion despise them.

II. He comforts and encourages the people of God
with the same comforts and encouragements which

he himself had received: the attempts made upon

them were very formidable; the house of David, the
court and royal family, were at their wits' end, (ch.

vii. 2.) and then no marvel if the people were in

a consternation.

Now, 1. The prophet tells us how he was himself

taught of God not to give way to such amazing

fears as the people were disturbed with, nor to run

into the same measures with them; (v. 11.) "The

Lord spake to me with a strong hand, not to walk in

the way of this people; not to say as they say, nor
do as they do, nor to entertain the same frightful

apprehensions of things, nor to approve of their

projects of making peace upon any terms, or calling

in the help of the Assyrians." God instructed the

prophet not to go down the stream. Note, (1.)

There is a proneness in the best of men to be

frightened at threatening clouds, especially when

fears are epidemic. We are all too apt to walk in

the way of the people we live among, though it

be not a good way. (2.) Those who are God's lovers

and friends, he will instruct, and enable to avoid

the stream of common corruptions, particularly of

common fears. He will find ways to teach his own

people not to walk in the way of other people, but

in a sober singularity. (3.) Corruption is sometimes

so active in the hearts even of good men, that they

have need to be taught their duty with a strong

hand, and it is God's prerogative to teach so, for he

only can give an unerring argument, and excepting

the contradiction of unbelief and prejudice he can

teach the heart; and herein none teaches like him.

(4.) Those that are to teach others have need to

be themselves well instructed in their duty, and
then they teach most powerfully, when they teach

experimentally; the word that comes from the

heart, is most likely to reach to the heart; and
only can give an unerring argument, and excepting

he is edified in, we should, as we are able, teach others also.

2. Now what is it that he says to God's people?

(1.) He cautions them against a sinful fear, v. 12.

It seems, it was the way of this people at this time,

and fear is catching; he whose heart fails him,
makes his brother's heart to fail, like his heart: (Deut.

xx. 8.) therefore Say we not, A confederacy,
to all them to whom this people shall say, I fear

raunts that is. [1] We are not associated with them in the

confederacies they are projecting and fife
casting for. Do not join with these that, for the securing of themselves, are for making a league with the Assyrians, through unbelief, and distrust of God and their cause. Do not come into any such confederacy. Note, It concerns us, in time of trouble, to watch against all such fears as put us upon taking any indirect courses for our own security. People are afraid of the Lord, and frighten themselves, and come together. Do not amuse yourselves with the apprehension of a confederacy, upon every thing that stirs, nor, when any little thing is amiss, cry out presently. There is a plot, a plot. When they talk what dismal news there is, 

Syria is joined with Ephraim, what will become of us! Must we fight, or must we flee, or must we yield, or must we stand fast? Be not afraid of the signs of heaven, as the heathen are, Jer. x. 2. Be not afraid of evil things on earth, but let your hearts be fixed. Fear not that which they fear, nor be afraid as they are. Be not put into such a fright as causes trembling and shaking; so the word signifies. Note, When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot, the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of these confederacies. 2. He advises them to a gracious, religious fear; But sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, v. 13. Note, The believing fear of God is a special preservation against the disquieting fear of man; see 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15, where this is quoted, and applied to suffering Christians. [1.] We must look upon God as the Lord of hosts, that has all power, and some way his hand hidden his back. [2.] We must sanctify him accordingly, give him the glory due to that name, and carry it toward him as those that believe him to be a holy God. [3.] We must make him our Fear, the Object of our fear, and make him our Dread; keep up a reverence of his providence, and stand in awe of his sovereignty; be afraid of his displeasure, and silently acquiesce in all his dispositions. Woe be us, but duly affected with the greatness and glory of God, we should see the pomp of our enemies eclipsed and clouded, and all their power restrained and under check; see Neh. iv. 14. That they are afraid of the reproach of men, forget the Lord their Maker, ch. ii. 12, 13. Compare Luke xii. 4, 5. [4.] He assures them of a holy security and sovereignty of mind, in so doing; v. 14. "He shall be for a Sanctuary; make him your Fear, and you shall find him your Hope, your Help, your Defense, and your mighty Deliverer. He will sanctify and preserve you. He will be for a Sanctuary."

[1.] "To make you holy; He will be your Sanctification"; so some read it. If we sanctify God by our praises, he will sanctify us by his grace. [2.] "To make you easy; He will be your جانب; to which you may flee for safety, and where you are privileged from all the arrests of fear; you shall find an inviolable refuge and security in him, and see yourselves out of the reach of danger. They that truly fear God, shall not need to fear any evil. [5.] He threatens the ruin of the ungodly and unbelieving, both in Judah and Israel. They have no part nor lot in the following comforts: That God, who will be a Sanctuary to those who trust in him, will be a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence, to those who leave these waters of Shiloh, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son, (v. 6.) who make the creature their fear and their hope, v. 14, 15. The prophet foresees that the greatest part of both the houses of Israel would not sanctify the Lord of hosts, and to them he would be for a Goat and a Snare; he would be a terror to them, as he would be a Support and Stay to those that trusted in him. Instead of profiting by the word of God, they should be offended at it; and the providences of God, instead of leading them to him, would drive them from him. What was a savour of life unto life to others, would be a savour of death unto death to them. So that many among them shall stumble and fall; they shall fall both into sin and into ruin, they shall fall by the sword, shall be taken prisoners, and go into captivity. Note, If the things of God be an offence for us, they will be an undoing to us. Some apply this to the unbelieving Jews, who rejected Christ, and to whom he became a Stone of stumbling, for the apostle quotes this scripture with application to all those who persisted in their unbelief of the gospel of Christ; (1 Pet. ii. 8.) to them he is a Rock of offence, because, being disobedient to the word, they stumble at it.

16. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. 17. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. 18. Behold, I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. 19. And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto the wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? 20. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. 21. And they shall pass through it hardly; and they shall come to pass, that, when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. 22. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness. In these verses, we have, 1. 'The unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy in breaching the oracles of God consigned over to them, and being intrusted with the sacred writings; that they may sanctify the Lord of hosts, may make him their Fear, and find him their Sanctuary; Bind up the testimony, v. 16. Note, It is a great instance of God's care of his church and love of it, that he has lodged in it the valuable treasure of divine revelation. It is a testimony and a law; not only this prophecy is so, which must therefore be preserved safe for the comfort of God's people in the approaching times of trouble and distress, but the whole word of God is so; God has attested it, and he has enjoined it. As a testimony, it directs our faith; as a law, it directs our practice; and we ought both to subscribe to the truths of it, and to submit to the precepts of it. 2. This testimony and law are bound up in a seal; a letter from God to man, folded up and sealed; a proclamation under the broad seal. The binding up and sealing of the Old Testament signified, that the full explication of many of the prophecies of it was reserved for the New Testament times; (Dan. xii. 4.) Seal the book till the time of the end; but what was then bound up and sealed, is now opened and unsealed, and revealed unto babes. Matt. xi. 25. Yet with reference to the other world, and the future state, still the testimony is bound up and sealed, for we know but in part, and prophecy but
ISAIAH, VIII.

in part, 3. They are lodged as a sacred deposit in the hands of the disciples, of the children of the prophets and the covenant, Acts iii. 25. This is the good thing which is committed to them, and which they are charged with the custody of, 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Those that had prophets for their tutors, must still keep close to the written word.

11. The good use which we ought to make of this privilege. This is the present, the sight, the assurance, the comfort, the blessing, and the encouragement, which is in the word of God. This is the practice of their own practice and resolutions, Prov. x. 17, 18. He embraced the law and the testimony, and he had the comfort of it, in the midst of all the many discouragements he met with. Note, Those ministers can best recommend the word of God to others, that have themselves found the satisfaction of relying upon it. Observe,

(1.) The discouragement in which the prophet laboured under he specifies two; [1.] The frowns of God, not so much upon himself, but upon his people, whose interests lay very near his heart; "He hides his face from the house of Jacob, and seems, at present, to neglect, and lay them under the tokens of his displeasure." The prophet was himself employed in revealing God's wrath against them, and yet grieved thus for it, as if he had no hand in it; and the frowning face of God forced the God of Jacob, let it not be thought strange that he hides his face from them. [2.] The contempt and reproaches of men, not only upon himself, but upon his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed; I and the children which the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders; we are gazed at as monsters or outlandish people, pointed at as we go with staring looks. Probably, the prophetic names that were given his children were ridiculed and bantered by the profane scoffers of the town. I am as a wonder unto many, Ps. lxxi. 7. God's people are the world's wonder, (Zech. iii. 8,) for their singularity, and because they run not with them to the same excess of riot, 1 Pet. iv. 4. The prophet was herein a type of Christ; for this is quoted (Heb. ii. 13,) to prove that believers are Christ's children; Behold, I and the children which God hath given me. Parents must look upon their children as God's gifts, his gracious gifts; Jacob did so, Gen. xxxviii. 5. Ministers must look upon their converts as their children, and be tender of them accordingly, (1 Thess. ii. 7, and as the children which God has given them; for whatever good we are instrumental of to others, is an interest of the grace of God. Christ looks upon believers as his children, which the Father gave him; (John xvi. 6,) and both he and they are for signs and wonders, spoken against, (Luke ii. 34,) every where spoken against, Acts xxxviii. 22.

(2.) The encouragement he took, in reference to these discouragements. [1.] He saw the hand of God in all that which were discouraging to him, and kept his eye upon that. Whatever trouble the house of Jacob is in, it comes from God's hiding his face; may, whatever contempt is put upon him or his friends, it is from the Lord of hosts; he has hidden Shimei curse David, Job xix. 13—xxx. 11.

[2.] He saw God dwelling in mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, and ready to hear the prayers of his people. Though, for the present, he hide his face from the house of Jacob, yet they know where to find him, and recover the sight of him; he dwells in Mount Zion.

[3.] He therefore resolved to wait upon the Lord, and to look for him; to attend his motions, even while he hid his face, and to expect with an humble submission to his will, and in meekness that wait upon God by faith and prayer, may look for him with hope and joy. When we have not sensible comforts, we must still keep up our observance of God and obedience to him, and then wait awhile; at evening-time it shall be light. 2. By the counsel and advice which he gives to his disciples, among whom the law and the testimony were sealed, to whom were committed the lively oracles.

(1.) He supposes they would be tempted, in the day of their distress, to consult them that had false spirits; as if to consult others for advice, and desired to be informed by him concerning things to come, that they might take their measures accordingly. Thus Saul, when he was in straits, made his application to the witch of Endor, (1 Sam. xxvii. 7, 13,) and Ahasiah to the God of Ekron, 2 Kings i. 2. These conjurers had fantastic gestures and tones; they peeped and muttered, and fancied themselves furnished with the power to see him; but see me he be plainly, but peeped and were peeped at; or both the words here used may refer to their voice or manner of speaking; they delivered what they had to say with a low, hollow, broken sound, scarcely articulate; and sometimes in a puling or mournful tone, like a crane, or a swallow, or a dove, ch. xxxviii. 14. They spake not with that boldness and plainness which the prophets of the Lord spake with, but rather to instruct the people rather than to instruct them; yet there were those who were so wretchedly at a loss to seek to them, and to court others to do so, even the prophet's hearers, who knew better things, wherefore the prophet warns not to say, Congress with such. There were express laws against this wickedness, (Lev. xix. 31—xxv. 32,) and yet it was found in Israel, is found even in Christian nations; but let all that have any sense of religion show it, by startled at the thought of it; Get thee behind me, Satan. Dread the use of spells and charms, and consulting those that by hidden arts pretend to tell fortunes, cure diseases, or discover things lost; for this is a heinous crime, and, in effect, denies the God that is above.

(2.) He furnishes them with an answer to this temptation, puts words into their mouths; "If any go about to ensnare you, give them this reply: Should not a people seek to their God? What! for the living to the dead?" (1.) Tell them it is a principle of religion, that a people ought to seek unto their God; now Jehovah is our God, and therefore to him we ought to seek, and to consult with him, and not with them that have familiar spirits. All people will thus walk in the name of their God, Mic. iv. 5. They that made the hosts of heaven their gods, sought unto them, Jer. viii. 2. Should not a people under guilt, and in trouble, seek to their God for pardon and peace? Should not a people in doubt, in want, and in danger, seek to their God for direction, supply, and protection? Since the Lord hath made himself known to his people, it is certain by our duty to seek him." [2.] "Tell them it is an instance of the greatest folly in the world, to seek for living men to dead idols," What can be more absurd than to seek to lifeless images for life and living comforts, or to expect that our friends that are dead, when we defile them and pray to them, should do that for us which our living friends will not do? The Lord had shewn and taught them that his people, it is there with them, any device or working. Ezek. xlv. 5, 10. It is folly therefore for the living to make their court to them, with any expectation of relief from them. Necromancers consulted the dead, as the witch of Endor, and so proclaimed their own folly; we must live by the living, and not by the dead; what life or light can we look for from them that have no life? (3.) He directs them to consult with the oracles of God; if the prophets that were among them did not speak directly to every case, yet they had the
written word, and to that they must have recourse. Note. Those will never be drawn to consult wizards, that know how to make a good use of their Bibles. Would we know how we may seek to our God, and come to the knowledge of his mind? To the law and to the testimony, that ye may know what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Make God's statutes your counsellors, and you will be counselled right.

Observe, [1.] What use we must make of the law and the testimony; we must speak according to that word; we must make this our standard, conform to it, take advice from it, make our appearance to it, and in everything be overruled and determined by it. The words of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches. It is not enough to say nothing against it, but we must speak according to it.

[2.] Why we must make use of this law and the testimony; because we shall be convicted of the greatest folly imaginable if we do not. They that concur not with the word of God, prove there is no light, no morning-light, (so the word is,) in them; they have no right sense of things; they do not understand themselves, nor the difference between good and evil, truth and falsehood. Note. Those that reject divine revelation, have not so much as human understanding; nor do they rightly admit the oracles of reason, who will not admit the oracles of God. Some read it, a threatening thing; for they speak not according to this word, there shall be no light to them, no good, no comfort, or relief; but they shall be driven to darkness and despair; "as it follows here, (v. 21, 22.) What light had Saul when he consulted the witch? 1 Sam. xxviii. 18, 20. Or what light can they expect, that turn against the Father's light? (v. 11.)"

[3.] He runs the doom of those that seek to familiar spirits, and regard not God's law and testimony; there shall not only be no light to them, no comfort or prosperity, but they may expect all horror and misery, v. 21, 22. [1.] The trouble they feared shall come upon them; they shall pass through the land, or pass to and fro in the land, unhinged, unsettled, and driven from place to place by the three sera of the land, the spirit of an abiding enemy; they shall be hardly beastly whither to go for the necessary supports of life; either because the country would be so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had, or at least themselves and their friends so impoverished, that there would be nothing to be had for them; so that they who used to be fed to the full shall be hungry. Note. Those that go away from God, go out of the way of all good. [2.] They shall be very uneasy to themselves, by their discontent and impatience under their trouble. A good man may be in want, but then he quieter himself, and strives to make himself easy; but these people, when they shall be hungry, shall fret themselves, and when they have nothing to feed on, their vexation shall prey upon their own spirits; for they possess not the power of an inflicting enemy. [3.] They shall be very provoking to all about them, nay, to all above them; when they find all their measures broken, and themselves at their wit's end, they will forget all the rules of duty and decency, and will treasonably curse their king, and blasphemously curse their God; and this more than in their thought, and in their bed-chamber, Eco. xi. 3. They shall curse, and they shall be cursed, in managing the public affairs no better, as if the fault were his, when the best and wisest kings cannot secure success; but when they have broken the bonds of their allegiance, no marvel if those of their religion do not hold them long; they next curse their God, curse him, and die; they quarrel with his providence, and reproach that, as if he had done them wrong; The foolishness of men overthrows his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3. See what we need have to keep our mouth as with a bridle, when our heart is not within us; for the language of foolishness is commonly very offensive; and to let them speak by themselves to despair, and which way soever they lock, shall see no probability of relief; they shall look upward, but heaven shall frown upon them, and look gloomy; and how can it be otherwise, when they curse their God? They shall look to the earth, but what comfort can that yield to those whom God is at war with? There is nothing there but trouble, as all darkness and anguish; even every thing threatening, and not one pleasant gleam, in the hopeful prospect; but they shall be driven to darkness by the violence of their own fears, which represent every thing about them black and frightful. This explains what he had said, (v. 20.) that there shall be no light to them. Those that shut their eyes against the light of God's word, will justly be abandoned to darkness, and left to wander endlessly, and the sparks of their own kindling will do them no kindness.

CHAP. IX.

The prophet, in this chapter, (according to the directions given him ch. iii. 10, 11.) saith to the righteous, It shall be well with thee, but Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him. Here are 1. Gracious promises of that that adhere to the law and to the testimony; while those that seek to familiar spirits, shall be driven into darkness and distress, they shall see a great light, relief in the midst of their distresses, typical of gospel-mercy. 1. In the doctrine of the Messiah, v. 1. 3. 2. His victories, v. 4, 5. 3. His government and dominion, as Immanuel, v. 6, 7. 4. Dreadful threatenings against the people of God, when they are turned against themselves, or against the house of David; that they should be brought to utter ruin, that their pride should bring them down, (v. 8. 10.) that their neighbours should make a prey of them, (v. 11.) that, for their impudence, and hypocrisy, all their ornaments and supports should be cut off, (v. 13. 17.) and that by the wrath of God against them, and their wrath one against another, they should be brought to utter ruin, v. 18. 21. And this is typical of the final destruction of all the enemies of the son of David and his kingdom.

1. NEVERTHELESS, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphthali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

2. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. 3. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. 4. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. 5. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. 6. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

The first words of this chapter plainly refer to the close of the foregoing chapter, where every thing looked black and melancholy: Behold, trouble, and darkness, and the glory of Israel shall beMine, that to the upright there shall arise light in the darkness, (Ps. cxii. 4.) and at evening-time it shall be light, Zech. xiv. 7. Nevertheless, it shall not be such dimness (either not such for kind, or not such for degree,) as sometimes there has been. Note, In the worst of times, God's people have a nevertheless to comfort themselves with, something to allay and balance their troubles; they are persecuted, persecuted, they are wounded, yet always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10. And it is a matter of comfort to us, when things are at their darkest, that he who forms the light, and creates the darkness, (ch. xlv. 7.) has appointed both their bounds, and set the one over against the other, Gen. i. 4. He can say, "Hitherto the dimness shall go", so long as it shall last, and no further, no longer. Those things were here promised, and shall, at some point ultimately at the grace of the gospel, which the saints then were to comfort themselves with the hopes of, in every cloudy and dark day, as we now are to comfort ourselves, in time of trouble, with the hopes of Christ's second coming, though that he now, as his first coming then was, a thing at a great distance. The more likewise which God has in store for his church, in the latter days, may be a support to those that are mourning with her for her present calamities. We have here the promise, 1. Of a glorious light, which shall so qualify, and by degrees dispel, the dimness, that it shall not be, as it sometimes has been not such as was in her generation; there shall not be such dark times as we have had, and are yet in; there shall be a land of Zebulun and Napthali, which lay remote, and most exposed to the inroads of the neighbouring enemies; and, afterward, he more grievously afflicted the land by the way of the sea, and beyond Jordan, (v. 1.) referring, probably, to those days when God began to cut Israel short, and to unite them in all their coasts, 2 Kings x. 32. Note, 1. Christ's times were lesser judgments will do with a people, before he brings greater. 2. If a light affliction do not do its work with us, to humble and reform us, we must expect to be afflicted more grievously; for when God judges he will overcome. Well, those were dark times with the land of Zebulun and Napthali, and there was dimness of anguish in Galilee of the Gentiles, both in respect of ignorance, (they did not speak according to the law and testimony,) and then there was no light in them, ch. viii. 20.) and in respect of trouble and the desperate posture of their outward affairs; we have both together, 2 Chron. xiv. 3, 5. Israel has been without the true God and a teaching priest, and in those times there was no peace; but the dimness that covered them did not prevail to such a degree; For, (v. 2.) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. 1. At this time, when the prophet lived, there were many prophecies in Judah and Israel, whose prophecies were a great light both for direction and comfort to the people of God, who adhered to the law and the testimony, beside the written word, they had prophecies; there were those that had showed them how ing, (Ps. lxiv. 9.) which was a great satisfaction to them, when, in respect of their outward troubles, they sat in darkness, and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death. 2. This was to have its full accomplishment when Jesus began to appear as a Prophet, and to preach the gospel in the land of Zebulun and Napthali, and in Galilee of the Gentiles. And the Old Testament prophets, as they were witnesses to him, so they were types of him. When he came, and dwelt in the borders of Zebulun and Napthali, then this prophecy is said to be fulfilled, Matt. iv. 13—16. Note, [1.] Those who, by the example of our Saviour, who took upon him the suffering that he might be anointed with the joy of the knowledge of the salvation of many, who, by his preaching, and his moral and spiritual graces, are a light to the nations, and also to the dark places of the earth, and into all the ends of the earth, Matt. vi. 33. [2.] When the gospel comes to any place, to any soul, light comes, a great light, a shining light, which will shine more and more. It should be welcome to us, as light is to them that sit in darkness, and we should readily entertain it, both because it is of such sovereign power, and because we have our own evidence with it. Truly this light is sweet. II. Of a glorious increase, and an universal joy arising from it; (v. 3.) "Thou, O God, hast multiplied the nation, the Jewish nation, which thou hast mercy in store for; though it has been diminished by one sore judgment after another, yet now thou hast begun to multiply it again. The numbers of a nation are its strength; we have numerous b evi industrious; and it is God that increases nations, Job xii. 23. Yet it follows, "Thou hast not increased the joy; the carnal joy and mirth, and those things that are commonly the matter and occasion of that; but, notwithstanding that, they joy before thee, there is a great deal of serious spiritual joy has begun among them, joy in the presence of God, with an eye to him." This is very applicable to the times of gospel-light, spoken of, v. 2. Then God multiplied the nation, the gospel-Israel. "And to him" (so the Masorites read it) "then hast magnified the joy, to every one that receives the light." The following words favour this reading; they joy before thee; they come before thee in holy ordinances with great joy; their mirth is not like that of Israel under the law; Gad, they are spiritual men; their joy is not increased that joy; but it is in the favour of God and in the tokens of his grace." Note, The gospel, when it comes in its light and power, brings joy along with it, and those who receive it aright, therefore in do rejoice, and will rejoice; therefore the conversion of the nations is prophesied of by this, Ps. lxvii. 4. Let the nations be glad, and sing for joy, Ps. cxvi. 10. It is holy joy; "let my joy before thee;" they rejoice in spirit, (as Christ did, Luke x. 21.) and that is before God. In the eye of the world, they are always as sorrowful, and yet, in God's sight, always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10. 2. It is great joy, it is according to the joy in harvest, when those who sowed in tears, and have with long patience waited for the precious fruits of the earth, in the joy of harvest, and a hard conflict, as the soldier, before he has the joy of dividing the spoil; but the joy, when it comes, will be the abundant recompense for the toil. See Acts viii. 39.

III. Of a glorious liberty and enlargement; (v. 4, 5.) "They shall rejoice before thee, and with good reason, for thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and made him easy, for he shall no longer
be in servitude, and then hast broken the staff of his shoulder, and the rod of his oppressor, that red of the wicked which rested long on the lot of the righteous;" as the Middimites' yoke was broken from of neck of Israel by the agency of Gideon. If G as makes matter deliverances his patterns in working for us, we ought to make them known at home, and to seek to him; (Ps. lxxxiii. 9.) Do unto them as to the Middimites. What temporal deliverance this refers to, is not clear, probably, the preventing of Smocharebb from making himself master of Jerusalem, which was done, as in the day of Midian, by the immediate hand of God; and whereas other battles were usually won with a great deal of loss, and by the death of the conqueror, this shall be without blood and without noise; Under his glory God shall kindle a burning; (ch. x. 16.) a fire not blown shall consume him, Job xx. 26. But doubtless it falls further, to the blessed fruits and effects of that great light which should visit them that sit in darkness; it would bring liberty along with it, deliverance to the captives, Luke iv. 18. 1. The design of the gospel, and the grace of God, is to break the yoke of sin and Satan, to remove the burden of guilt and corruption, and to free us from the rod of those oppressors, that we might be brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Christ brake the yoke of the ceremonial law, (Acts xx. 10. Gal. v. 1.) and delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear, Luke i. 74, 75. 2. This is done by the spirit working like fire, (Matth. iii. 11.) not as the battle of the warrior is fought, with confounded noise; nor, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but it is done with the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, ch. iv. 4. It is done as in the day of Midian, by a work of God upon the hearts of men. Christ is our Gideon; it is his sword that doeth work.

But who, is he that shall undertake and accomplish these great things for the church? He tells us, (v. 6, 7.) they shall be done by the Messiah, Immanuel, that son of a virgin, whose birth he had foretold, (ch. vii. 14.) and now speaks of, in the prophetic style, as a thing already done: the Child is born; not only because it was as certain, and he was as certain of its accomplishment as if of an event near at hand, but because the church, before his incarnation, reaped great benefit and advantage by his undertaking in the virtue of that first promise concerning the Seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 15. As he was the Lamb slain, so he was the Child born, from the foundation of the world, Rev. xii. 8. All the great things that God did for the Old Testament church, were done by him as the eternal Word, and for his sake as the Mediator. He was the Anointed, to whom God had respect, (Ps. lxxxiv. 9.) and it was for the Lord's sake, for the Lord Christ's sake, that God caused his face to shine upon his sanctuary, Dan. ix. 17. Therefore the Jewish nation, and particularly the house of David, were preserved many a time from imminent ruin, because that blessing was in attendance of Israel built him, and was given to the church of God then, that it should be preserved, and be the special care of Divine Providence, than this, that God had so great a mercy in reserve for it? The Chaldee Paraphrase understands it of the Man that shall endure for ever, even Christ. And it is an illustrious prophecy of him and of his kingdom, which doubtless they that waited for the exaltation of Israel built much upon, often turned to, and read with pleasure. (1.) See him in his humiliation; the same that is the mighty God, is a Child born; the Ancient of Days becomes the Infant of a span long; the everlasting Father is a Son given. Such was his condition in taking our nature upon him; thus did he humble and empty himself, to exalt and fill us. He is born into our world: the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He is given, freely given, to be all that to us, which our case, in our fallen state, calls for; God so loved the world, that he gave him. He is born to procure atonement for sin, to all the angels that sinned; it is spoken with an air of triumph, and the angel seems to refer to these words in the notice he gives to the shepherds of the Messiah's being come; (Luke ii. 11.) unto you is born, this day, a Saviour. Note, Christ's being born and given to us, is the great foundation of our hopes, and fountain of our joys, in times of greatest grief and fear.

(2.) See him in his exaltation; this Child, this Son, this Son of God, this Son of man, that is given to us, in a capacity to do us a great deal of kindness; for he is invested with the highest honour and power, so that we cannot but be happy if he be our Friend.

[1.] See the dignity he is advanced to, and the name he has above every name. He shall be called (and therefore we are sure he is, and shall be,) Wonderful, Counsellor, &c. His people shall know him, and worship him, by these names; and as one that fully answers them, they shall submit to him, and depend upon him.

First, He is Wonderful, Counsellor. Justly he is called Wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is without measure, and his wisdom is without end. He is by him that God has set above all things in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended him, and, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning him. He is the Counsellor, for he was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and he gives counsel to the children of men, in which he consults our welfare, and parts with none of his secret things. He is the Wonderful Counsellor, Ps. xvi. 7. Rev. iii. 18. He is the Wisdom of the Father, and is made of God to us Wisdom. Some join these together; He is the Wonderful Counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, he has the pre-eminence; none teaches like him.

Secondly, He is the mighty God; God, the mighty One. As he has wisdom, so he has strength, to go with his wisdom. This is he that has given his Son to the uttermost; and such is the work of the Mediator, that no less a power than that of the mighty God could accomplish it.

Thirdly, He is the everlasting Father, or the Father of eternity; he is God, one with the Father, who is from everlasting to everlasting. His fatherly care of his people and tenderness toward them are everlasting. He is the Author of everlasting light and tenderness to them, and so is the Father of a blessed eternity to them. He is the Father of the world to come; so the LXX read it; the Father of the gospel-state, which is put in subjection to him, not to the angels, Heb. i. 5. He was, from eternity, Father of the great work of Redemption: his heart was upon it; it was the product of his wish as the Counsellor; of his love, as the everlasting Father.

Fourthly, He is the Prince of Peace: as a King, he preserves the peace, commands peace, may, he creates peace, in his kingdom. He is Our Peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people, and rules in them. He is not only a peaceable Prince, and his reign peaceable, but he is the Author and Giver of all peace, all that peace which is the present and future bliss of his subjects.

[2.] See the dominion he is advanced to, and the throne he has, above every throne; (v. 6.) The government shall be upon his shoulder; his title: he shall not only wear the badge of it upon his
Therefore and shall God for men's shall not the the evidence shall. 

For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts. 

Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day.

The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. 

For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed.

Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is a hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly. 

For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

For wickedness burneth as the fire: it shall devour the briers and thorns, and they shall kindle in the thickets of the forest; and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke.

Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.

And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: 

Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Here are terrible threatenings, which are directed primarily against Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Ephraim and Samaria, the ruin of which is here foretold, with all the woful confusions that were the prefaces to that ruin, all which came to pass within a few years after; but they look further, to all the enemies of the throne and kingdom of Christ the Son of David, and read the doom of all nations that forget God, and will not have Christ to reign over them.

I. The preface to this prediction; (r. 8.) The Lord sent a word into Jacob; sent it by his servants the prophets; he warns before he wounds; he sent notice what he would do, that they might meet him in the way of his judgments, but they would not take the hint, took no care to turn away his wrath, and so it lighted upon Israel; for no word of God shall fall to the ground. It fell upon them as a storm of rain and hail from on high, which they could not avoid. 

"It has lighted upon them; it is as sure to come as if it were come already; and all the people shall know by feeling it, what they would not know by hearing of it." Those that are willingly ignorant of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin and sinners, shall be made to know it.

II. The sins charged upon the people of Israel,
which provoked God to bring these judgments upon them.

1. Their insolent defiance of the justice of God, thinking themselves a match for him; they say, "in the pride and stoutness of their heart, "Let God himself do his worst, we will hold our own, and make our part good with him; if he ruin our houses, we will repair them, and make them stronger and firmer than they were before; and God the Lord shall turn us out of doors, though we pay him no rent, but we will keep in possession. If the houses that were built of bricks, be demolished in the war, we will rebuild them with hewn stones, that shall not so easily be thrown down. If the enemy cut down the sycamores, we will plant cedars in the room of them. We will make a hand of God's judgments, gain by them, and so outbrave them." Note, Those are ripening fields for ruin, whose hearts are unburdened under humiliating provusions; for God will walk contrary to those who thus walk contrary to him, and provoke him to jealousy, as if they were stronger than he.

2. Their incorrigibility under all the rebukes of providence hitherto; (v. 15.) The people then not to return, shall be brought upon to reform their lives, to forsake their sins, and to return to their duty; neither do they seek the Lord of hosts; either they are atheists, and have no religion, or idolaters, and seek to those gods that are the creatures of their own fancy, and the works of their own hands. Note, That which God designs, in smiting us, is, to turn us to himself, and to set us a seer, or to be a prophet to us, that we may see our judgments, greater may be expected. God smites, that he may not kill.

3. Their general corruption of manners and abounding profaneness. (1.) Those that should have reformed them, helped to debauch them; (v. 18.) The leaders of these people mislead them, and cause them to err; by conniving at their wickedness, and countenancing wicked people, and by setting them bad examples; and then no wonder if they that are led of them be deceived, and so destroyed; but it is ill with a people when their physicians are their worst disease. They that bless this people, or call them blessed, (so the margin reads it,) that flatter them, and soothe them up in their wickedness, and cry Peace, peace, to them, they cause them to err; for one of the saved shall be cut off from them, and swallowed up ere they are aware. We have reason to be afraid of those that speak well of us when we do ill; see Prov. xxiv. 24—xxv. 5. (2.) Wickedness was universal, and all were infected with it; (v. 17.) Every one is a hypocrite and evil-doer. If there be any that are good, they do not, they dare not, appear; for every mouth speaks folly and vain; every one is profane toward God, (so the word properly signifies,) and an evil-doer toward man; these two commonly go together; they that fear not God, regard not man; and then every mouth speaks folly, falsehood, and reproach, both against God and man; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

III. The judgments threatened against them for this imageSize of theirs; let them not think to go unpunished.

1. In general, hereby they exposed themselves to the wrath of God, which should both devour as fire, and darken as smoke. (1.) It should devour as fire; (v. 18.) Wickedness shall burn as the fire; the displeasure of God, incurred by sin, shall consume the sinners, who have made themselves as briars and thorns; we are as the thorns of the forest, combustible matter, which the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the mighty God, will go through, and burn together. (2.) It should darken as smoke; the briars and thorns, when the fire consumes them, shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke, so that the whole land shall be darkened by it; they shall be in trouble, and see no way out; (v. 19.) The people shall be as the fuel of the fire. God's wrath fastens upon none but those that make themselves fuel for it, and then they mount up as the smoke of sacrifices, being made victims to divine justice.

2. God would make the neighboring powers against them, v. 11, 12. At this time, the Kingdom of Israel was in league with that of Syria against Judah; but the Assyrians, who were adversaries to the Syrians, when they had conquered them, should invade Israel; and God will stir them up to do it, and join the enemies of Israel together in alliance against them, who yet have particular ends of their own to serve, and are not ashamed of God's hand in their alliance. Note, (1.) When enemies increase up, and joined in confederacy against a people, God's hand must be acknowledged in it. (2.) Those that partake with each other in sin, as Syria and Israel in invading Judah, must expect to share in the punishment of sin. Nay, the Syrians themselves, whom they were now in league with, should be a scourge to them, (for it is no unusual thing for those that are made more and less together, to turn against each other, and make one another their torment,) and the Philistines behind; one attacking them in the front, the other flanking them, or falling upon their rear; so that they should be surrounded with enemies on all sides, who should devour them with open mouth, v. 12. The Philistines were not now looked upon as formidable enemies, and the Syrians were looked upon as fast friends; and yet these shall be the ruin of your Israel. When men's ways displease the Lord, he makes even their friends to be at war with them.

3. God would take from the midst of them those they confided in, and promised themselves help from, v. 14, 15. Because the people seek not God, those they seek to, and depend upon, shall stand them in no stead. The Lord will cut off head and tail, branch and rush, which is explained in the next verse. (1.) Their magistrates, that were honourable by birth and office, and were the ancients of the people, these were the head, these were the branch which they promised themselves spirit and fruit from; but because these caused them to err, they shall be cut off, and their dignity and power shall be no protection to them, when the abuse of their dignity and power was the great provocation; it was a judgment upon the people to have their princes cut off, though they were not such as they should be. (2.) Their prophets, their false prophets, were the tail and the rush, the most despis- able of all others. A wicked minister is the worst of men; Corruptio optimi est pesima—That which is best, proves, when corrupted, to be the worst. The blind led the blind, and so both fell into the ditch; and the blind leaders fell first, and fell undermost.

4. That the desolation should be as general as the corruption had been, and none should escape it, v. 17. (1.) Not those that were the objects of complacency: none shall be spared for love; The Lord shall have no joy in their young men, that were in the flower of their youth; nor will he say, God gently with the young men for my sake; no, "Let them fall with the rest, and with them let the seed of the next generation perish." (2.) Not those that were the objects of compassion; none shall be spared for pity; He shall not have mercy on the fatherless and widow, though he is, in a particular manner, their Patron and Protector; they had corrupted their way like all the rest; and if the poverty and helplessness of their state was not an argument with them to keep them from sin, they could not expect it should be an argument with God to protect them from judgments.
5. That they should pull one another to pieces, and every one should help forward the common ruin, and they should be cannibals to themselves and one another; so man shall share his brother, if he come in the way of his ambition or covetousness, or if he have any colour to be revenged on him; and how can they expect God should spare them, when they show no compassion one to another? Men's passions are not satisfied with their prey; they prey upon themselves for hunger, or upon their nearest relations that were as their own flesh, v. 20. This bespeaks, (1.) Great famine and scarcity; when men had pulled all they could to them, it was so little, that they were still hungry, at least God did not bless it to them; so that they eat and have not enough, Hagai i. 6. (2.) Great rapine and plunder; Iniquity is established upon the throne of the eldest; and the hedge of protection to men's estates, shall be plucked up, and every man shall think all that his own which he can lay his hands on; Non hostis ab hospite tutus—they live on the spoil, and the rites of hospitality are all violated. And yet when men thus catch at that which is none of their own, they are not satisfied. Covetous desires are insatiable, and this is extolled on that which is ill got, that it will never do well.

These intestine broils should be not only among particular persons and private families, but among the tribes; (v. 21.) Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim, Manasseh, though they be combined against Judah. They that could unite against Judah, could not unite with one another; but that sinful concordancy of theirs against their neighbours that dwelt securely by them, was justly punished by this separation of them one from another. Or, Judah having sinned like Manasseh and Ephraim, shall not only suffer with them, but suffer by them. Note, Mutual enmity and animosity among the tribes of God's Israel, is a sin that ripens them for ruin, and a sad symptom of ruin hastening on apace. If Ephraim be against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, and both against Judah, they will all soon become a very easy prey to the common enemy.

6. That though they should be followed with all those judgments, yet God would not let fall his controversy with them. It is the heavy burthen of this song; (v. 12, 17, 21.) For all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still; (1.) They are not granted to turn away his anger; they do not repent and reform, they do not humble themselves and pray; none stand in the gap, none answer God's calls, nor comply with the designs of his providences, but they are hardened and secure. (2.) His anger therefore continues to burn against them, and his hand is stretched out still. The reason why the judgments of God are prolonged, is, because the people continue in their way, begin again to provoke them; the people turn not to him who emits them, and therefore he continues to smite them; for when God judges, he will overcometh and the proudest, stoutest sinner shall either bend or break.

CHAP. X.

The prophet, in this chapter, is dealing, 1. With the proud oppressors of his people at home, that abused their power, to pervert justice, whom he would reckon with for their tyranny, v. 1—4. 2. With a threatening invader of his people from abroad, Schacharib king of Assyria; concerning whom, observe, (1.) The commission given him to invade Judah, v. 5—6. His pride and insolence in the execution of that commission, v. 7—11, 13, 14. 3. A rebuke given to his haughtiness, and a threatening of his destruction, v. 12. 4. This is followed by the promise of which God raised him up, v. 12—15, 16. 4. A promise of grace to the people of God, to enable them to bear up under the affliction, and to get good by it, v. 20—23. 5. Great encouragement given to them not to fear the threatening storm, but to hope that, though for the present all the country was put into a great consternation by it, it would end well, in the destruction of this formidable enemy, v. 24—34. And this is intended to give the minds of good people, in reference to all the threatening efforts of the wrath of the church's enemies: if God be for us, who can be against us? None to do us any harm.

1. Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed: 2. To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! 3. And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory? 4. Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Whether they were the princes and judges of Israel, or Judah, or both, that this prophet denounced this woe against, is not certain; if those of Israel, these verses are to be joined with the close of the foregoing chapter; which is probable enough, because the burden of that prophecy (For all this, his anger is not turned away) is repeated here, v. 4. If those of Judah, they then show what was the particular sin for which God brought the Assyrian army upon them—to punish their magistrates for mal-administration, which they could not legally be called to account for. To them he speaks woe, before he speaks comfort to God's own people.

Here is, 1. The indictment drawn up against these oppressors, v. 1—2. They are charged, (1.) With making wicked laws and edicts: they decree unrighteous decrees, contrary to natural equity and justice, in laws and statutes contrary to God's word, especially those which put the rich oppressor up to enforced听见 which they made to write or draw up against the poor, by which they did not only rob them, but also injure them, and involve many in the guilt of doing wrong, (2.) With perverting justice in the execution of the laws that were made: no people had statutes and judgments so righteous as they had; and yet corrupt judges found ways to turn aside the law of the Lord from his judges, both in their coming at their right, and recovering what was their due, because they were needy and poor, and such as they could get nothing by, nor expect any bribes from. (3.) With enriching themselves by oppressing these that lay at their mercy, when they ought to have protected: they made widows' houses and estates their prey, and they rob the fatherless of the little that is left them, because they have no friend to appear for them. Not to relieve them if
they had wanted, not to right them if they were wronged, had been crime enough in men that had wealth and power; but to rob them because on the side of the oppressors there was power, and the oppressed had no comforter. (Eccle. iv. 3.) is such a piece of barbarity, as one would think, none could ever be guilty of, that had either the nature of a man, or the name of an Israelite.

2. A challenge given them with all their pride and power to outface the judgments of God; (v. 3.) "What will ye do? To whom will ye flee for help? You can triumph upon the widows and fatherless, but what will ye do when God riseth up?" Job xxxi. 14. God comes, who tramples over the poor, think then shall never be called to account for it, shall never hear of it again, or fare the worse for it; but shall not God visit for these things? Jer. v. 29. Will there not come a desolation upon those that have made others desolate? Perhaps it may come from far, and therefore may be long in coming; but it will come at last; repeivies are not pardons; and, coming from far, from a quarter whence it was least expected, it will be the greater surprise, and the more terrible. Now what will then become of these unrighteous judges? Now they see their help in the gate, Job xxxi. 21. But to whom will they then flee for help? Note, (1.) There is a day of visitation coming, a day of inquiry and discovery, a searching day, which will bring to light, to a true light, even in the dark. (2.) The day of visitation will be a day of desolation to all wicked people, when all their comforts and hopes will be lost and gone, and buried in ruin, and themselves left desolate. (3.) Impenitent sinners will be utterly at a loss, and will not know what to do in the day of visitation and desolation. They cannot fly and hide themselves, cannot fight it out and defend themselves. (4.) There is a day of visitation coming, to which either to shelter themselves from the present evil. (To whom will ye flee for help?) or to secure to themselves better times hereafter; "Where will ye leave your glory, to find it again when the storm is over?" The wealth they had got was their glory, and they had no place of safety in which to deposit that, but they should certainly see it flee away. If our souls be taken from us, our glory, as they ought to be, and we make them our chief care, we know where to leave them, and into whose hands to commit them, even those of a faithful Creator.

4. It concerns us all seriously to consider what we shall do in the day of visitation, in a day of affliction, in the day of death and judgment, and to provide that we may do well for ourselves. See how they are doomed, some to imprisonment and captivity; They shall how down among the prisoners, or under them; those that were most highly elevated in sin, shall be most heavily loaded, and most deeply sunk in trouble; others to death, they shall fall first, and so shall fall under the rest of the slain; they that had trampled upon the widows and fatherless, shall themselves be trodden down; (v. 4.) "The day is come," says God, "without me; because you have deserted me, and driven me away from you." Nothing but utter ruin can be expected by those that live without God in the world; that cast him behind their back, and so cast themselves out of his protection.

5. O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

6. I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. 7. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. 8. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? 9. Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? 10. As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; 11. Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. 13. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man: 14. And my hand hath found, as a nest, the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped. 15. Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith, or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that hewed it up, or as if the staff should lift itself, as if it were no wood. 16. Therefore shall the LORD, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. 17. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; 18. And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body; and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. 19. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.
ISAIAH, X.

led siege to Jerusalem, (2 King xviii. 13.) in consequence of which, we may well suppose Hezekiah and his kingdom were greatly alarmed, though there was a good work of reformation lately begun among them: but it ended well, in the confusion of the Assyrians, and the great encouragement of Hezekiah and his people in their return to God.

Note.

I. How God, in his sovereignty, deputed the king of Assyria to be his servant, and made use of him as a mere tool to serve his own purposes with; (v. 3, 6.) “A Assyrian, know this, thou art the rod of mine anger; and I will send thee to be a scourg for the people of my wrath.” Observe here, 1. How bad the character of the Assyrians was; they were very great; they are a hypocritical nation, that made a profession of religion, and, at this time particularly, of reformation, but were not truly religious, not truly reformed, not so good as they pretended to be, now that Hezekiah had brought goodness into fashion. When rulers are pious, and so religion is in reputation, it is common for nations to be hypocritical; they are a profane nation; some read it, Hezekiah’s rod, that is, God’s rod, a great measure cured them of their idolatry, and now they run into profaneness; nay, hypocrisy is profaneness: none profane the name of God so much as those who are called by that name, and call upon it, and yet live in sin. Being a profane hypocritical nation, they are the people of God’s wrath; they lie under his wrath, and are likely to be numbered to it. N. C. He pleads to make use of the people of God’s wrath; nothing is more offensive to God than dissimulation in religion. See what a change sin made: they that had been God’s chosen and hallowed people, above all, were now become the people of his wrath, See Amos iii. 2. 2. How mean the character of the Assyrian is, though he appeared very great; he is but the rod of God’s anger; an instrument God is pleased to make use of for the chastening of his people, that, being thus chastened of the Lord, they may not be condemned with the world. Note, The tyrants of the world are but tools of Providence. Men are God’s hand, his sword sometimes, to kill and slay, Ps. xviii. 13, 14. At other times, they are his rod to correct. The staff in their hand, wherewith they smite his people, is his indignation; it is his wrath that puts the mark of his displeasure upon their heads, and enables them to deal blows at pleasure among such as thought themselves a match for them. Sometimes God makes an idolatrous nation, that serves him not at all, a scourge to an hypocritical nation, that serves him not in sincerity and truth.

The Assyr is called the rod of God’s anger, because he is employed by him. (1.) From his hand, God’s power is derived; I will send him, I will give him a charge. Note, All the power that wicked men have, though they often use it against God, they always receive from him. Pilate could have no power over Christ, unless it was given him from above, John xix. 11. (2.) By him the exercise of that power is directed. The Assyrian is to take the spoil, and to take the prey, not to shed any blood; not to read not of any skin, but he is to plunder the country, rifle the houses, drive the cattle, and strip them of all their wealth and ornaments, and tread them down like the mire of the streets. When God’s professing people wallow in the mire of sin, it is just with God to suffer their enemies to tread upon them like mire. But why must the Assyrian prevail thus against them? Not that they might be punished, but that they might be thoroughly reformed.

II. See how the king of Assyria, in his pride, magnified himself as his own master, and pretended to be above all, and above all control; to act pure according to his own will, and for his own honour. God ordained him for judgment, even the mighty God established him for correction, (Hab. i. 12.) to be an instrument of bringing his people to repentance; howbeit, he means not so, nor does his heart think so, v. 7. He does not think that he is either God’s servant, or Israel’s friend; either that he can do no more than God will let him, or that he will do no more than God will make to work for the good of his people. God designs to correct his people for, and so to cure them of, their hypocrisy, and bring them nearer to him; but was that Sennacherib’s design? No, it was the furthest thing from his thoughts: he means not so. Note, 1. The wise God often makes even the sinful passions and projects of men subservient to his own great and holy purposes. He will make instruments of them, sovereign instruments in his hand to do his work, it is very common for him to mean one thing, and them to mean another; may, for them to mean the quite contrary to what he intends. What Joseph’s brethren designed for hurt, God overruled for good, Gen. i. 20. See Mic. iv. 11, 12. Men have their ends, and God has his, but we are sure the counsel of the Lord shall stand. But what is it the proud Assyrian aims at? The heart of kings is unsearchable, but God knew what was in his heart: he designs nothing but to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few, and to make himself master of them. (1.) He designs to gratify his own cruelty; nothing will serve but to destroy, and cut off. He hopes to regale himself with blood and slaughter; that of particular persons he will have a great deal, and that of nations, he will make him toodle by retail, he traffics in murder by wholesale; nations, and those not a few, must have but one neck, which he will have the pleasure of cutting off. (2.) He designs to gratify his own covenutious and ambition, to set up for a universal monarch, and to gather unto him all nations, Hab. ii. 13. An insatiable desire of wealth and dominion, is that which carries him on in this undertaking.

The prophet here brings him in vaunting and hectoring; and by his general’s letter to Hezekiah, written in his name, vainglory and arrogance seem to have entered very far into the spirit and genius of the man. His haughtiness and presumption are here described very largely, and his very language copied out, partly to represent him as ridiculous, and partly to mock him. Thus he might be brought down; for that maxim generally holds true that pride goes before destruction. It also intimates, that God takes notice, and keeps an account, of all men’s proud and haughty words, with which they set heaven and earth at defiance. They that speak great swelling words of vanity, shall hear of them again.

[2.] He boasts what great things he has done to other nations. First, He has made his kings his courtiers; (v. 8.) “My princes are altogether kings; those that are now my princes, as such have been kings.” Or, he means that he had raised his throne to that degree, that his servants, and those that were in command under him, were as great, and lived in as much pomp, as the kings of other countries; nor that he, himself, in his own dominions, held their crowns under him, and did him homage. This was a vainglorious boast; but how great is our God whom we serve, who is indeed King of kings, and whose subjects are made to him kings! Rev. i. 6. Secondly, He has made himself master of their cities; he names several, (v. 9.) that were all alike reduced by him; and which were reduced as Conimbricia did; Hanno could not hold out any more than Arpad; and Samaria is become his, as well as Damascus. To support his boasts, he is obliged to bring the victories of his predecessor into the account; for it was he that conquered Samaria, not Sennacherib. Thirdly, He had been too hard for their idols, their tutelae
So (like make!) he was no Fourthly, Downright For So If He Israel dismal It am 2. come OTse he had cess tom hand, which was the constant practice of the Assyrians in all their conquests; this is a probable interpretation. Fifthly, He had enriched himself with their wealth, and brought it into his own exchequer; I have robbed their treasurers. In that, he said truly. Great conquerors are often no better than great robbers. Lastly, He had mastered all the opposition he met with; “I have put down the inhabitants as a valiant man: those that sat high, and thought they sat firm, I have humbled, and made to come down.”

He boasts, 1. That he had done all this by his own power and spirit (v. 8.) By the strength of my hand, for I am valiant; and by my wisdom, for I am prudent: not by the permission of providence, and the blessing of God: he knows not that it is God that makes him what he is, and puts the staff into his hand, but sacrifices to his own net, Hab. 1. 16. It is all gotten by my might, and the power of my hand, Dant. v. 17. Downright atheism and profanity! He believes himself to be the end and aim of the whole motion of men’s attributing their prosperity and success thus to themselves and their own conduct, and raising their own character upon it. 2. That he had done this with a great deal of ease, and had made but a sport and diversion of it, as if he had been taking birds’ nests; (v. 14.) My hand has found as a nest the riches of the people; and when he had found them, there was no more difficulty in taking them than in ridding a nest, nor any more reluctance or regret with his own breast, in destroying families and cities, than in destroying crows’ nests: killing children was no more to him than killing birds. “As one gathers the eggs that are left in the nest by the dam, so easily have I gathered all the earth.” (like Alexander, he thought he had conquered the world) and whatever prey he seized, there was none that moved the valiant One opened the mouth, or feasted, as birds do when their nests are rifled; they durst not make any opposition, no, nor any complaint; such afe did they stand in of this mighty conqueror; they were so weak, that they knew it was to no purpose to resist; and he was so arbitrary, that they knew it was to no purpose to resist. He was no more than the man, who was made to do good, should takethisapart, and takes pleasure in doing wrong, and doing mischief to all about them without control; and should reckon that their glory which is their shame! But their day will come to fall, who thus make themselves the terror of the mighty, and much more of the feeble, in the land of the living.

See how ignorant he was, and then we shall the less wonder that he was so proud. Secondly, He prefers the graven images of other countries before those of Jerusalem and Samaria, when he might have known that the worshippers of the God of Israel were expressly forbidden to make any graven images, and if any did, it must be by stealth, and therefore they could not be so rich and pompous as those of other nations. If he mean the ark and the mercy-seat, he speaks like himself, very foolishly, and as one that judged by the sight of the eye, and might therefore be easily deceived in matters of spiritual concern. Those who make external pomp and splendor a mark of the true church, go by the same rule. Thirdly, Because he had conquered Samaria, he concludes Jerusalem would fall of course; “shall not I do so to Jerusalem? Can I act as easily, and may I not as justly?” But it did not follow; for Jerusalem adhered to her God, whereas Samaria had forsaken him.

II. See how God, in his justice, rebukes his pride, and reads his doom. We have heard what the great king, the king of Assyria, says, and how big he talks: let us now hear what the great God has to say by his servant the prophet, and we shall find, wherein he deals proudly, God is above him.

1. He shows the vanity of his insolent and audacious boasts; (v. 15.) Shall the axe boast itself against him that hews with it? Or, Shall the saw magnify itself against him that draws it? So absurd are the boasts of this proud man. “O what a dust do I make!” says the axe. Two ways the axe may be said to boast itself against him that hews with it; (1.) By way of resistance and opposition. Samaria and Jerusalem are the wood, and he, the saw or woodcutter, as he has served the gods of the nations; now this was as if the axe should fly in the face of him that hews with it. The tool striving with the workman is no less absurd than the hay striving with the potter: and as it is a thing not to be justified, that men should fight against God with the wit, and wealth, and power, which he gives them, so it is a thing not to be suffered; but if men will be thus proud and daring, and bid defiance to all that is just and sacred, let them expect that God will reckon with them; the more insolent they are, the surer and sorrier will their ruin be. (2.) By way of rivalry and competition. Shall the axe take to itself the praise of the work it is employed in? So senseless, so absurd, was it for Sennacherib to say, by the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, v. 15. It is as if the rod, when it is shaken, should boast that it guides the hand which shakes it; whereas when the staff is lifted up, is it not wood still? So the last clause may be read. If it be an ensign of authority, (as the nobles of the people carried staves, Num. xxi. 18.) if it be an instrument of service, either to support a weak man, or to correct a stubborn one, it is still but nothing else as it is directed by him that uses it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations know that they were but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) the staff to know that it is but wood.

2. He foretells his fall and ruin. (1.) That when God hath done his work for him, he will then do his work upon him. (2.) For the contempt of the people of God, the word, and can do nothing but as it is directed by him that uses it. The psalmist prays that God would make the nations know that they were but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) the staff to know that it is but wood.

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order to the performing of some great good work upon them; and when that is done, then, and not till then, he will work deliverance for them. When God brings his people into trouble, it is to try them, (Dan. xi. 53.) to bring sin to their remembrance, and humble them for it, and to awaken them to a sense of their duty, to teach them to pray, and to love and help one another; and this must be the fruit of these afflictions. When these points are, in some measure, gained by the affliction, it shall be removed in mercy, (Lev. xxvi. 41, 42.) otherwise not; for as the word, so the rod, shall accomplish that for which God sends it.

2. That when God had wrought this work of grace for his people, he would work a work of wrath and vengeance upon their invaders; I will punish them, saith God, by the rod of Asyria. His big words are here said to come from his stout heart, and they are the fruit of it, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; notice is taken too of the glory of his high looks, for a proud look is the indication of a proud spirit. The enemies of the church are commonly very high and haughty; but, sooner or later, God will reckon for that. He glories in it as an incontestable proof of his power. He will show them that he is a king upon proud men, and abases them, Job xli. 11, &c.

2. That how threatening soever this attempt was upon Zion and Jerusalem, it should certainly be baffled and broken, and come to nothing, and he should not be able to bring to pass his enterprise, v. 16—19.

Observe, (1.) Who it is that undertakes his destruction, and will be the Author of it: not Hezekiah, or his princes, or the militia of Judah and Jerusalem; (what can they do against such a potent force?) but God himself will do it, as the Lord of hosts, and as the Light of Israel. First, We are sure he can do it, for he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth; all the creatures are at his command, he makes what use he pleases of them, and lays what restraints he pleases on them. He is the Lord of the hosts both of Judah and of Assyria, and can give the victory to which he pleases. Let us not fear the hosts of any enemy, if we have the Lord of hosts for us. Secondly, We have reason to hope he will do it, for he is the Light of Israel, and his Holy One. God is Light; in him are perfect brightness, purity, and happiness. He is Light, for he is the Holy One; his holiness is his glory. He is Israel, and Israel is Light. He shall be forthwith discovered, and prophesied, and crowned with favour and countenance them, and so to rejoice and comfort them in the worst of times. He is their Holy One, for he is in covenant with them; his holiness is engaged and employed for them. God's holiness is the saints' comfort; they give thanks at the remembrance of it, and with a great deal of pleasure, call him their Holy One, Hab. i. 13.

2. How this destruction is represented. It shall be Fire, a devouring of the body by a disease: The Lord shall send leanness among his fatness, or his fat ones. His numerous army, that was like a body covered with fatness, shall be diminished, and waste away, and become like a skeleton. Secondly, as a consumption of buildings, or trees and bushes, by fire; Under his glory, that very thing which he en the taking away of such, ch. xxvii. 9, 10, of fire, burning of a fire, which shall lay his army in ruins, as suddenly as a raging fire lays a stately house in ashes. Some make it an allusion to the fire kindled under the sacrifices, for proud sinners fall as sacrifices to divine justice. Observe, 1. How this fire shall be kindled, v. 17. The same God that is a rejoicing Light to them that serve him faithfully, will be a consuming Fire to them that trifle with him, or rebel against him; the Light of Israel shall be Fire to the Assyrians, as the same pillar of cloud was a light to the Israelites, and a terror to the Egyptians, in the Red sea. What can oppress what can extinguish, such a fire? 2. What devastation it shall make; It shall burn and devour its thorns and briers, his officers and soldiers, which are of little worth, and vexations to God's Israel, as thorns and briers, whose end is to be burned, and which are easily and quickly consumed by a devouring fire; (ch. xxxvii. 5.) Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? They will be so far from stopping the fire, that they will inflame it; I would go through them and burn them together; they shall be devoured in one day, all cut off in an instant. When they cried not only Peace and safety, but Victory and triumph, then sudden destruction came; it came surprisingly, and was consummated in a little moment. (v. 18.) The choice troops of his army, the veterans, the troops of the household, the bravest regiments he had, that he was most proud of, and depended most upon, that he values, as men do their timber-trees, the glory of their forest, or their fruit-trees, the glory of their Carmel; those shall be put as briers and thorns before the fire; they shall be consumed both soul and body, entirely consumed, not only a few but many; not only a few but all, for in all, as many as would be able to destroy both soul and body, and therefore we should fear him more than men, who can but kill the body; great armies before him are but as great woods, which he can fell or fire when he pleases.

And what would be the effect of this great slaughter? The prophet tells us, (1.) That the army would be reduced to a very small number. The rest of the trees of his forest shall be few! very few shall escape the sword of the destroying angel, so few that there needs no artist, no master-master, or secretary of war, to take an account of them, for even a child may soon reckon the numbers of them, and write the names of them. (2.) That those few who remained, should be quite displeased; They shall be as when a standard-bearer faints; when he either falls or flees, and his colours are taken by the enemy, this discourages the whole army, and puts them all into confusion. Upon the whole matter we must say, Who is able to stand before this great and holy Lord God?

20. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them: but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. 22. For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. 23. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.

The prophet had said, (v. 12.) that the Lord would perform his whole work upon Mount Zion and upon Jerusalem, by Sennacherib's invading of the land; now here we are told what that work should be. A two-fold work:

1. The conversion of some, to whom this providence should be sanctified, and yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, though for the present it was not joyful, but grievous; these are but a remnant; (v. 22.) the remnant of Israel, (v. 20.) the remnant of Jacob, (v. 21.) but a very few in comparison with
the vast numbers of the people of Israel, which were as the sand of the sea. Note, Converting work is wrought but on a remnant, who are distinguished from the rest, and set apart for God. When we see how populous Israel is, how numerous the members of the visible church are, as the sand of the sea, and yet consider that of those a remnant only shall be saved, that is very convicting, for if it be few among them, we shall surely strive to enter in at the strait gate, and fear lest we seem to come short. The remnant of Israel are said to be such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, such as escaped the corruptions of the house of Jacob, and kept their integrity in times of common apostacy; and that was a fair escape. And therefore they escape the desolations of that house, and be preserved in safety, in times of common calamity; and that also will be a fair and narrow escape. Their lives shall be given them for a prey; (Jer. xv. 5.) the righteous scarcely are saved.

Now, (1.) This remnant shall come off from all confidence in an arm of flesh; this providence shall cure them of that; they shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, shall never depend upon the Assyrians, as they have done for his help against their other enemies, finding that they are themselves their worst enemies; Ictus piscator saith—Sufferings teach caution. They have now learned, by dear-bought experience, the folly of leaning upon that staff as a stay to them, which may perhaps prove a staff to beat them; it is a part of the covenant of a returning people, (Hos. xiv. 5.) as a thing for one use. Note, By our afflictions we may learn not to make creatures our confidence. (2.) They shall come home to God, to the mighty God, (one of the names given to the Messiah, ch. ix. 6.) to the Holy One of Israel. The remnant shall return; (that was signified by the name of the prophet's son, Shear-jashub, ch. vii. 3.) even the remnant of Jacob: they shall return after the raising of the siege of Jerusalem, not only to the quiet possession of their houses and lands, but to God and to their duty; they shall repent and pray, and seek his face, and reform their lives. The remnant that escape, are a returning remnant; they shall return to God, and shall stay upon him. Note, Those only may with comfort stay upon God, that return to him; then may we have a humble confidence in God, and a true experience of his people.

They shall stay upon the Holy One of Israel, in truth, and not in pretence and profession only. This promise of the conversion and salvation of a remnant of Israel now, is applied by the apostle, (Rom. ix. 27.) to the remnant of the Jews, which, at the first preaching of the gospel, received and entertained it; and sufficiently proves, that it was no new thing for God to abandon to ruin a great many of the seed of Abraham, and yet preserve his promise to Abraham in full force and virtue; for so it was now. The number of the children of Israel was as the sand of the sea, (according to the promise, Gen. xxii. 17.) and yet only a remnant shall be saved. 2. The consumption of others; The Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption; (v. 25.) this is not meant (as that v. 18.) of the consumption of the Assyrian army, but of the consumption of the estates and families of many of the Jews by the Assyrian army. This is taken notice of, to magnify the power and goodness of God in the escape of the distinguished remnant, and to let us know what shall become of those that will not return to God; they shall be wasted away by this consumption, this general desire that over the midst of the land. Observe, (1.) It is a consumption of God's own making: he is the author of it; the Lord God of hosts, whom none can resist, he shall make this consumption. (2.) It is decreed, it is not the product of a sudden resolve, but

was before ordained; it is determined, not only, that there shall be such a consumption, but it is cut out, (so the word is,) it is particularly appointed, how far it shall extend, and how long it shall continue, who shall be consumed by it, and who not. (3.) It is an overflowing consumption, in that shall overspread the land, and, like a mighty torrent or inundation, shall come down all before it. (4.) Though it overflows, it is not to judgment, but in righteousness, which signifies both wisdom and equity. God will justly bring this consumption upon a provoking people, but he will wisely and graciously set bounds to it; Hitherto it shall come, and no further.

24. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian; he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. 25. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction. 26. And the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. 27. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing. 28. He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmas he hath laid up his carriages: 29. They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. 30. Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim; cause it to be heard unto Laish. O poor Anathoth. 31. Madmenah is removed; the habitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. 32. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. 33. Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall hop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. 34. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forests with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one.

The prophet, in his preaching, distinguishes between the precious and the vile; for God, in his providence, even in the same providence, does set he speaks terror, in Sennacherib's invasion, to the hypocrites, who were the people of God's love, iv. 8. But here he speaks comfort to the sincere, who were the people of God's love. The judgment was sent for the sake of the former, the deliverance was wrought for the sake of the latter. Here we have: 1. An exhortation to God's people, not to be frightened at this threatening calamity, nor to be put into any confusion or consternation, but (v. 24.) Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, ch. xxxiii. 14. O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian. Note, It is against the mind and will of God, that his people, whatever happens
ISAIAH, X.

shall give way to that fear which has hurried them into BroadcastReceiver.
They that dwell in Zion, where God dwelleth, and whither God hath brought him, shall be under the protection of the bulwarks that are round about Zion, (Ps. lxxvi. 13.) need not be afraid of any enemy. Let their souls dwell at ease in God.

II. Considerations offered for the silencing of their fear.

1. The Assyrian shall do nothing against them but that God hath determined and determined; they are not told beforehand what he should do, that it may be no surprise to them, "He shall smite thee by the divine permission, but it shall be only with a rod to correct thee, not with a sword to wound and kill; may, he shall but lift up his staff against thee, threaten thee, and frighten thee, and shake the rod at thee, after the manner of Egypt, as the Egyptians shook their staff against the rivers of the Red sea, when they said, We will pursue, we will overtake, (Exod. xv. 9.) but could not reach to do them any hurt." Note, We should not be frightened at those enemies that can do no more than frighten us.

2. The storm will soon blow over; (v. 25.) Yet a very little while, a little, little while, (so the word is,) and the indignation shall cease even as the staff is in their hand, (v. 3.) so that when that ceases, they are disarmed, and disabled to do any further mischief. Note, God's anger against his people is but for a moment; (Ps. xxx. 5.) and when that ceases, and is turned away from us, we need not fear the fury of any man, for it is impatient passion.

3. The evil that threatens them, shall himself be reckoned with; God's anger against his people shall cease in the destruction of their enemies; when he turns away his wrath from Israel, he shall turn it against the Assyrian; and the rod with which he corrected his people, shall not only be laid aside, but thrown into the fire. He lift up his staff against Zion, but God shall stir up a scoure for him; (v. 26.) he is a terror of God's people, but God will be a Terror to him; the destroying angel shall be this scourge; which he can neither flee from, nor contend with. The prophet, for the encouragement of God's people, quotes precedents, and puts them in mind of what God had done formerly against the enemies of his church, that were very strong and formidable, but were brought to ruin. The destruction of the Assyrian shall be, (1.) According to their services, (Midian, etc.) which makes him an invisible power, but done suddenly, and it was a total rout. And as at the rock of Oreb, one of the princes of Midian, after the battle, was slain, so shall Sennacherib be in the temple of his god Nisrach, after the defeat of his forces, when he thinks the bitterness of death is past. Compare with this, Ps. lxxxiii. 11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb; and see how God employs them at last. (2.) As his rod was upon the sea, the Red sea, as Moses's rod was upon that, to divide it, first for the escape of Israel, and then to close it again for the destruction of their pursuers, so shall his rod now be lifted up, after the manner of Egypt, for the deliverance of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Assyrian. Note, It is good to observe the resemblance between God's latter day and former appearances for his people, and against his and their enemies.

4. They shall be wholly delivered from the power of the Assyrian, and from the fear of it; (v. 27.) they shall not only be eased of the Assyrian army, which now quartered upon them, and which was a grievous yoke and burden to them, but they shall no more pay that tribute to your god of Asshur, which, before this invasion, he had exacted from them, (2 Kings xviii. 14.) shall be no longer his service, nor lie at his mercy, as they have done; but God shall lift up a Rod of Righteousness over them for a multitude and for a distribution. Some think it looks further, to the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and further yet, to the redemption of believers from the tyranny of sin and Satan. The yoke shall not only be taken away, but it shall be destroyed; the enemy shall no more recover his strength, to do the mischief he has done. And this, because of the triumphing of God's favour for their sake in the sight of the enemies.

1. (1.) For Hezekiah's sake, whose name is Jehovah, and was not that of the Lord, who had been an active reformer, and was dear to God. (2.) For David's sake; that is particularly given them as the reason why God would preserve Jerusalem from Sennacherib, (ch. xxxvii. 35.) For my own sake, and for my servant David's sake. (3.) For his people Israel's sake, then Ziph, people among them that had received the nation of divine grace. (4.) For the sake of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, whom God had an eye to in all the deliverances of the Old Testament church, and hath still an eye to in all the favours he shows to his people; it is for his sake that the yoke is broken, and that we are made free indeed.

III. A description both of the terror of the enemy, and the terror with which many were struck by it, and the folly of both exposed, v. 28, to the end.

Where observe,

1. How formidable the Assyrians were, and how daring and threatening they affected to appear. Here is a particular description of his march, what course he steered, what swift advances he made; he is come toAith, &c. This and the other places he has made himself master of, and has met with no opposition; At Michnoeah he has laid up his carriages, as if he had no further occasion for his heavy artillery, so easily was every place he came to reduced; yet, the store-cities of Judah, which were fortified for that purpose, were now become his magazines. Some remarkable pass, and an important one, he had taken, they are gone over the passage.

2. How cowardly the men of Judah were, the degenerate seed of that lion's whelp; they are afraid, they are fled upon the first alarm, and did not offer to make any head against the enemy; their apostacy from God had spirited them, so that one chases a thousand of them. Instead of a valiant shout, to animate one another, nothing was heard but lamentation, to discourage and weaken one another. And poor Anathoth, a priest's city, that should have been a pattern of courage, shrieks louder than any; (v. 36.) with respect to those that gathered themselves together, it was not to fight, but to flee by consent, v. 31. This is designed either, (1.) To show how fast the news of the enemies progress flew through the kingdom; He is come to Aith, says he not, let us rise on him; but the contrary. And yet, perhaps, it was not altogether so bad as common fame represented it. But we must watch against the fear, not only of evil things, but of evil tidings, which often make things worse than really they are, Ps. cxii. 7. Or, (2.) To show what imminent danger Jerusalem was in, when its enemies made so many bold advances towards it, and its friends were very backward to make any resistance. Note, The more daring the church's enemies are, and the more desperately those are that should appear for her, the more will God be exalted in his own strength, when, notwithstanding this, he works deliverance for her.

3. How impotent his attempt upon Jerusalem shall be; He shall remain at Noh, whence he set out, and there he shall shake his hand against it; (v. 32.) he shall threaten it, and that shall
be all; it shall be safe, and shall set him at defiance; the daughter of Jerusalem, to be even with him, shall shake her head at him, ch. xxxvii. 22.

4. How fatal it would prove, in the issue, to himself; when he shakes his hand at Jerusalem, and is about to lay hands on it as a lion is to sup- pear against him; for Zion is the place of which God has said, 'This is my rest for ever; therefore those who threaten it, affront God himself. Then the Lord shall lay the bough with terror, and cut down the thickets of the forests. v. 33, 34. (1) The pride of the enemy shall be humbled, and the boughs that are lifted up on high shall be lopped off; and the high and stately trees shall be hewn down. The haughtiness shall be humbled; those that lift up themselves in competition with God, or opposition to him, shall be abased. (2) The power of the enemy shall be broken; the thickets of the forest he shall cut down. When the Assyrian soldiers were under their arms, and their spears erect, they looked like a forest, like Lebanon: but when in one night they all became as dead corpses, the pikes were laid on the ground, and Lebanon was a sudden cut down by a mighty one, the destroying angel, who in a little time slew so many thousands of them: and if this shall be the exit of that proud invader, let not God's people be afraid of him. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?"

CHAP. XI.

It is a very good transition in prophecy, (whether it be so intended or not, is not here the case,) as we have seen in the prediction of the temporal deliverances of the church to that of the great salvation, which in the fulness of time shall be wrought out by Jesus Christ, of which the other prophecies spoke and shewed to which all the prophets bare witness; and the ancient Jews understood them. For what else was it that raised so great an expectation of the Messiah at the time he came. Upon occasion of the prophecy of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, here comes in a prophecy concerning Messiah the Prince: 1. His rise out of the house of David, v. 1. II. His qualifications for his great undertaking, v. 2, 3. 1. The justice and equity of his government, v. 3. 5. 2. The gentleness of his kingdom, v. 6, 8. 3. The accession of the Gentiles to it, (v. 10,) and with them the remnant of the Jews, that should be united with them in the Messiah's kingdom, v. 11, 16. And of all this, God is the author; and we have here a dark representation, in the excellent government of Hezekiah, the great peace which the nation should enjoy under him, after the ruin of Sennacherib's design, and the return of many of the ten tribes out of their dispersion to their brethren of the land of Judah, when they enjoyed that great tranquillity.

1. And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: 2. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; 3. And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. 4. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. 5. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. 6. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leop- ard shall be down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatting together; and a little child shall lead them. 7. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. 8. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet had before, in this sermon, spoken of a Child that should be born, a Son that should be given, on whose shoulders the government should be; intending this for the comfort of the people of God in times of trouble, as dying Jacob, many ages before, had intended the prospect of Shiloh, for the comfort of his seed in their affliction in Egypt. He had said, (ch. x. 27,) that the yoke should be destroyed because of the anointing; now here he tells us on whom that anointing should rest. He foretells, 1. That the Messiah should, in due time, arise out of the house of David, as that Branch of the Lord, which he had said (ch. iv. 2,) should be exalted among the Gentiles, and sit upon the throne of David; and, some think is referred to, Matth. ii. 23, where it is said to be spoken by the prophets of the Messiah, that he should be called a Nazaréan. Observe here, 1. Whence this Branch should arise: from Jesse. He should be the Son of David, with whom the covenant of royalty was made; and to whom it was promised with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins God would raise up Christ. Acts ii. 30. David is often called the son of Jesse, and Christ is called so, because he was to be not only the Son of David, but David himself, Hos. iii. 5.

2. The meanness of his appearance. (1. He is called a Rod, and a Branch; both the words here used signify a worm, a small, tender product, a twig, and a shrub; and some render them; such as is easily broken off. The explication of them was just before compared to strong and stately branches, (ch. x. 33,) which will not, without great labour, be hewn down; but Christ, to a tender branch; (ch. iii. 2,) yet he shall be victorious over them. (2. He is said to come out of Jesse, rather than David, because Jesse lived and died in meanness and obscurity; his family was of small account, (1 Sam. xvii. 18,) and it was in a way of contempt and reproach that David was sometimes called the son of Jesse, ch. xxii. 7. (3. He comes forth out of the stem, or stump, of Jesse; when the royal family that had been a cedar, was cut down, and only the stump of it left, almost levelled with the ground, and lost in the grass of the field, (Dan. iv. 15,) yet it shall sprout again, Job xiv. 5. Nay, it shall grow out of its roots, which are quite buried in the earth, and, like the roots of flowers in the winter, have no sight appearing above ground. The house of David was reduced and brought very low at the time of Christ's birth, witness the obscurity and poverty of Joseph and Mary. The Messiah was thus to begin his estate of humiliation, for submitting to which he should be highly exalted, and would thus give early notice that his kingdom was not of this world. The Chaldee Paraphrase reads this. There shall come forth a king from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah (or Christ,) shall be anointed out of his sons sons.
tender Branch should be so watered with the dews of heaven, as to become a strong Rod for a sceptre to rule; v. 2. 1. In general; the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and graces, shall not only come, but rest and abide, upon him; he shall have the Spirit not by measure, but without measure, the fuller font of the Father's love to his Son. His is the fullness of the Spirit. He began his preaching with this, (Luke iv. 18.) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. 2. In particular; the spirit of government, by which he should be every way fitted for that judgment which the Father has committed to him, and given him authority to execute, John v. 22, 27. And not only so, but he should be made the Father's anointed, the man concerning God, and his mind and will, he shall be himself acquainted with and apprised of, John i. 18. He shall know how to administer his spiritual kingdom in all the branches of it, so as effectually to answer the two great intentions of it, the glory of God, and the welfare of the children of men. The terms of the covenant shall be settled by him, and ordinances instituted, in wisdom; treasures of the Godhead dwell in him; he shall be our Counsellor, and shall be made of God to us Wisdom. (2.) The Spirit of courage, or might, or fortitude; the undertaking was very great, abundance of difficulty must be broken through, and therefore it was necessary that he should be so endued that he might not fail, or be discouraged, ch. xliii. 1. He was famed for courage in his teaching the way of God in truth, and not caring for any man, Matth. xxvii. 16. (3.) The Spirit of religion, or the fear of the Lord; not only he shall himself have a reverent affection for his Father, as his servant, (ch. xliii. 1.) and he was heard in that he feared, (Heb. v. 7.) but he shall have a zeal for religion, and shall design the advancement of it in his whole undertaking. Our faith in Christ was never designed to supersede and juggle out, but to prove and support, our hope in his day. (4.) The Spirit of wisdom, or understanding, or knowledge, that he should be accurate and critical, and very exact in the administration of his government, and the exercise of the power committed to him; (v. 3.) The Spirit wherewith he shall be clothed, shall make him of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord; of an acute sense or scent, so the word is, for the apprehensions of the mind are often expressed by the sensations of the body. Note. 1. There was most truly and valorously intelligent, that are so in the fear of the Lord, in the business of religion, for that is both the foundation and top-stone of wisdom. 2. By this it will appear that we have the Spirit of God, if we have spiritual senses exercised, and are of quick understanding, in the fear of the Lord; those who have divine illumination, that know their duty, and know how to go about it. (5.) There is a view of the whole undertakings of the Lord, how his power and love shall be to the nation, the whole land, Isa. xix. 19, 20. 3. of the whole undertaking. He has settled the great affair of religion so essentially well, (so as effectually to secure both God's honour and man's happiness,) that it must be owned, he thoroughly understood it.

IV. That he should be just and righteous in all the acts of his government, and there should appear in it as much equity as wisdom. He shall judge, as he expresses it himself, and as he himself would be judged, of John vii. 24. 1. Not according to outward appearance; (v. 3.) He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, with respect of persons (Ps. xvi. 5.) but he shall judge the outward actions and appearances, or reprove after the hearing of his ears, by common fame and report, and the representations of others, as men often do; nor does he judge of men by the fair words they speak, calling him Lord, Lord, or their plausible actions before the eye of the world, which they do to be seen of men; but he will judge by the hidden man of the heart, and the righteousness of God, and the wisdom of God, by which he is an infallible Witness. Christ will judge the secrets of men; (Rom. ii. 16.) will determine concerning them, not according to their own pretensions and appearances, that were to judge after the sight of the eyes; not according to the opinion others have of them, that were to judge after the hearing of the ears; but we are sure that his judgment is according to truth, according to his own knowledge, and his own principles of righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins; he shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle, it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, it shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall be in favour and defence of his undertakings, as a man with his lion's girt. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth, (Eph. vi. 14.) and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly,

(1.) He shall in righteousness plead for the people that are poor and oppressed; he will be their Protector; (v. 4.) with righteousness shall he judge the poor, shall judge in favour and defence of them, (Isa. xliii. 4.) his righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins; he shall be righteous in the administration of his government, and his righteousness shall be his girdle, it shall constantly compass him and cleave to him, it shall be his ornament and honour; he shall gird himself for every action, shall gird on his sword for war in righteousness; his righteousness shall be his strength, and shall be in favour and defence of his undertakings, as a man with his lion's girt. In conformity to Christ, his followers must have the girdle of truth, (Eph. vi. 14.) and it will be the stability of the times. Particularly,

(2.) He shall in righteousness plead against his enemies that are proud and oppressors; (v. 4.) But he shall with the rod of his mouth, the word of his mouth, speaking terror and ruin to them; his threatenings shall take hold of them, and be executed upon them; with the breath of his lips, by the operation of his Spirit, according to its word, and working mightily in the land, shall they be wrecked. He will do it easily, with a word's speaking, as he laid those flat who came to seize him, by saying, I am he, John xviii. 6. Killing terrors shall arrest their consciences, killing judgments shall ruin them, their power, and all their interests; and in the other world everlasting tribulation will be repaid to those that trouble his poor people. The apostle applies this to the destruction of the wicked one, (2 Thess. ii. 8.) whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth. And the Chaldee here reads it, He shall说 that
wicked Romulus,* or Rome, as Mr. Hugh Broughton understands it.

V. That there should be great peace and tranquillity under his government; this is an explanation of what was said, ch. ix. 6. that he should be the Prince of Peace. Peace signifies two things:
1. Unity and concord; these are intimately connected in these figurative promises, that even the wolf shall dwell peaceably with the lamb; men of the most fierce and furious dispositions, who used to bite and devour all about them, shall have their temper so strangely altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall live in love even with the weakest, and such as formerly they would have made an easy prey of. So far shall the sheep be joined to the lamb, that the wolf did not so much as frighten the lamb, nor was the lamb afraid of the wolf. The leopard shall not only not the kid, but shall lie down with her; even their young ones shall lie down together, and shall be trained up in a blessed unity, or in the perpetuating of it. The lion shall cease to be ravacious, and shall eat straw like the ox, as some think all the bestaste and best food, for in the Psalm, and the cockatrice shall cease to be venomous, so that parents will let their children play with them, and put their hands among them. A generation of vipers shall become a seed of saints, and the old complaint of Homo homini lupus—Man is a wolf to man, shall be at an end. They that inhabit the holy mountain, shall live as amicable as the creatures did that were with Adam in the park, and it shall be a means of their preservation, for they shall not hurt or destroy one another as they have done. Now, (1.) This is fulfilled in the wonderful effect of the gospel upon the minds of those that sincerely embrace it; it changes the nature and makes those that trampled on the neck of the earth, not only meek like them, but kind to them. When the sheep is delivered from the hand of self to itself, then the wolf dwell with the lamb. (2.) Some are willing to hope it shall yet have a further accomplishment in the latter days, when swords shall be beaten into ploughshares.

2. Safety and security; Christ, the great Shepherd, shall take such care of his flock, that those who would hurt them, shall not; they shall not only not destroy one another, but no enemy from within shall be permitted to give them any molestation; the property of troubles, and of death itself, shall be so altered, that they shall not do any real hurt to, much less shall they be the destruction of, any that have their conversation in the holy mountain, 1 Pet. iii. 13. Who, or what, can harm us, if we be followers of him that is good? G D's people shall be preserved not only from without, but from the fear of it; even the sucking child shall without any terror lie upon the hole of the asp; blessed Paul does so when he says, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? and O death! where is thy sting? Lastly, Observe what shall be the effect, and what the cause, of this wonderful softening and sweetening of men's tempers by the grace of God.

1. The effect of it shall be, tractableness, and a willingness to receive instruction; A little child shall lead them who formerly scorched to be controlled by the strongest man. Calvin understands it of their willing submission to the ministers of Christ, who are to instruct with meekness, and not to use any coercive power, but to be as little children, Matt. xviii. 3. See 2 Cor. viii. 5.

2. The cause of it shall be, the knowledge of God. The more there is of that, the more there is of a disposition to peace. They shall thus live in love, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, which shall extinguish men's heats and insatieties. The better acquainted we are with the God of love, the more we shall be changed into the same image, and the better affected shall we be to all those that bear his image. The earth shall be as full of this knowledge as the channels of the sea are of water; so broad and extensive shall this knowledge be, and so far shall it spread; so deep shall it penetrate, and so substantial shall this knowledge be, and so long shall it last. There is much more of the knowledge of God to be got by the gospel of Christ, than could be got by the law of Moses; and whereas then in Judah only was God known, now all shall know him, Heb. viii. 11. But that is knowledge falsely so called, which sows discord among men: the right knowledge of God settles peace.

10. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. 11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. 12. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 13. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. 14. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. 15. And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. 16. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left from Assyria, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

We have here a further prophecy of the enlargement and advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah, under the type and figure of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah in the latter end of Hezekiah's reign, after the defeat of Sennacherib.
done in the land, on which stood the king of Babylon’s ambassadors came. To them the Gentiles spake; and Jerusalem, the rest or habitation of the Jews, with them glorified: 11. That the rather, many of the Israelites who belonged to the kingdom of the ten tribes, who, upon the destruction of that kingdom by the king of Assyria, were forced to flee for shelter into all the countries about, and to some that lay very remote, even to the islands of the sea, were encouraged to return to their own country, and put themselves under the protection and government of the king of Assyria, and the rather, because that was an Assyrian army by which their country had been ruined, and that was now routed. This is said to be a recovery of them the second time, (v. 11.) such an instance of the power and goodness of God, and such a reviving to them, as their first deliverance out of Egypt was. Then the outcasts of Israel should be gathered in, and brought home, and those of Judah too, who, upon the approach of the Assyrian army, shifted for their own safety. Then the old feud between Ephraim and Judah shall be forgotten, and they shall join against the Philistines and their other common enemies, v. 13, 14. Note, Those who have been sharers with each other in afflictions and mercies, dangers and deliverances, in consideration thereof, ought to unite for the service of God, and assert the rights of God’s church, and then it is likely to be well with the church, when Ephraim and Judah are one against the Philistines.

Then, whatever difficulties there may be in the way of the return of the dispersed, the Lord shall find out some way or other to remove them; as, when he brought Israel out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan, (v. 15.) and led them to Canaan through the invincible embarrassments of a vast howling wilderness, v. 16. The like will he do this second time, or that which shall be equivalent; when God’s time is come for the deliverance of his people, mountains of opposition shall become plain before him. Let us not despair, therefore, when the interests of the church seem to be brought very low; God can soon turn gloomy days into glorious ones.

II. It had a further reference to the days of the Messiah, and the accession of the Gentiles to his kingdom; for to that the apostle applies, v. 10, of which the following verses are a continuation.

Rom. xv. 12. There shall be a root of Jesse; and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust. That is a key to this prophecy, which speaks of Christ as the Root of Jesse, a branch out of his roots, (v. 1.) a root out of a dry ground, ch. liii. 2. He is the Root of David, (Rev. v. 5.) the Root and Offspring of David, Rev. xxii. 16.

1. He shall stand, or be set up, for an Ensign of the people; when he was crucified, he was lifted up from the earth; that, as an Ensign or Beacon, he might draw the eyes and hearts of all men to himself, (John i. 20.) and in the preaching of the everlasting gospel, in which the ministers, as standard-bearers, display the banner of his love, to allure us to him, (Cant. i. 4.) the banner of his truth, under which we may enlist ourselves to engage in a holy war against sin and Satan. Christ is the ensign to whom the children of God, who were scattered abroad, are gathered together, (Rev. xvi. 15.) and in whom they meet as the Centre of their unity.

2. To him shall the Gentiles seek; we read of Greeks that did so; John xii. 21. We would see Jesus; and upon that occasion Christ spake of his being lifted up, to draw all men to him. The apostle, from the LXX. (or perhaps the LXX from the apostle, in the editions after Christ,) reads it, (Rom. xv. 12.) In him shall the Gentiles trust; they shall seek to him with a dependance on him.

3. His root shall be glorious. Some understand it of the death of Christ; the triumphs of the cross made such an impression upon all nations, others of his power, when he sat down to rest at the right hand of God. Or rather, it is meant of the gospel church, that Mount Zion, of which Christ has said, This is my rest; and in which he resides. This, though despised by the world, having upon it the beauty of holiness, is truly glorious; a glorious high throne, Jer. xvii. 12.

4. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be gathered to him. As thus, when those who were gathered out of Egypt, returned into their own land, in comparison, which shall be recovered, as it were, with great difficulty and hazard. As formerly God delivered his people, and gathered them out of all the countries whither they were scattered, (Ps. cvii. 47.) Jer. xvi. 15, 16.) so he will a second time, in another way, by the powerful working of the Spirit of grace with the word. He shall set his hand to do it; he shall exert his power, the arm of the Lord shall be revealed to do it. There shall be a remnant of the Jews gathered in. The outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, (v. 12.) many of whom, at the time of the bringing of them in to Christ, were Jews of the dispersion, the twelve tribes that were scattered abroad, (James i. 1. Pet. i. 1.) these shall flock to Christ; and, probably, they, who were now gathered to Christ, shall be brought into the church, in proportion, than those which remained in their own land. (2.) Many of the nations, the Gentiles, shall be brought in by the lifting up of the ensign. Jacob forsook concerning Shiloh, that to him shall the gathering of the people be. These that were strangers and foreigners, shall be made high. The Jews were jealous of Christ’s going to the dispersed among the Gentiles, and of his teaching the Gentiles, John vii. 35.

5. There shall be a happy accommodation between Judah and Ephraim, and both shall be safe from their adversaries, and have dominion over them, v. 13, 14. The coincidence between Judah and Israel at that time, was a type and figure of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, who had been so long at variance. The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, (Jer. iii. 18.) and become one nation; (Ezek. xxxvii. 22.) so the Jews and Gentiles are made of twain one new man, Eph. ii. 16. And being at peace one with another, those that are adversaries to them both, shall be cut off; for they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines, as an eagle strikes at her prey, shall spoil them, and they were hot against them; (v. 14.) and the more they extend their conquests eastward, over the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites; the gospel of Christ shall be successful in all parts, and some of all nations shall become obedient to the faith.

Lastly, Everything that might hinder the progress and success of the gospel, shall be taken out of the way. As when God put out of Egypt, he dried up the Red sea and Jordan before them, (ch. liii. 11, 12.) and as afterward when he brought up the Jews out of Babylon, he prepared them their way; (ch. lix. 16.) so when Jews and Gentiles are to be brought together into the gospel-church, all obstructions shall be removed, (v. 15, 16.) difficulties that seemed insuperable shall be strangely got over. The Lord shall be against them that stand against them. See ch. xlii. 15, 16.—xliii. 19, 20. Converts shall be brought in chariots and litters, ch. lxvi. 20. Some think it is the further accession of multitudes to the church, that is pointed at in that obscure prophecy of the drying up of the river Euphrates, that the way of the kings of the east may be prepared, (Rev. xvi. 12.) which seems to refer to this here. Note, When God’s time is come for the bringing of nations, or par-
ticular persons, home to himself, divine grace will be victorious over all opposition. At the presence of the Lord, the sea shall flee, and Jordan be driven back; and those who set their faces heaven-ward will find there are not such difficulties in the way as they thought there were, for there is a highway thither; ch. xxxv. 8.

CHAP. XII.

The salvation promised in the foregoing chapter was compared to that of Israel, "in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt; so that chapter ends. And besides the Messianic and the children of Israel sang a song of praise, to the glory of God, (Exod. xv. 1.) so shall the people of God do in that day, when the Root of Jesse shall stand for an Ensign of the people, and shall be the Desirous and Joy of all. In that day, 1. Every particular believer shall sing a song of praise for his own interest in that salvation; (v. 1. 3.) Thou shalt say, Lord, I will praise thee: thanksgiving-work shall be close-work. II. Many in concert shall join in praising God for the common benefit arising from this salvation; (v. 4.-6.) Ye shall say, praise ye the Lord: thanksgiving-work shall be congregation-work; and the praises of God shall be publicly sung in the congregations of the upright.

1. AND in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. 2. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. 3. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

This is the former part of the hymn of praise which is prepared for the use of the church; of the Jewish church, when God would work great deliverances for them, and of the Christian church when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up in the world, in despite of the opposition of the powers of darkness; In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. The scattered church, being united into one body, shall, as one man, with one mind and one mouth, thus praise God, who is one, and his name one. In that day, when the Lord shall do these great things for thee, thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. That is,

1. "Thou shalt have cause to say so." The promise is sure, and the blessings contained in it are very rich, and, when they be bestowed, will burnish the church with abundant matter for rejoicing, and therefore with abundant matter for thanksgiving. The Old Testament prophecies of gospel-times are often expressed by the joy and praise that shall then be excited; for the inestimable benefits we enjoy by Jesus Christ, require the most elevated and enlarged thanksgivings.

2. "I will have a heart to say so." All God's other gifts to his people shall be crowned with this; he will give them grace to ascribe all the glory of them to him, and to speak of them upon all occasions, with thanksgiving. Thou shalt say, thou oughtest to say so. In that day, when many are brought home to Jesus Christ, and flock to him as doves to their windows, in spite of every opposition, and every political, and religious faction, as the Jews grudged the favour shown to the Gentiles, thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. Note, We ought to rejoice in, and give thanks for, the grace of God to others as well as to ourselves.

1. Believers are here taught to give thanks to God for the turning away of his displeasure from them, and the return of his favour to them; (v. 1.) O Lord, I will praise thee, though thou wast angry with me. Note, Even God's enemies must not put us out of tune for praising him; though he be angry with us, though he say, we, yet we must put our trust in him, and give him thanks. God has often just cause to be angry with us, but he has never given any reason to be angry with him, nor to speak otherwise than well of him: even when he blames us, we must praise him. Thou wast angry with us, but thine anger is turned away. Note, (1.) God is sometimes angry with his own people, and the fruits of his anger do appear: they ought to take notice of it, that they may humble themselves under his mighty hand. (2.) Though God may for a time be angry with his people, yet his anger shall, at length, be turned away; it endures but for a moment, nor will he contend for ever. By Jesus Christ, the Root of Jesse, God's anger against mankind was turned away, for he is our Peace. (3.) Those whom God is reconciled to, he comforts; even the turning away of his anger is a comfort to them; yet that is not all, they that are at peace with God, may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 1. 2. Nay, God sometimes brings his people into a wilderness, that there they may speak comfortably to them, Hosen ii. 14. (4.) The turning away of God's anger, and the return of his comfort to us, ought to be the matter of our joyful, thankful praises.

2. They are taught to triumph in God, and their interest in him; (v. 2.) "Behold, and wonder; God is my salvation; not only my Saviour, by whom I am saved, but my Salvation, in whom I am safe. I depend upon him as my Salvation, for I have found him to be so. He shall have the glory of all the salvations that have been wrought for me, and from me. I shall, in my eternity, when I further need, and not from hills and mountains; and if God be my Salvation, if he undertake my eternal salvation, I will trust in him to prepare for me, and preserve me to it. I will trust him with my temporal concerns, not doubting but he will make all to work for my good. I will be confident, I will be always easy in my own mind." Note, Those that have God for their Salvation, may enjoy themselves with a holy security and serenity of mind; let faith in God, as our Salvation, be effectual. (1.) To silence our fears; we must trust, and not be afraid; not be afraid that the God we trust in will fail us; no, there is no danger of that; not be afraid of any creature, though ever so formidable and threatening. Note, Faith in God is a sovereign remedy against distrust, the chief of our fears. (2.) To support our hopes. Is the Lord Jehovah our salvation? Then he will be our Strength and Song. We have work to do and temptations to resist, we may depend upon him to enable us for both; to strengthen us with all might by his Spirit in the inner man, for he is our strength; his grace is so, and that grace shall be sufficient for us. We have many a thing to undergo under the load of griefs in a vale of tears; and we may depend upon him to comfort us in all our tribulations, for he is our Song, he giveth songs in the night. If we make God our strength, and put our confidence in him, he will be our strength; if we make him our Song, and place our comfort in him, he will be our Song, Many good Christians have God for their strength, and God for their Song. They walk in darkness, but light is sown for them; and they that have God for their Strength, ought to make him their Song, that is, to give him the glory of it, (see Ps. lxviii. 33.) and to take to themselves the comfort of it, for he will become their Salvation. Observe the title here given to God, Jah, Jehovah; Jah is the contraction of Jehovah, and both signify his eternity and unchangeableness; which
a great comfort to those that depend upon him as their Strength and their Song. Some make Jah to signify the Son of God made man; he is Jehovah, and in him we may glory as our Strength, and Song, and Salvation. 3. They are taught to derive comfort to themselves from the love of God, and all the tokens of this love (Exod. xxxii. 18.). God is your Strength and Song, and will be your Salvation, you shall draw water with joy. Note, The assurances God has given us of his love, and the experiences we have had of the benefit and comfort of his grace, should greatly encourage our faith in him and our expectations from him; Out of the wells of Salvation in God, who is the Father of our salvation, his children shall draw water with joy. God's favour shall flow forth to you, and you shall have the comfort of it, and make use of the blessed fruits of it. Note, (1.) God's promises revealed, ratified, and given out to us, in his ordinances, are wells of salvation; wells of the Saviour, so some read it; for in them the Saviour and salvation are made known to us, and made over to us. (2.) It is our duty by faith to draw water out of these wells, to take to ourselves the benefit and comfort that are treasured up for us in them, as those that acknowledge all our fresh springs to be there, and all our fresh streams to be thence, Ps. lxxxvii. 7. (3.) Water is to be drawn out of the wells of salvation with a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction. It is the will of God that we should rejoice before him, and rejoice in him (Deut. xxxiii. 11.) be joyful in his house of prayer, (Isa. lv. 7.) and keep his feasts with gladness, Acts ii. 46. 4. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. 5. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. 6. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee. This is the second part of this evangelical song, and to the same purport with the former; there be lievers stir up themselves to praise God; here they invite and encourage one another to do it, and are contriving to spread his name, and draw in others to join with them in it. Observe, 1. Who are here called upon to praise God; the inhabitants of Zion and Jerusalem, whom God had in a particular manner protected from Sennacherib's violence, v. 6. Those that have received distinguishing favours from God, ought to be most forward and zealous in praising him. The gospel-church is Zion, Christ is Zion's King; those that have a place and a name in that, should lay out themselves to diffuse the knowledge of Christ, and to bring many to him. Thou inhabitress of Zion; the word is feminine; Let the weaker sex be strong in God, and out of their mouth shall praise be perfected. 2. How they must praise the Lord; (1.) By prayer we must call upon his name: as giving thanks for former mercy is a decent way of begging further mercy, so begging further mercy is graciously accepted as a thankful acknowledgment of the mercies we have received. In calling upon God's name we must call upon him by name, and this his name is that by which we know him; his name is our Strength and our Song, as a powerful and beautiful Benignator. (2.) By preaching and writing we must not only speak to God, but speak to others concerning him; not only call upon his name, but (as the margin reads it) proclaim his name; let others know some thing more from us than they did before, concerning God, and those things whereby he has made himself known. Declare his doings, his counsel; so some read it; the work of redemption is according to the counsel of his will; and in that and other wonderful works that he has done, we must take note of his excellencies, Ps. xxxii. 1. 5. Declare these among the people, among the heathen, that they may be brought into communion with Israel and the God of Israel. When the apostles preached the gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, then this scripture was fulfilled, that his doing should be declared among the people, and that what he has done should be known in all the earth. (2.) By thus exulting in his joyful triumph, Cry out and shout, welcome the revelation to ourselves, and publish it to others with huzzas and loud acclamations, as those that shout for victory, (Exod. xxxii. 18.) or for the coronation of a king, Numb. xxii. 21. 3. For what they must praise the Lord; (1.) Because he has glorified himself. Remember it yourselves, and say it to others; for to others, that his name is exalted, is becoming ye, for, it is written, There shall be more marvellous among you; and I will make you more conscious; in this every good man rejoices. (2.) Because he has magnified his people; he has done excellent things for them, which make them look great and considerable. (3.) Because he is, and will be, great among them; great is the Holy One, for he is glorious in holiness; therefore great because holy; true goodness is true greatness; great as the Holy One of Israel, and in the midst of them, praised by them, (Ps. lxxvi. 1.) manifesting himself among them, and appearing gloriously in their behalf. It is the honour and happiness of Israel, that the God who is in covenant with them, and in the midst of them, is infinitely great. CHAP. XIII. Hitherto, the prophecies of this book related only to Judah and Israel, and Jerusalem especially; but now the prophet begins to look abroad, and to read the dooms of divers of the neighbouring states and kingdoms; for he that is King of saints, is also King of nations, and ruler in the affairs of all; and therefore it behoves us to consider what he has said concerning them, as well as his own children. But the nations to whom these prophecies do relate, were all such as the people of God were some way or other conversant and concerned with; such as had been Israel's enemies, and accordingly God would deal with them, either in favour or in wrath; for the Lord's portion is his people, and to them he has an eye in all the dispensations of his providence concerning them; those whose names may be written among the living. The threatenings we find here, against Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, &c. were intended for comfort to those in Israel that feared God, but were terrified and oppressed by those potent neighbours, and for alarm to those among them that were wicked. If God would thus severely reckon with those for their sins that know him not, and made not profession of his name, how severe would he be with those that were called by his name, and yet live in rebellion against him? And perhaps the direc ting of particular prophecies to the neighbouring nations, might invite some of those nations to the reading of the Jews' Bible, and so they might be brought to their religion, as this chapter and that which follows, contain what God had to say to Babylon and Babylons king, who were at present little known to Israel, but would in process of time become a greater enemy to them then the former had been, and which endeavoured to last reckon with them. In this chapter, we have, I. A general rendezvous of the forces that were to be employed against Babylon, v. 1. 5. II. The dreadful bloody work that God would make in Babylon, v. 6. 18. III. The utter ruin and desolation of Babylon, which this should end in, v. 19. 22. 1. THe burden of Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. 2. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain,
exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. 3. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anoint, even them that rejoice in my highness. 4. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. 5. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.

The general title of this book was, The visions of Isaiah the son of Amoz, ch. i. 1. This is that which Isaiah did see, which was represented to his mind as clearly and fully as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes: but the particular inscription of this scrm n. is, the burden of Babylon: 1. It is a burden, a lesson they were to learn; some understand it; but they would be loath to learn it, and it would be a burden to their memories, or a load which should lie heavy upon them, and under which they should sink. Those that will not make the word of God their rest, (ch. xxviii. 12.) Jer. vi. 10. and 11. shall be made a burden, as the burden of Babylon or Babel, which at this time was a dependent upon the Assyrian monarchy, (the metropolis of which was Nineveh,) but soon after revolted from it, and became a monarchy of itself, and a very potent one, in Nebuchadnezzar. This prophet afterward foretold the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, ch. xxxix. 6. Here he foretells the doom of God's people; and how he will make upon Babylon for the wrongs done to his people.

In these verses a simmons is given to those powerful and warlike nations, whom God would make use of as the instruments of his wrath for the destruction of Babylon: he afterward names them (v. 17.) the Medes, who, in conjunction with the Persians under the command of Darius and Cyrus, would come against Babylon, as they did against Tyre, (ch. xi. 2.) God's standard is set up, a flag of defiance hung out against Babylon. It is erected on high, where all may see it; whoever will, may come, and enlist themselves under it, and they shall be taken immediately into God's pay. They that best for volunteers, must exalt the voice in making proclamation, to encourage soldiers to come in; they must shake the bards, to beckon them at a distance, and to animate those that have enlisted themselves. And they shall not do this in vain; God has commanded and called those whom he designs to make use of, (v. 5.) and power goes along with his calls and commands, which cannot be resisted. He that makes men able to serve him, can, when he pleases, make them willing too; it is the Lord of hosts that brings them together, puts them in order, reviews them, has an exact account of them in his muster-roll, sees that they are all in their respective posts, and gives them their necessary orders. Note. All the hosts of war are under the command of the Lord of hosts; and that which makes them truly formidable, is, that when they come against Babylon, the Lord comes, and brings them with him as the crown of his indignation, v. 5. Note. Great princes and armies are but tools in God's hands, weapons that he is pleased to make use of in doing his work, and it is his wrath that arms them, and gives them success.

6. Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. 7. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: 8. And they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed one at another; their faces shall be as flames. 9. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. 10. For the stars of heaven, and the
constellations thereof, shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. 11. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. 12. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man slain, is precious in the sight of the Terrible. 13. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. 14. And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: they shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. 15. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. 16. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. 17. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. 18. Their hewz also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.

We have here a very elegant and lively description of the terrible confusion and desolation which should be made in Babylon by the descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon it. They that were now secure and easy, are bid to howl, and make sad lamentation. For,

1. God is about to appear in wrath against them, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands; The day of the Lord is at hand, (v. 6.) a little day of judgment, when God will act as a just Avenger of his own and his people's injurious cause. And there are those who will have reason to tremble when the day is at hand; the day of the Lord cometh, v. 9. 2. Men have their day now, and they think to carry the day; but God laughs at them, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 13. Fury is not with God, and yet his day of reckoning with the Babylonians is said to be cruel with wrath and fierce anger. God will deal in severity with them for the severities they exercised upon God's people; with the sword, with the cruel, he will show himself toward, will show himself cruel, and give the blood-thirsty blood to drink.

2. Their hearts shall fail them, and they shall have neither courage nor comfort left; they shall not be able either to resist the judgment coming, or to bear upon it, either to oppose the enemy, or to support themselves, v. 7, 8. They that in the day of the Lord shall be left, and be found, and be hale, and terrible, (v. 11.) are, when trouble come, quite dispirited, and are at their wits' end; all hands shall be faint, and unable to hold a weapon, and every man's heart shall melt, so that they shall be ready to die for fear. The pangs of their fear shall be like those of a woman in hard labour, and they shall be amazed one at another; in frightening themselves, they shall frighten one another; they shall wonder to see those trembling, that used to be bold and daring; or, they shall be amazed, looking one at another as men at a loss, Gen. xiii. 1. Their faces shall be as flames, their eyes as flames, through fear; so some; or red as flames sometimes are, blushing at their own cowardice; or their faces shall be as faces scorchcd with the flames, or as theirs that labour in the fire, their visage blacker than a coal; or like a bottle in the smoke, Ps. cxxviii. 83.

3. All comfort and hope shall fail them; v. 10. The stars of heaven shall not give their light, but shall be cloaked, and covered over, as softened in his going forth, rising bright, but lost again, a certain sign of foul weather. They shall be as men in distress at sea, when neither sun nor stars appear, Acts xxvii. 20. It shall be as dreadful a time with them as it would be with the earth, if all the heavenly luminaries were turned into darkness; a resemblance of the day of judgment, when the sun shall be turned into darkness. The heavens fainting thus, is an indication of the displeasure of the God of heaven; when things look dark on earth, yet it is well enough if all be clear upward; but if we have no comfort thence, wherewith shall we be comforted?

4. God will visit them for their iniquity; and all this is intended for the punishment of sin, and particularly the sin of pride, v. 11. This puts wormwood and gall to their mouths, Ps. xcv. 12. That sin must now have its punishment; though Babylon be a little world, yet, being a wicked world, it shall not go unpunished. Sin brings desolation on the world of the ungodly; and when the kingdoms of the earth are quarelling with one another, it is the fruit of God's controversy with them all. (2.) That pride must now have its fall. The haughtiness of the tyrant must now be laid low, particularly of Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar, who had, in their pride, trampled upon, and made themselves very terrible to, the people of God. A man's pride will bring him low.

3. There shall be so great a slaughter as will produce a scarcity of men; (v. 12.) I will make a man more precious than fine gold. You could not have a man to be employed in any of the affairs of state, not a man to be enlisted in the army, not a man to match a daughter to, for the building up of a family, if you would give any money for one. The troops of the neighbouring nations would not be hired into the service of the king of Babylon, because they saw every thing go against him. Pegusus countries are soon depopulated by war. And God can make a kingdom that has been admired and admired, to be dreaded and shunned by all, as a house that is falling, or a ship that is sinking.

6. There shall be a universal confusion and consternation; such a confusion of their affairs, that it shall be like the shaking of the heavens, with dreadful thunders, and the removing of the earth, by no less dreadful earthquakes. All shall go to wreck and ruin in this day of the Lord's vengeance, v. 7. And such a consternation shall seize their spirits, that Babylon, which used to be like a roaring lion, and a raging bear, to all about her, shall become as a chased roe, and as a sheep that no man takes up, v. 14. The army they shall bring into the field, consisting of troops of divers nations, (as great armies usually do,) shall be so dispersed by their enemies' sword, that they shall be like the bands of the wind, which man shall shift for his own safety; the men of might shall not find their hands, (Ps. lxxvi. 5.) but take to their heels.

8. There shall be a general scene of blood and horror, as is usual where the sword devours. No wonder that every one makes the best of his way, since the conqueror gives no quarter, but puts all to the sword, and not those only that are found in arms, as is usual with us even in the most cruel.
Every one that is found alive, shall be run through, as soon as ever it appears that he is a Babylonian. Nay, because the sword devours one as well as another, every one that is joined to them, shall fall by the sword; those of other nations that come in to their assistance, shall be cut off with them. It is dangerous being in bad company, and helping those whom God is about to destroy. Those particularly that join themselves to Babylon, must expect to share in her plagues, Rev. xviii. 4. And since the most sacred laws of nature, and humanity itself, are silenced by the fury of war, (though they cannot be cancelled,) the conquerors shall, in the most barbarous brutish manner, dash the children to pieces, and ravish the wives. 

Jasus datum stulerit—Wickedness shall take her note, (Ps. cxxxvii.) Their hands did thus deal with God's people, (Lam. v. 11.) and now they shall be paid in their own coin, Rev. iii. 10. It was particularly foretold, (Ps. cxxxvii. 9.) that the little ones of Babylon should be dashed against the stones. How cruel, severe, and unjust, they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered to it be done, and to be done before their eyes, to their great terror and vexation. It was just so also that which they had filled with the spoil of Israel, should be spoiled and plundered. What is got by rapine, is often lost in the same manner.

The enemy that God would send against them, should be inexorable, probably being by some provocation or other more than ordinarily exasperated against them; or, however, God himself will stir up the Medes, and leave them to deal with the Babylonians. He will only serve his own purposes by their dispositions and designs, but will put it into their hearts to make this attempt upon Babylon, and suffer them to prosecute it with all this fury. God is not the author of sin, but he would not permit it if he did not know how to bring glory to himself out of it. These Medes, in conjunction with the Persians, shall make thorough work of it. For,

(1.) They shall take no bribes, v. 17. All that men have they would give for their lives, but the Medes shall not regard silver; it is blood they thirst for, not gold; no man's riches shall with them be the ransom of his life.

(2.) They shall show no pity, (v. 18.) not to the young men that are in the prime of their time, they shall slay them through with their bows, and then dash them to pieces; not to the age of innocence, they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb, nor spare little children, whose cries and frights one would think should make even marble eyes to weep, and hearts of adamant to relent. Pause a little here, and wonder, [1.] That men should be thus cruel and inhuman, and so utterly divested of all compassion; and in it see how corrupt and degenerate the nature of man is become. [2.] That the God of infinite mercy should suffer it, nay, and should make it to be the execution of his justice; which shows that though he is gracious, yet he is the God to whom vengeance belongs. [3.] That little infants, who have never been guilty of any actual sin, should be thus abused, which shows that there is an original guilt, by which life is forfeited as soon as it has.

19. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch their tents there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: 21. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. 22. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces; and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.

The great havoc and destruction which it was foretold should be made by the Medes and Persians in Babylon, here end in the final destruction of it.

1. It is allowed that Babylon was a noble city; it was the glory of kingdoms, and the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency; it was that head of gold; (Dan. ii. 37, 38.) it was called the lady of kingdoms, (ch. xviii. 5.) the prince of men, (Jer. ii. 41.) like a pleasant rose: (so the word signifies;) but it shall be as a chased roe; (v. 14.) the Chaldeans gloried in the beauty and wealth of this their metropolis.

2. It is foretold that it should be wholly destroyed, like Sodom and Gomorrah; not so miraculously, nor so suddenly, but as effectually, though gradually; and the destruction should be upon them, when they were secure, eating and drinking. Luke xvii. 28. Babylon was taken when Belshazzar was in his revel; and though Cyrus and Darius did not demolish it, yet by degrees it was wasted away, and in process of time it went all to ruin. It is foretold here, (v. 20.) that it shall never be inhabited; in Adrian's time, nothing remained but the wall. And concerning Babylon, that great city, that when it should be deserted and left desolate, yet flocks should lie down in the midst of it; it is here said concerning Babylon, that the Arabsians, who were shepherds, should not make their folds there; the country about should be so barren, that there would be no grazing there; no, not for sheep; nay, it shall be the receptacle of wild beasts, that affect solitude; the houses of Babylon, where the sons and daughters of pleasure used to rendezvous, shall be full of doleful creatures, owls and satyrs, that are themselves frightened thither, as to a place proper for them, and by whom all others are frightened thence. Historians say that this was fulfilled to the letter. Benjamin Bar-Jona, in his Journey, speaking of Babel, has these words; This is that Babylon which was, and is, and shall be no more; and this is Babylon, the name of which is Babylon, to which are yet to be seen the ruins of a palace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the sons of men dare not enter in, for fear of serpents and scorpions, which possess the place." Let none be proud of their pompous palaces, for they know not but they may become worse than cottages; nor let any think that their houses shall endure for ever, (Ps. xxix. 11.) when perhaps nothing may remain but the ruins and reproaches of them.

3. It is intimated that this destruction should come shortly; (v. 22.) Her time is near to come. This prophecy of the destruction of Babylon was intended for the support and comfort of the people of God when they were captives there, and grievously oppressed; and the accomplishment of the prophecy was near 200 years after the time when it was delivered; yet it followed soon after the time for which it was calculated. When the people of Israel were groaning under the heavy yoke of Babylonish tyranny, sitting down in tears by the rivers of Babylon, and uproared with the songs of Zion, when their insolent oppressors were most haughty and arrogant, (v. 11.) then let them know that their福t is at hand, that it is near to come, and the days of her prosperity shall not be prolonged, as they have been; when God begins with her, he will make an end. Thus it is
said of the destruction of the New Testament Babylon, whereas the former was a type; In one hour is her judgment come.

CHAP. XIV.

In this chapter, I. More weight is added to the burthen of Babylon, enough to sink it like a millstone; 1. It is Israel's cause that is to be pleaded in this quarrel with Babylon, and the King of Babylon; the subject of the vengeance, shall be remarkably brought down and triumphed over, v. 4. 20. 3. The whole race of the Babylonians shall be cut off and exterminated, v. 21. 23. II. A confirmation of the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was a thing at a distance, is here given in the prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrian army that invaded the land, which happened not long after, v. 24. 27. III. Cyrus's prophecy against the Philistines is here foretold, and the advantages which his people would gain thereby, v. 28. 32.

1. FOR the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. 2. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. 3. And it shall come to pass, in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve.

This comes in here as the reason why Babylon must be overthrown and ruined; because God has mercy in store for his people, and therefore, 1. The injuries done to them must be reckoned for, and avenged upon their persecutors. Mercy to Jacob will be wrath and ruin to Jacob's impenitent, implacable adversaries, such as Babylon was. 2. The yoke of oppression which Babylon had long laid on their necks, must be broken off, and they must be set at liberty; in order to this, the destruction of Babylon is as necessary as the destruction of Egypt and Pharaoh was to their deliverance out of that house of bondage. The same prediction is a promise to God's people, and a threatening to their enemies, as the same providence has a bright side towards Israel, and a black and thick side toward the Egyptians. Observe,

I. The ground of these favours to Jacob and Israel is the kindness God had for them, and the choice he had made of them; (v. 1.) The Lord will have mercy on Jacob, the seed of Jacob now captives in Babylon; he will make it to appear that he has compassion on them, and has mercy in store for them, and that he will not contend for ever with them, but will yet choose them, will yet again return to them, though he had seemed for a time to refuse and reject them; he will show that they are his choice, and his people, and his friends; be sure, however it may seem to us, God's mercy is not gone, nor does his promise fail, Ps. Lxxvii. 8.

II. The particular favours he designed them.

1. He would bring them back to their native soil and air again; The Lord will set them in their own land, out of which they were driven. A settlement in the Holy Land, the Lord of Promise, is a fruit of God's mercy, distinguishing mercy.

2. Many should be proselyted to their holy religion, and should return with them, induced to do so by the manifest tokens of God's favourable presence with them, the operations of God's grace in them, and his providence for them; Strangers shall be joined with them, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23.

It adds much to the honour and strength of Israel, when strangers are joined with them, and there are added to the church many from without, Acts ii. 47. Let not the church's children be shy of strangers, but receive those whom God receives, and two those who are to be sent to, to gather out, v. 28. 32.

3. These proselytes should not only be a credit to their cause, but very helpful and serviceable to them in their return home; the people among whom they live shall take them, take care of them, take pity on them, and shall bring them to their place; as friends, both to part with such good company, as servants, willing to do them all the good offices they could. God's people, wherever their lot is cast, should endeavour thus, by all the instances of an exemplary and winning conversation, to gain an interest in the affections of those about them, and recommend religion to their good opinion. This was fulfilled in the return of the captives from Babylon, when all that were about them, pursuant to Cyrus's proclamation, contributed to their return, (Ezra i. 4, 5,) not as the Egyptians, because they were sick of them, but because they loved them.

4. They should have the benefit of their service when they were returned home, for many would of choice go with them in the meanest post, rather than not go with them; They shall possess them in the land of the Lord, for servants and handmaids; and as the laws of that land saved it from being the purgatory of servants, providing that they should not be oppressed, so the advantages of that land made it the paradise of those servants that had been strangers to the covenants of promise, for there was one law to the stranger, and to them that were born in the land. They whose lot is cast in the land of the Lord, a land of light, should take care that their servants and handmaids may share in the benefit of it; who will then find it better to be possessed in the Lord's land, than possessors in any other.

5. They should triumph over their enemies; and they that would not be reconciled to them, should be reduced and humbled by them; They shall take them captives, whose captives they were, and shall rule over their oppressors, righteously, but not re-vengefully. It was the pleasure of God to bring Persian prisoners out of the hands of the Medes and Persians, and made slaves of them; or this might have its accomplishment in the victories over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees. It is applicable to the success of the gospel, when those were brought into obedience to it, who had made the greatest opposition to it, as Paul; it is applicable also to the interest believers have in Christ's blessedness over our enemies, and the triumphs over the enmity, when he led captive power, to the power they gain over their own corruptions, and to the dominion the upright shall have in the morning, Ps. xlix. 14.

6. They should see a happy period of all their grievances; (v. 3.) The Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and thy fear, and from the hard bondage. God himself undertakes to make all things work according to his blessed change: (1.) In their state; they shall have rest from their bondage; the days of their affliction, though many, shall have an end; and the rod of the wicked, though it lie long, shall not always lie, or their lot. (2.) In their spirit; they shall have rest from their sorrow and fear, sense of their present barrenness, and dread of worse. Sometimes fear puts the soul into a ferment as much as sorrow does; and those most needs feel themselves very easy, to whom God has given rest from both. They who are freed
from the bondage of sin, have a foundation laid for true rest from sorrow and fear.

1. That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! 5. The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. 6. He that smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke, he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth.

7. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet; they break forth into singing. 8. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. 9. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. 10. All they shall speak, and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? 11. Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. 12. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13. For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:

14. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. 15. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. 16. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? 17. That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners! 18. All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house: 19. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcasse trodden under feet. 20. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned. 21. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities.

For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord, of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord. 23. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts.

The kings of Babylon, successively, were the great enemies and oppressors of God's people, and therefore the destruction of Babylon, the fall of the king, and the ruin of his family, are here particularly taken notice of and triumphed in; in the day that God has given Israel rest, they shall take by the hand of Babylon. We must not rejoice when our enemy falls, as curs; but when Babylon, the common enemy of God and his Israel, sinks, then rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, Rev. xviii. 20. The Babylonian monarchy bade fair to be an absolute, universal, and perpetual one, and, in these pretensions, vied with the Almighty; it is therefore very justly, not only brought down, but insulted over when it is down; and it is not only the last monarch, Belshazzar, who was slain on that night that Babylon was taken, (Dan. v. 30.) who is here triumphed over, but the whole monarchy, which sunk in him; not without special reference to Nebuchadnezzar, in whom that monarchy was at its height. 5. For the fall of the king of Babylon is rejoiced in; and a most curious, elegant composition is here prepared, not to adorn his hearse or monument, but to expose his memory, and fix a lasting brand of infamy upon it. It gives us an account of the life and death of this mighty monarch, how he went down slain to the pit, though he had been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Ezek. xxxii. 27. In this passage we may observe,

1. The prodigious height of wealth and power at which this monarch and monarchy arrived. Babylon was a golden city, (v. 4.) It is a Chaldee word in the original, which intimates that she used to call herself so; she abounded in riches, and excelled all other cities, as gold does all other metals. She was gold-thirsty, or an exactress of gold; so some read it, for how do men get wealth to themselves, but by squeezing it out of others? The New Jerusalem is the only truly golden city, Rev. xxi. 18, 21. The king of Babylon, having so much wealth in his dominions, and the absolute command of it, by the help of that ruled the nations, (v. 6.) gave them law, read them their doom, and, at his pleasure, weakened the nations, (v. 12.) that they might not be able to do any good against him; and against his horrid armies did he bring into the field, then, which way soever he looked, he made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms; (v. 16.) all his neighbours were afraid of him, and were forced to submit to him. No one man could do this by his own personal strength, but by the numbers he has at his beck. Great tyrants, by making some appear they will, whither the monarchs sat by the withers, How pitious is the case of mankind, which thus seems to be in a combination against itself, and its own rights and liberties, which could not be ruined but by its own strength.

2. The wretched abuse of all this wealth and power, which the king of Babylon was guilty of, in two instances.

(1.) Great oppression and cruelty: he is known by the name of the oppressor, (v. 4.) he has the sceptre of the rulers, (v. 5.) has the command of all the princes about him; but it is the staff of the wicked, a staff with which he supports himself in his wickedness, and wretchedly strikes all about him: He saith the people, not in justice, for their correction and reformation, but in wrath, (v. 6.) to gratify his own peevish resentments, and that with a continual stroke, pursued them with his forces,
and gave them no respite, no breathing time, no cessation of arms. He ruled the nations, but he ruled them in anger, every thing he said and did was in passion; so that he who had the government of all about him, had no government of himself; he made the world a wilderness, as if he had taken a curse from his ancestors in Egypt and carried it to plunder mankind, a curse to mankind, (v. 17.) Great princes used to glory in building cities, but he gloried in destroying them; see Ps. xvi. 6.

Two particular instances are here given of his tyranny, worse than all the rest: [1.] That he was severe to his captives; (v. 17.) He opened not the house of his prisoners; he did not let them loose homely, but made them their prison in a state of close confinement, and never would suffer any to return to their own land. This refers especially to the people of the Jews, and it is that which fills up the measure of the King of Babylon's iniquity, that he had detained the people of God in captivity, and would by no means release them; nay, and by profaning the vessels of God's temple at Jerusalem, did, in effect, say that they should never return to their former home, Dan. v. 2, 3. For this he was quickly and justly turned out by one, whose first act was to open the house of God's prisoners, and send home the temple-vessels. [2.] That he was oppressive to his own subjects; (v. 20.) Thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people; and what did he get by that, when the wealth of the land, and the multitude of its people, are the strength and honour of the prince, who never rules so safely, so gloriously, as in the hearts and affections of the people? But tyrants sacrifice their interests to their lusts and passions; and God will reckon with them for their barbarous usage of those who are under their power, whom they think they may use as they please.

(2.) Great pride and haughtiness; notice is here taken of his pomp, the extravagancy of his retinue, (v. 11.) he affected to appear in the utmost magnificence; but that was not the worst, it was the temper of his mind, and the elevation of that, which ripened him for ruin; (v. 13, 14.) Thou hast said in thy heart, like Lucifer, I will ascend into heaven. Here is the language of his vainglory, borrowed perhaps from that of the angels who fell, who, not content with their dignity and power, as God's angels, coveted to be equal with God, and become not only independent on him, but equal with him: or perhaps it refers to the story of Nebuchadnezzar, who, when he would be more than a man, was justly turned into a brute, Dan. iv. 30. The king of Babylon here promises himself, [1.] That in pomp and power he shall exceed all his neighbours, and shall arrive at the very height of earthly glory and felicity; that he shall be as great and happy as this world can make him; that is the heaven of a carnal heart, and to that he hopes to ascend, and to be as far above those about him, as the heaven is above the earth. Princes are the stars of God, which give some light to this dark world; (Matth. xxiv. 29.) but he will exalt his throne above them all. [2.] That he shall particularly insult over God's mount Zion, which Belshazzar, in his last drunkenness, seemed to have had a particular spite against, when he called for the vessels of the temple at Jerusalem, to profane them; see Dan. v. 2. In the same humour, he here said, I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, (it is the same word that is used for the holy convocations, in the sides of the north; so Mount Zion is said to be situated, Ps. lxxiii. 2. Perhaps Belshazzar was projecting an expedition to Jerusalem to triumph in the ruins of it, then when God cut him off. [3.] That he will vie with the God of Israel, of whom he had indeed heard glorious things, that he had his residence above the height of the clouds. But this, says he, will not pass; I ascend, and be as great as he; I will be like him which they call the Most High. This is a glorious ambition to covet to be like the Most Holy, for he has said, Be ye holy, for I am holy; but it is a sinful ambition to aim to be like the Most High, for he has said, He who exalts himself, shall be abased; and he who spurns the dust and dross of all below him, but turns it into a curse to mankind.}

3. The utter ruin that should be brought upon him:

(1.) It is foretold that his wealth and power should be broken, and a final period put to his pomp and pleasures; he has been long an oppressor, but he shall cease to be so, v. 4. Had he ceased to be so by true repentance and reformation, according to the advice Daniel gave to Nebuchadnezzar, it might have been a lengthening of his life and tranquillity. But those that will not cease to sin, God will make to cease. The golden city, which, one would have thought, might have continued for ever, is ceased; there is an end of that Babylon. The Lord, the righteous God, has broken the staff of that wicked prince, broken it over his head, in token of the disgrace and death of him, and of his kingdom, by taking it from him, and disabled him to do any more mischief; he has broken the sceptres; for even those are brittle things, soon broken, and often justly.

(2.) That he himself should be seized; He is persecuted; (v. 6.) violent hands are laid upon him, and none hinderers. It is the common fate of tyrants, when they fall into the power of their enemies, to be deserted by their flatterers, whom they took for their friends. We read of another enemy like this here, of whom it is foretold that he shall come to his end, and none shall help him, Dan. xi. 45. Tiberius and Nero thus saw themselves abandoned.

(3.) That he should be slain, and go down to the congregation of the dead, to be free among them, as the slain that are no more remembered, Ps. lxxxviii. 10. He shall be as1 the dead, and like the body of them, v. 10. His pomp is brought down to the grave, it perishes with him; the pomp of his life shall not, as usual, end in a funeral pomp. True glory, that is, true glory, will go up with the soul to heaven, but vain pomp will go down with the body to the grave, there is an end of it. The noise of his viols is now heard no more; death is a farewell to the pleasures, as well as to the pomp of this world. This mighty prince, that used to lie on a bed of down, and tread upon rich carpets, and to have coverings and canopies exquisitely fine, now shall have the worms spread under him, and the worms covering him, (v. 11.) worms bred out of his own putrefied body, which, though he fancied himself a god, proved him to be made of the same mould with other men. When we are pampering and decking our bodies, it is good to remember they will be worms' meat shortly.

(4.) That he should not have the honour of a burial, much less of a decent one, and in the sepulchres of his ancestors; The kings of the nations lie in glory; (v. 18.) either the dead bodies themselves, so embalmed as to be preserved from putrefaction, as of old among the Egyptians; or their tombs (as with us) erected over their graves. Thus, if they would defy the ignominy of death, they lay in a poor, faint sort of glory, every one in his own house, his own burying-place; for the grave is the house appointed for all living, a sleeping-house, where the busy and troublesome will be quiet, and the true
nked and weary lie at rest. But this king of Babylon is cast out, and has no grave; (v. 19.) his dead body is thrown, like that of a beast, into the next ditch, or by the side of it. It is no improbable branch of some noxious, poisonous plant, which nobody will touch; or as the clothes of malefactors put to death, and by the hand of justice thrust through with a sword, on whose dead bodies heaps of stones are raised, or they are thrown into some deep quarry, among the stones of the pit. Nay, the king of Babylon's dead body is cast into a hollow in a battle, who are trodden under feet by the horses and soldiers, and crushed to pieces: thus shall he not be joined with his ancestors in burial, v. 20. To be denied decent burial is a disgrace, which, if it be inflicted for righteousness sake (as Ps. Ixix. 2.) may, as other similar reproaches, be rejected in; (Matt. v. 12.) it is the lot of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 9. But if, as here, it be the just punishment of iniquity, it is an intimation that evil pursues impenitent sinners beyond death, greater evil than that, and that they shall rise to everlasting shame and contempt.

4. The many triumphs that should be in his fall.
(1.) Those whom he had been a great tyrant and terror to, will be glad that they are rid of him; (v. 10.) the Philistines, the king of Tyre, the king of Egypt, and the king of Edom, (v. 3.) "The gods, the rulers of the nations, the princes of earth, will be glad at his fall, and is quiet, for he was the great disturber of the peace; now they all break forth into singing, for when the wicked perish, there is shouting;" (Prov. x. 10.) the fir-trees and cedars of Lebanon now think themselves safe, there is no danger now of their being cut down, to make way for his vast armies, or to furnish him with his wealth and riches. The neighboring princes, and great men, who are compared to fir-trees and cedars, (Zech. xi. 2.) may now be easy, and out of fear of being disposed of their rights, for the hammer of the whole earth is cut asunder and broken, (Jer. i. 23.) the axe that boasted itself against him that heaved with it, (ch. x. 15.)

(2.) The congregation of the dead will bid him welcome to them, especially those whom he had barbarously hastened thither; (v. 9, 10.) "Hell from beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming, and to complain thee upon thy arrival at their dark and dreadful regions." The chief ones of the earth, who, when they were alive, were kept in awe by him, and durst not come near him, but rose from their thrones, to resign them to him, these shall now rise from their thrones to sit down in them, as he used to do in them, and, upon the body of the dead, they shall go forth to meet him, as they used to do when he made his public entry into cities he was become master of; with such a parade shall he be introduced into those regions of horror, to make his disgrace and torment the more grievous to him. They shall scoffingly rise from their thrones and seats there, and ask him if he will please to sit down in them, as he used to do in them, and be their prince and and king; (v. 11.) in the desert where thy mirth? How art thou fallen from heaven, Q Lucifer, son of the morning," v. 11, 12. The king of Babylon has shone as bright as the morning-star, and fancied that, wherever he came, he brought day along with him; and is such an illustrious prince as this fallen, such a star become a cloud of clay? Did ever any man fall from such a height of honour and power into such an abyss of shame and misery? This has been commonly alluded to, (and it is a mere allusion,) to illustrate the fall of the angels, who were as morning-stars, Job xxxiii. 7.

5. But how are they fallen! How art thou cast down to the ground, and levelled with it, that dost transgress the limits of thy property? Conquerors in war that invade the rights, and disturb the peace, of mankind, for he is King of nations as well as saints.

Now this reception of the king of Babylon into the regions of the dead, which is here described, surely is something more than a flight of fancy, and is designed to speak these solid truths: [1.] That there is an invisible world, a world of spirits, to which the dead shall be carried, and to which they which exist in, and act in a state of separation from the body. [2.] That separate souls have acquaintance and converse with each other, though we have none with them; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus intimates this. [3.] That death and hell will be death and hell indeed to those that fall unsanctified from the height of this world's pomp, and the fulness of its pleasures: "Son, remember, Luke xvi. 25."

(3.) Spectators will stand amazed at his fall. When he shall be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit, and to be lodged there, (v. 13.) they that see him shall narrowly look upon him, and consider him, they shall scarcely believe their own eyes; never was death so great a change to any man as it was to him. Nebuchadnezzar, a king but a few hours ago looked so great, so pleasant, and was so splendidly adorned and attended, should now look so ghastly, so despicable, and lie thus naked and neglected? Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, and shook kingdoms? Who would have thought he should ever have come to this? Psalm cxlvii. 7.

Lastly, Here is an inference drawn from all this; (v. 20.) The seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. The princes of the Babylonian monarch were all a seed of evil-doers, oppressors of the people of God, and therefore they had this infamy entailed upon them. They shall not be renowned for ever; so some read it; they may look big for a time, but all their pomp will only render their disgrace at last the more shameful; there is no credit in a sinful way.

II. The utter ruin of the royal family is here foretold, together with the desolation of the royal city.

1. The royal family is to be wholly extirpated. The Medes and Persians that are to be employed in this destroying work, are ordered, when they make their public entry into Babylon to destroy all the children, (v. 21.) and not to spare them; the little ones of Babylon must be dashed against the stones, Ps. cxlvii. 9. These orders sound very harsh; but, (1.) They must suffer for the iniquity of their fathers, which is often visited upon the children, to show how much God hates sin, and is displeased at it, and to deter sinners from it, which is the end of punishment. Nebuchadnezzar had slain Zedekiah's sons, (Jer. lii. 10.) and for that iniquity of his, his seed are spared in the same coin. (2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land, and do as much mischief in their day as their fathers had done in theirs; that they may not be as vexations to the world by building cities for the support of their tyranny, (which was Nine- vah's policy,) Belshazzar, to prepare slumber for kings, (Jer. lii. 10.) and for that iniquity of his, his seed are spared in the same coin. (2.) They must be cut off now, that they may not rise up to possess the land.

The providence of God consults the welfare of nations more than we are aware of. by cutting off some who, if they had lived, would have done mischief. Justly may the enemies cut off the children; "For I will raise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, two Boats," v. 22. And God will drive him out, he will have it done, as none can hinder it, so we need scruple to further it.

Babylon perhaps was proud of the numbers of her royal family, but God
ISAIAH, XIV.

had determined to cut off the name and remnant of it, so that none should be left, to have both the sons and grandsons of the king slain; and yet we are sure he never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures.

2. The royal city is to be demolished and desecrated, ver. 23. It shall be a possession for solitary fowl, birds, particularly the bittern, and with them the corncrake and the owl, ch. xxiv. 11. And thus the utter destruction of the New Testament Babylon is illustrated, (Rev. xviii. 2) it is become a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Babylon lay low, so that when it was deserted, and no care taken to drain the land, it soon became pools of water, standing puddles, as unhealthful as unpleasant: and that, and not the land, was the object of its destruction. When a people have nothing among them but dirt and filth, and will not be made clean with the bosom of reformation, what can they expect but to be swept off the face of the earth with the bosom of destruction?

24. The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand; 25. That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. 26. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. 27. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back? 28. In the year that king Ahaz died, was this burden. 29. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken; for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. 30. And the first-born of the poor shall be fed, and the needy shall be in safety; and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant. 31. Howl, O gate; cry, O city: thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times. 32. What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it.

The destruction of Babylon and the Chaldean empire was a thing at a great distance; the empire was not risen to any considerable height when its fall was here foretold: it was almost 200 years from this prediction of Babylon's fall to the accomplishment of it. Now the people to whom Isaiah prophesied, might ask, "What is this to us, or what shall we be the better for it, and what assurance shall we have of it?" To both which questions he answers in these verses, by a prediction of the ruin both of the Assyrians and of the Philistines, the present enemy and that infested them, which should shortly be eye-witnesses of, and have benefit by. These would be a present comfort to them, and a pledge of future deliverance, for the confirming of the faith of their posterity. God is to his people the same to-day that he was yesterday, and will be hereafter; and he will for ever be the same that he has been, and is. Here is, 1. Assurance given of the destruction of the Assyr-ians; (ver. 25.) I will break the Assyrian in my land. Sennacherib brought a very formidable army into the land of Judah, but there God broke it, and delivered all the people; and the Philistines, with the Scythians, who assailed them, were also delivered. Note, Those who wrongfully invade God's land, shall find it at their peril, and those who with unaided feet trample upon his holy mountains, shall themselves there be trodden under foot. God undertakes to do it himself, his people having no might against the great company that came against them; "I will break the Assyrian; let me alone to smite, who is my shepherd to give me command." Now the breaking of the power of the Assyrian would be the breaking of the yoke from off the neck of God's people. His burden shall depart from off their shoulders, the burthen of quartering that vast army, and paying contribution; therefore the Assyrian must be broken, that Judah and Jerusalem may be eased. Let those that make themselves a yoke and a burden to God's people, see what they are called to expect.

Now, I. This prophecy is here ratified and confirmed by an oath; (ver. 24.) The Lord of hosts hath sworn, that he might show the immutability of his counsel, and that his people may have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. What is here said of this particular intention, is true of all God's purposes; so I have thought, so shall it stand, is one in mind, and who can turn him? Nor is he ever put upon new counsels, or obliged to take new measures, as men often are, when things occur which they did not foresee. Let those who are the called according to God's purpose, comfort themselves with this, that as God has purposed, so shall it stand, and on that their stability does depend.

2. The breaking of the Assyrian power is made a specimen of what God would do with all the powers of the nations that were engaged against him and his church; (ver. 26.) This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, the whole world, so the LXX; all the inhabitants of the earth, so the Chaldee; not only upon the Assyrian empire, (which was then reckoned to be in a manner all the world, as afterward the Roman empire was, (Luke ii. 1.) which was to destroy Christianity, but it is upon it,) but upon all these states and potentates that should at any time attack his land, his mountains; the fate of the Assyrian shall be theirs, they shall soon find that they meddle to their own hurt. Jerusalem, as it was to the Assyrians, will be to all people a burdensome stone; all that burden themselves with it, shall infallibly be cut to pieces by it, Heb. xvi. 3, 6. The same hand of power and justice that is now to be stretched out against the Assyrian for invading the people of God, shall be stretched out upon all the nations that do likewise. It is still true, and will be ever so, Cursed is he that curseth God's Israel, Num. xxiv. 9. God will be an Enemy to his people's enemies, Exod. xxviii. 22.

3. All the powers on earth are defied to change God's counsel; (ver. 27.) "The Lord of hosts has purposed to break the Assyrian's yoke, and every rod of the wicked laid upon the lot of the righteous; and who shall disannul this purpose? Who can persuade him to recall it, or find a plea to evade it? His hand is stretched out to execute this purpose; and he has power enough to turn it back, or to stay the course of his judgments?"

4. Assurance is likewise given of the destruction of the Philistines and their power. This burthen, this prophecy, that lay as a load upon them, to sink their state, came in the year that king Ahaz died; which was the first year of Hezekiah's reign;
They that were fiery, this, when he had brought them very low; (2 Chron. xxvi. 6.) he warr'd against the Philistines, broke down their walls, and built cities among them; but when Uzziah died, or rather abdicated, it was told with joy in Gath, and published in the streets of Askelon. It is inhuman thus to rejoice in our neighbour's evil; but let them not be secure, for though, when Uzziah took many of the cities of Judah, (2 Chron. xxviii. 18.) yet out of the root of Uzziah should come a cockatrice, a more formidable enemy than Uzziah was, even Hezekiah, the fruit of whose government should be to them a fiery serpent, for he should fall upon them with incredible swiftness and fury; we find he did so; (2 Kings xviii. 8.)

He smote the Philistines even to Gaza. Note, If God remove one useful instrument in the midst of his usefullness, he can, and will, raise up others to carry on and complete the same work that they were employed in, and left unfinished.

2. A prophecy of the destruction of the Philistines by famine and war. (1.) By famine; (v. 30.) when the people of God, whom the Philistines had warr'd, and thus should slay the remnant; those, joy plenty again, and the first-born of their poor shall feed, (the poorest among them shall have food convenient.) then, as for the Philistines, God will kill their root with famine; that which was their strength, and with which they thought themselves established as the tree is by the root, shall be starved and dried up by degrees, as those die, that die by famine; and thus should slay the remnant; those, that escape from one destruction, are but reserved for another; and when there are but a few left, those few shall at length be cut off, for God will make a full end. (2.) By war; when the needy of God's people shall lie down in safety, (v. 30.) not terrified with the alarms of war, but delighting in the songs of peace, then every gate and every city of the Philistines shall howl and crying; (v. 31.) and there shall be a total dissolution of their state; for from Jерала, which lay north of the Philistines, there shall come a smoke, a vast army raising a great dust, a smoke that shall be the indication of a devouring fire at hand; and none of all that army shall be alone in his appointed times; none shall struggle or be missing when they are to engage; but they shall be vigorous and triumphant in attacking the common enemy, when the time appointed for the doing of it comes. None of them shall decline the public service, as, in Deborah's time, Reuben abode among the sheepfolds, and Asher on the sea-shore, Judg. v. 16, 17. When God has work to do, he will wonderfully endow and dispose men for it.

III. The good use that should be made of all these things, and encouragement of the people of God; (v. 32.) What shall one then answer the messengers of the nations? This implies, 1. That the great things God does for his people, are, and cannot but be, taken notice of by their neighbours; they among the heathen make remarks upon them, Ps. cxxxvi. 2. 2. That messengers will be sent to inquire concerning them. Jacob and Israel had long been a pint from them, and from all others, had dignified with uncommon favours; and therefore some, for good-will, others, for ill-will, and all, for curiosity, are inquisitive concerning them. 3. That it concerns us always to be ready to give a reason of the hope that we have in the providence of God, as well as in his grace, in answer to every one that asks it, with meekness and fear, 1 Petr. iii. 15. And we need go no further than the sacred truths of God's word, for a reason; for God, in all he does, is fulfilling the scripture. 4. The issue of God's dealings with his people shall be so clearly and manifestly glorious, that any one, every one, shall be able to give an account of them. This he does, concerning them. Now the answer which is to be given to the messengers of the nations, is, (1.) That God is, and will be, a faithful Friend to his church and people, and will secure and advance their interests. Tell them that the Lord has founded Zion. This gives an account both of the work itself that is done, and of the reason of it. What is God doing in this day? As he did in the days of Hezekiah, and he does, in all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, in the ruin of some nations, and the rise of others? He is, in all this, founding Zion; he is aiming at the advancement of his church's interests; and what he aims at he will accomplish. The messengers of the nations, when they sent to inquire concerning Hezekiah's successes against the Philistines, expected to learn by what politics, commerce, and arts of war, he carried his point; they are told that they were not owing to any thing of that nature, but to the care God took of his church, and the interest he had in it. The Lord has founded Zion, and therefore the Philistines must fall. (2.) That his church has, and will have, a dependence upon him: The poor of his people shall trust in it, his poor people who have been brought very low, even in the persons of them, through God hath others, for they have nothing else to trust to; (Zeph. iii. 12, 13.) the poor receive the gospel, Matth. xi. 5. They shall trust to this, to this great truth, that the Lord has founded Zion; on this they shall build their hopes, and not on an arm of flesh. This ought to give us abundant satisfaction as to public affairs, that, however it goes with particular persons, parties, and nations of the world, God has done it for his own, as to the foundation, and Christ the Rock for its Foundation, cannot but stand firm; The poor of his people shall betake themselves to it; so some read it; shall join themselves to his church, and embark in its interests; they shall concur with God in his designs to establish his people, and shall wind up all on the same plan, and make all their little concerns and projects bend to that. They that take God's people for their people, must be willing to take their lot with them, and cast in their lot among them. Let the messengers of the nations know that the poor Israelites, who trust in God, having, like Zion, their foundation in the holy mountains, (Ps. lxxxvii. 1.) are like Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides for ever, (Ps. cxxxv. 1.) and therefore they will not fear what man can do unto them.

CHAP. XV.

This chapter, and that which follows it, are the burthen of Moab; a prophecy of some great desolation that was coming upon that country, which bordered upon this land of Israel, and had often been inures and vexations to it, though the Moabites were descended from Lot, Abraham's kinsman and companion, and though the Israelites, by the appointment of God, had spared them, when they might both easily and justly have cut them off with their neighbours. In this chapter, we have, I. Great harm from Moab; that nation, not the Moabites, but the prophet himself for them, v. 1. - 5. II. The great calamities which should occasion that lamentation, and justify it, v. 6. - 9.

1. THE burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; 2. He is gone up to Bajith, and
to Dibon, the high places, toweep: Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba; on all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off. 3. In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth: on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly. 4. And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh: their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz: therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out; his life shall be grievous unto him. 5. My heart shall cry out for Moab; his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar, a heifer of three years old: for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction.

The country of Moab was of small extent, but very fruitful; it bordered upon the lot of Reuben on the other side Jordan, and upon the Dead sea. Naomi went to squarren there, when there was a famine in Canaan. This is the country which (it is here foretold) should be wasted and grievously harassed; not quite ruined, for we find another prophecy of its ruin, (Jer. 48.) which was accomplished by Nabuchodonosor. The prophet here was to be fulfilled within three years, (ch. xvi. 14.) and therefore was fulfilled in the devastations made of that country by the army of the Assyrians, which for many years ravaged those parts, enriching themselves with spoil and plunder. It was done either by the army of Shalmaneser, about the time of the taking of Samaria in the fourth year of Hezekiah, (2 Kings xx. 10.) or by the army of Senacharib, which, ten years after, invaded Judah.

We cannot suppose that the prophet went among the Moabites to preach them this sermon; but he delivered it to his own people, (1.) To show them, that though judgment begins at the house of God, it shall not end there; that there is a Providence which governs the world and all the nations of it; and that to the God of Israel the worshippers of false gods were accountable, and liable to his judgments. (2.) To give them a proof of God’s care of them and jealousy for them; and to convince them that God was an Enemy to their enemies, for such the Moabites had often been. (3.) That the accomplishment of this prophecy, now shortly, (within three years,) might be a confirmation of the prophet’s mission, and of the truth of all his other prophecies, and might encourage the faithful to depend upon them.

Now concerning Moab, it here foretold,
1. That their chief cities should be surprised and taken in a night by their enemy, probably because the inhabitants, as the men of Lishah, indulged themselves in ease and luxury, and dwelt securely; (v. 1.) Therefore there shall be great grief, because in the night Am of Moab is laid waste, and Kir of Moab; the two principal cities of that kingdom. In the night that they were taken, or sacked, Moab was cut off. The seizing of them laid the whole country open, and made all the wealth of it an easy prey to the victorious army. Note, (1.) Great changes and very dismal ones may be made in a very little time. Here are two cities lost in a night, though that is the time of quietness; let us therefore lie down as those that know not what a night may bring forth. (2.) As the country feeds the cities, so the cities protect the country, and neither can say to the other, I have no need of thee. 2. That the Moabites, being hereby put into the utmost consternation imaginable, should have recourse to their idols for relief, and pour out their tears before them; (v. 2.) He, that is, Moab, especially the King of Moab, is gone up to Baalit, or rather, to the house or temple of Chemosh; and Dibon, the inhabitants of Dibon, are gone up to the high places, where they worshipped their idols, their very complaints. Note, It becomes a people in distress to seek the God they have despised; but let us then thus walk in the name of the Lord our God, and call upon him in the time of trouble, before whom we shall not shed such useless fruitless tears as they did before their gods!
3. That there should be the voice of universal grief, all the country over. It is described here elegantly and very affectionately. Moab shall be a vale of tears; a little map of God’s wrath on the Moabites. The Moabites shall lament the loss of Nebo and Medeba, two considerable cities, which, it is likely, were plundered and burnt. They shall tear their hair for grief, to that degree, that on all their heads shall be baldness, and they shall cut off their beards, according to the customary expressions of mourning in those times and countries. When they go abroad, they shall be so far from the approved of God, as some, that in the streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth; and perhaps being forced to use that poor clothing, the enemies having stripped them, and rifled their houses, and left them another clothing. When they come home, instead of applying themselves to their business, they shall go up the streets of their cities, which were flat-roofed, and there they shall weep abundantly; for, they shall howl, in crying to their gods; those that cry not to God with their hearts, do but how upon their beds, Hos. vii. 14. Amos viii. 3. They shall come down with weeping; so the margin reads it; they shall come down from their high places and the tops of their houses, weeping as much as they did when they went up. Prayer to the true God is heart’s-ease. (1 Sam. i. 18.) but prayers to false gods are not. Divers places are here named, that should be full of lamentation. (v. 4.) and it is but a poor relief to have so many fellowsufferers, fellow-mourners; to a public spirit it is rather an aggravation, socios habuisse doloris—to have associates in wo.

4. That all of their militia should fail them; though they were bred soldiers, and were well armed, yet they shall cry out, and shriek, for fear, and every one of them shall have his life become grievous to him; though it is a military life, which delights in danger, v. 4. See how easily God can dispirit the stoutest of men, and deprive a nation of benefit, by those whom it most depended on for its strength and defence. The Moabites shall generally be so overwhelmed with grief, that the life itself shall be a burthen to them. God can easily make weariness of life those that are fond of it.
5. That the outcry for these calamities should propagate grief to all the adjacent parts, v. 5. (1.) The prophet himself has very sensible impressions made upon his spirit by the prediction of it: “My heart shall cry out for Moab; though they are enemies to Israel, they are our fellow-cryers of grief; they stand in the same rank with us, and therefore it should grieve us to see them in such distress, the rather because we know not how soon it may be our own turn to drink of the same cup of trembling.” Note, It becomes God’s ministers to be of a tender spirit, not to desire the woful day, but to be like their Master, who wept over Jerusalem. If God gave her up to ruin, like their God, who desires no death of sinners. (2.) All the neighbouring cities shall echo to the lamentations of Moab. The fugitives, who are making the best of their way to
shift for their own safety, shall carry the cry to Zion, the city to which their ancestor Lot fled for shelter from Sodom's flames, which was spared for his sake. There also Daniel was as great a helper with his cry, as a helper of three year old doles, when he goes loving for his calf, as 1 Sam. vi. 12. They shall go up the hill of Lubeth, as David went up the ascent of mount Olivet, many a weary step, and all in tears, 2 Sam. xv. 36. And in the way of Horoniam, (a dual termination,) the way that leads to the two Beth-horons, the upper and the nether, which we read of, Josh. xvi. 3, 5. Neither shall there be carried, there it should be raised; even at that great distance, a cry of destruction, that shall be the cry; like, "Fire, fire, we are all undone." Grief is catching, so is fear, and justly, for trouble is spreading, and when it begins, who knows where it will end.

6. For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faleth, there is no green thing. 7. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. 8. For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim. 9. For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood: for I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.

Here the prophet further describes the woful and pitious lamentations that should be heard throughout all the country of Moab, when it should become a prey to the Assyrian army. By this time the cry is gone round about all the borders of Moab, v. 8. Every corner of the country has received the alarm, and is in the utmost confusion upon it. It is got to Eglaim, a city at one end of the country; and to Beer-elim, a city as far the other way. Where sin has been general, and all flesh have corrupted their way, what can be expected but a general desolation?

Two things are here spoken of, as causes of this lamentation.

1. The waters of Nimrim are desolate, (v. 6.) This country is plentifully furnished with pasture, and all the wealth and substance of it swept away by the victorious army. Famine is usually the sad effect of war. Look into the fields that were well watered, the fruitful meadows that yielded delightful prospects, and more delightful products, and there all is eaten up, or carried off by the enemy's foragers, and the remainder trodden to drivel in the streets. If an army encamp upon given fields, the grassiness is soon got into the houses, and they are stripped too; (v. 7.) The abundance of wealth that they had gotten with a great deal of art and industry, and that which they have laid up with a great deal of care and confidence, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows. Either the owners shall carry it thither to hide their homesteads shall carry it thither to pack it up, and send it home, by water perhaps, to their own country. Note, (1.) Those that are eager to get abundance of this world, and solicitous to lay up what they have gotten, little consider what will become of it, and in how little a time it may be all taken from them. Great abundance, by tempting the robbers, exposes the owners; and they do not depend upon it to protect them, often find it does but betray them. (2.) In times of distress, great riches are often great burthens, and do but increase the owner's care or the enemies' strength.

2. Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land, (v. 1.) The fenny, low traveller will exult, when accused by a robber, in having nothing about him.

The Moabites were turned into blood, (v. 9.) The inhabitants of the country are slain in great numbers, so that the waters adjoining to the cities, whether rivers or pools, are discououred with human gore, inhumanly shed like water. Dimon signifies bloody; the place shall answer to its name. Perhaps it was that place in the country of Moab, where the water seemed to the Moabites as blood, (2 Kings. ii. 22, 23,) which the prophet occasioned their name to throw. But now, says God, I will bring more upon Dimon, more blood than was shed, or thought to be seen, at that time. I will bring additions upon Dimon, (so the word is,) additional plagues: I have yet more judgments in reserve for them; for all this, God's anger is not turned away. When he judges, he will overcomer; and to the roll of curses be added many like words, Jer. xxxix. 22. See here what is the yet more evil to be brought upon Dimon, upon Moab, which is now to be made a land of blood. Some flee, and make their escape, others sit still, and are overlooked, and are as a remnant of the land; but upon both God will bring lions, beasts of prey; (which are reckoned one of God's four judgments, Ezek. xiv. 21.) and these shall glean up those that have escaped the sword of the enemy. Those that continue impenitent in sin, when they are preserved from one judgment, are but reserved for another.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter continues and concludes the burden of Moab. In it, 1. The prophet gives good counsel to the Moabites, to reform what was amiss among them, and particularly to be kind to God's people, as the likeliest way to prevent the judgments before threatened, v. 1–3. If the Moabites should not reform, (they were so proud,) he goes on to foretell the lamentable devastation of their country, and the confusion they should be brought to, and this within three years, v. 4–14.

1. Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughters of Zion. 2. For it shall be, that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Ammon. 3. Take counsel, execute judgment, make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon-day; hide the outcasts, bewray not him that wandereth. 4. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab: be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler: for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. 5. And in mercy shall the throne be established, and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking judgment, and hast ing righteousness.

God has made it to appear that he delights not in the ruin of sinners, by telling them what they may do to prevent the ruin; so he does here to Moab. 1. He advises them to be just to the house of David, and to pay the tribute they had formerly contracted to pay to the kings of his line; (v. 1.) Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land. David made Moab tributaries to him; (2 Sam. viii. 2.) they became his servants, and brought gifts. After wards they paid their tribute to the kings of Israel.
2 Kings iii. 4.) and paid it in lambs. Now the prophet requires them to pay it to Hezekiah. Let it be paid, and levied from all parts of the country, from Sela, a frontier city of Moab on the one side, to the wilderness, a boundary of the kingdom on the other side: and let it be sent, where it should be sent, to the mount of the daughter of Zion, the city of David. Some take it as an advice to send a lamb for a sacrifice to God the Ruler of the earth, (so it may be read,) the Lord that made the whole earth, Ruler of the land of Moab as well as the land of Israel: "Send it to the temple built on mount Zion." And some think it is in this sense spoken ironically, upbraiding the Moabites with their folly in delaying to repent, and make their peace with God; "Now you would be glad to send a lamb to mount Zion, to make the God of Israel your Friend; but it is too late, the decree has forth, the consumption is determined, and the daughters of Moab shall be cast out as a wandering bird." v. 2. I rather take it as good advice seriously given, like that of Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar then when he was reading him his doom; (Dan. iv. 27.) Break off thy sins by righteousness, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility. And as it is applicable to the great gospel-duty of submission to Christ, as the Ruler of the land, so it is applicable to the best lamb you have, yourselves a living sacrifice. When you come to God the great Ruler, come in the name of the Lamb, the Lamb of God. For else it shall be," (so we may read it, v. 2.) "that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be. If you will not pay your quit-rent, your last tribute to the king of Judah, you shall be turned out of your houses: the daughters of Moab (the country-villages, or the women of your country) shall flatter about the fords of Arnon, attempting that way to make their escape to some other land, like a wandering bird thrown out of the nest half-fledged." Those that will not submit to Christ, nor be gathered under the shadow of his wings, shall be as a bird that wanders from her nest, that shall either be snatched up by the next bird of prey, or shall wander endlessly in continual frights. Those that will not yield to the fear of God, shall be made to yield to the fear of every thing else.

II. He advises them to be kind to the seed of Israel; (v. 3.) "Take counsel, call a convention, and consult among yourselves what is fit to be done in the present critical juncture; and you will find it your best way to execute judgment, to reverse all the unrighteous decrees you have made, by which you have put hardships upon the people of God; and, in token of your repentance for them, study now how to oblige them, and this shall be accepted of God more than all burnt-offering and sacrifice."

1. The prophet foresaw some storm coming upon the people of God, perhaps the good people of the ten tribes, of the house of Joseph, that were inside Jordan, was a country joined to that of Moab, and who, by the merciful providence of God, escaped the fury of the Assyrian army, had their lives given them for a prey, and were reserved for better times, but were put to the utmost extremity to shift for their own safety. The danger and trouble they were in, were like the scorching heat at noon; the heart of the spoiler was very fierce upon them, and the oppressor and exterminator were ready to swallow them up.

2. He bespeaks a shelter for them in the land of Moab, when their own land was made disagreeable to them. This judgment they must execute; thus wisely must they do for themselves, and thus kindly must they deal with the people of God. If they would themselves continue in their habitations, let them now open their doors to the distressed dispersed members of God's church, and be to them like a cool shade to those that bear the burthen and heat of the day. Let them not discover those that ascended among them, nor deliver them up to the pursuers that made search for them; "Beware not him that wandereth, nor deliver him up," (as the Edomites did, Obad. xii. 14.) "but hide the outcasts." This was that good work by which Rahab's faith was tried, and mighty works were wrought; (Heb. xii. 31.) "Nay, do not only hide them for a time, but, if there be occasion, let them be naturalized; let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moabs; find a lodging for them, and be thou a covert to them. Let them be taken under the protection of the government, though they are but poor, and likely to be a charge to thee." Note, (1.) It is often the lot even of those who are Israelites indeed, to be outcasts, driven out of house and harbour, by persecution or war, Hb. xi. 37. (2.) God owns them, when men reject and disown them. They are outcasts, but they are mine outcasts. The Lord knows them that are his, wherever he finds them, even there where no one else knows them. (3.) God will find a rest and shelter for his outcasts; for though they are persecuted, they are not rejected of God. They shall not be driven from their land, if they have to other, and in him they shall be at home. (4.) God can, when he pleases, raise up friends for his people, even among Moabites, when they can find none in all the land of Israel, that can and dare shelter them. The earth often helps the woman, Rev. xii. 16. (5.) Those that expect to find favour when they are in trouble themselves, must show favour to those that are in trouble; and that service is done to God's outcasts, shall, no doubt, be recompensed one way or other.

3. He assures them of the mercy God had in store for his people. (1.) That they should not long need their kindness, or be troublesome to them, for the extortioner is almost at an end already, and the spoiler ceases. God's people shall not be long outcasts, they shall have tribulation ten days, (Rev. iv. 10.) and that is all. The spoiler would never cease spoiling, if he might have his will; but God has him in a chain. Hitherto he shall go, but no further. (2.) That they should, ere long, be in a capacity to return their kindness; (v. 5.) "Though the throne of the ten tribes be sunk and overturned, yet the throne of David shall be established in mercy, by the mercy they received from God, and the mercy they show to others; and by the same methods may your throne be established; it shall please." It would engage great men to be kind to the people of God, if they would but observe, as they easily might, how often that brings the blessing of God upon kingdoms and families. "Make Hezekiah your friend, for you will find it your interest to do so, upon the account both of the grace of God in him, and the presence of God with him. The throne shall be filled, the throner shall indeed sit in honour, and sit fast. Then he shall sit judging, and will then be a protector to those that have been a shelter to the people of God." And see in him the character of a good magistrate, [1.] He shall seek judgment; he shall seek occasions of doing right to those that are wronged, and shall punish the injuries even before they are complained of; or, even before he brought them, that he may find where the right lies. [2.] He shall instate righteousness, and not delay to do justice, nor keep those long waiting, that make application to him for the redress of their grievances. Though he seeks judgment, and deliberates upon it, yet he does not, under pretence of that, stay the progress of the streams of justice. Let the Moabites take care

84 ISAIAH, XVI.
We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud; even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so. 7. Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn: surely they are stricken. 8. For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness; her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea: 9. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh; for the shouting for thy summer-fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen. 10. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treads shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage shouting to cease. 11. Wherefore my bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-hareseth. 12. And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray; but he shall not prevail. 13. This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab since that time. 14. But now the Lord hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of a hiring, and the glory of Moab shall be contended with, all that great multitude; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble.

Here we have,
1. The sins with which Moab is charged, v. 6. The prophet seems to check himself for going about to give good counsel to the Moabites, concluding they would not take the advice he gave them. He told them their duty, (whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear,) but despaired of working any good upon them; he would have healed them, but they would not be healed. They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped. Their sins were, 1. Pride; this is most insisted upon; for perhaps there are more precise souls reprobate, and blessed by any one lust whatsoever. The Moabites were notorious for this; We have heard of the pride of Moab; it is what all their neighbours cry out shame upon him for; he is very proud; the body of the nation is so, forgetting the baseness of their original, and the brand of infamy fastened upon them by that Law of God, which forbade a Moabite to enter into the congregation of the Lord for ever, Deut. xxiii. 3. We have heard of his haughtiness and his pride; it is not the rash and rigid censure of one or two concerning them, but it is the character which all that know them will give of them; they are a proud people; and therefore they will not take good counsel when it is given them, they think themselves too wise to be advised; therefore they will not take example by Heshchiah to do justly and love mercy; they scorn to make him their pattern, for they think themselves able to teach him. They are proud, and therefore will not be subject to God himself, nor regard the things he gives. The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: they are proud, and therefore will not entertain and protect God's outcasts, they scorn to have any thing to do with them: but this is not all. 2. We have heard of his wrath too, (for those that are very proud, are commonly very passionate,) particularly his wrath against the people of God, whom therefore he would rather project, curse than praise. It seems this lies that he gave, the gratifications of his pride and his passion; but his lies shall not be so, he shall not compass his proud and angry projects, as he hoped he should. Some read it, His haughtiness, his pride, and his wrath, are greater than his strength. We know that if we lay at his mercy, we should find no mercy with him, but he has not power equal to his malice, his pride draws down ruin upon him, for it is thy preface to destruction, and he has not strength to ward it off.

II. The sorrows with which Moab is threatened; (v. 7.) Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab; all the inhabitants shall bitterly lament the ruin of their country, they shall complain one to another, every one shall howl in despair, and not one shall suffer see any comfort, or have any heart, to encourage his friend. Observe,
1. The causes of this sorrow. (1.) The destruction of their cities; For the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, that great and strong city, which had held out against a mighty force, (2 Kings iii. 15.) should now be levelled with the ground either burnt or broken down, and its foundations, its chickens, his broken branches, he shall hear, they shall howl when they see their splendid cities turned into ruinous heaps. (2.) The desolation of their country. Moab was famous for its fields and vineyards; but those shall all be laid waste by the invading army, (v. 8, 10.) See, [1.] What a fruitful, pleasant country they had, as the garden of the Lord, Gen. xiii. 10. It was planted with choice noble vines, with principal plants, which reached even to Jazer, a city in the tribe of God; the luxuriant branches of their vines wandered, and wound themselves along the ranges on which they were spread, even through the wilderness of Moab, there were vineyards there; nay, they were stretched out, and went even to the sea, the Dead sea; the best grapes grew in their hedge-rows. [2.] How merry and pleasant they had been in it; many a time had they shouted for their summer-fruits, and for their harvest, as the country people sometimes do with us, when they have cut down all their corn. They had had joy and gladness in their fields and vineyards, singing and shouting at the treading of their grapes; nothing is said of their praising God for their abundance, and giving him the glory of it. If they had made it the matter of their rejoicing, they might still have had it the matter of their rejoicing, but they made it the food and fuel of their lusts; see therefore, [5.] How they should be stripped of all; the fields shall languish, all the fruits of them being carried away, or trodden down; they cannot now enrich their owners as they have done, and therefore they languish. The soldiers, called here the lords of the heathen, shall break down all the plants, though they were principal plants, the choicest that could be got. Now the shouting for the enjoyment of the summer-fruits is fallen, and is turned into howling for the loss of them; the joy at harvest is ceased, there is no more singing; no more shouting, for the treading out of wine: they have
ISAIAH, XVII.

not: what they have had to rejoice in, nor have they a disposition to rejoice, the ruin of their country has marked their mirth. Note, First, God can easily change the palate of the sweet that are most addicted to, and make them, as it were, turn their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. Secondly, Joy in God is, upon this account, far better than the joy of harvest, that it is what we cannot be robbed of, Ps. iv. 6, 7. Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. But a gracious soul can rejoice in the ruin of the Gentiles, and even then the fig-tree does not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine, Hab. iii. 17, 18. In God therefore let us always rejoice with a holy triumph, and in other things let us always rejoice with a holy trembling, rejoice as though we rejoiced not.

2. The concurrence of the prophet with them in this sorrow, "I will with weeping bewail Jazer, and the vine of Sibmah, and lock with a compassionate concern upon the desolations of such a pleasant country; I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and mingle them with thy tears;" nay, (v. 11.) it appears to be an inward grief: My bowels shall sound like a harp for Moab; it should make such an impression upon him, that he should feel an inward trembling, like that of the strings of a harp when it is played upon. It would make them groan and lament themselves with grief; the great Prophet did so. The afflictions of the world, as well as those of the church, should be afflictions to us. See ch. xv. 5.

In the close of this chapter, we have,

3. The insufficiency of the gods of Moab, the false gods, to help them, v. 12. Moab shall be soon weary of his high-places, he shall spend his spirits and effort in vain in praying to his idols; they cannot help him, and he shall be convinced that they cannot. It is seen that it is no purpose to expect any relief from the high-places on earth, it must come from above the hills. Men are generally so stupid, that they will not believe, till they are made to see, the vanity of idols and of all creature-confidence, nor will come off from them, till they are made weary of them. But when he is weary of his high-places, he will not go, as he should, to God's sanctuary, but to his sanctuary, to the temple of Chemosh, the principal idol of Moab; so it is generally understood; and he shall pray there to as little purpose, and as little to his own case and satisfaction, as he did in his high-places; for, whatever honours they do there for the gods, they do not thereby make them at all the better able to help them; whether they are the Dii majorum Gentium—Gods of the higher order, or minorum—of the lower order, they are alike the creatures of men's fancy, and the work of men's hands. Perhaps it may be meant of their coming to God's sanctuary: when they found they could have no succours from their high-places, show them the town of God, Jerusalem, to pray there, but in vain; he will justly send them back to the gods whom they have served, Judg. x. 14.

3. The sufficiency of the God of Israel, the only true God, to make good what he had spoken against them.

[1.] The thing itself was long since determined.

[2.] This is the word, this is the thing, that the Lord has spoken concerning Moab, since the time that he began to be so proud and insolent, and abusive to God's people. The country was long ago doomed to ruin; this was enough to give an assurance of it, that it is the word which the Lord has spoken; and as he will never unsee what he has spoken, so all the power of hell and earth cannot gainsay it, or obstruct the execution of it. [2.] Now it was made known when it should be done; the time was before fixed in the counsels of God, but now it was revealed, The Lord has spoken that it shall be within three years, v. 14. It is not for us to know, or even to know, the times and the seasons, any farther than God has thought fit to make them known; and so far we may and must take notice of them. See how God makes known his mind by degrees; the light of divine revelation shone more and more, and so does the light of divine grace in the heart.

Observe, First, The sentence passed upon Moab; The glory of Moab shall be consumed; it shall be contemnible, when all these things they have glorified in, shall come to nothing. Such is the glory of this world, so fading and uncertain, admired a while; but soon slighted. Let that therefore which will soon be contemnible in the eyes of others, be always contemnible in our eyes, in comparison with the far more exceeding weight of glory. It was the glory of Moab that their country was very populous, and their forces courageous, but where is her glory, when all that great multitude is in a manner swept away, some by one judgment, and some by another, and the little remnant that is left shall be very small and feeble, not able to bear up under their own griefs, much less to make head against their enemies' insults? Let no therefore glory in their glory in their strength, nor in the many in their numbers.

Secondly, The time fixed for the execution of this sentence; Within three years, as the years of a hireling, at the three years' end exactly: for a servant that is hired for a certain term keeps count to a day. Let Moab know that her ruin is very near, and prepare accordingly. Fair warning is given, and with that space to repent, which if they had improved as Nineveh did, we have reason to think, the judgments threatened had been prevented.

CHAP. XVII.

Syria and Ephraim were confederate against Judah, (ch. vii. 1, 2;) and they being so closely joined together in their counsels, this chapter, though it be entitled the burden of Damascus, (which was the head city of Syria,) reads the doom of Israel too. 1. The destruction of the strong cities both of Syria and Israel is here foretold, (v. 1-6;) and again of the cities of Syria generally, v. 22. 2. In this chapter we have, first, the prediction of the judgment of Damascus; yet the nation of Syria was not only preserved, but it was afterwards displeased, as Nineveh was, and the church. See the following verses, ch. x. 2. 3. The destruction of the cities of Syria, the beginning of which Jonah speaks of, is here foretold, happened in the reign of Ahaz, 2 Kings xvi. 9.

1. The burden of Damascus. Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a reninous heap. 2. The cities of Aror are forsaken; they shall be for flocks which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. 3. The fortress shall also cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts. 4. And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. 5. And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim. We have here the burden of Damascus; the
Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, *The barrenness of the garden of Damascus; and the ten tribes being in alliance, they must expect to pledge Damascus in this cup of trembling that is going to round.*

1. Damascus itself, the head city of Syria, must hide itself in the houses; it is likely, will be burnt, at least the walls and gates and fortifications demolished, and the inhabitants carried away captive, so that for the present it is taken away from being a city, and is reduced, not only to a village, but to a ruinous heap, v. 1. Such desolating work as this does sin make with cities.

2. The country towns are abandoned by their inhabitants, they are carried away by their invaders; *The cities of Aror (a province of Syria so called) are forsaken,* (v. 2.) the conquered dare not dwell in them, and the conquerors have no occasion for them, nor did they seize them for want, but wantonness; so that the places which should be for men to live in, are for *flocks to lie down in,* which they may do, and none will disturb or dislodge them. Stately houses are converted into sheep-cotes. It is shewn that great conquerors should pride themselves in being common enemies to mankind. But, how unrighteous soever they are, God is righteous in causing these cities to spew out their inhabitants, who by their wickedness had made themselves vile; it is better that *flocks should lie down there,* than that they should harbour such as are in open rebellion against God. v. 2.

3. The strong-holds of Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes, will be brought to ruin; *the fortress shall cease from Ephraim,* (v. 3.) that in Samaria, and all the rest. They had joined with Syria in invading Judah very unnaturally; and now they that had been partakers in sin, should be made partakers in ruin, and justly. *When the fortress shall cease from Ephraim,* and with Israel shall be weakened, the kingdom will cease from Damascus, by which Syria will be ruined. The Syrians were the ring-leaders in that confederacy against Judah, and therefore they are punished first and sorest; and because they boasted of their alliance with Israel, now that Israel is weakened, they are upbraided with these boasts; *The remnant of Syria shall be as the glory of the children of Israel;* those few that remain of the Syrians, and their children, in a very obscure condition as the children of Israel are, and the glory of Israel shall be no relief or reputation to them. Sinful confederacies will be no strength, no stay, to the confederates, when God's judgments come upon them.

See here what the glory of Jacob is, when God contends with him, and what little reason Syria will have to be proud of resembling the glory of Jacob.

(1.) It is wasted like a man in a consumption, v. 4.

The glory of Jacob was their numbers, that they were as the sand of the sea for multitude; but this glory shall be made thin, when many are cut off, and few left. Then *the fatness of their flesh, which was their pride and security, shall wax lean,* and the body of the people shall become a perfect skeleton, nothing but skin and bones. Israel died of a lingering disease, the kingdom of the ten tribes wasted gradually. God was to them *as a moth,* Hos. v. 12. Such is all the glory of this world, it soon withers, and is made thin; but there is a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory designed for the spiritual seed of Jacob, which is not subject to any such decay; fatness of God's house, which will not wax lean.

(2.) It is all gathered and carried away by the Assyrian army, as the corn is carried out of the field by the husbandman. *They are carried away like the corn,* (Ps. lxv. 13.) but when it is reaped and gone, where is the glory? The people had by their sins made themselves ripe for ruin, and their glory was as quickly, as easily, as justly, and as irresistibly, cut down and taken away, as the corn is out of the field by the husbandman. God's judgments are compared to the *threshing in of the sickle,* when the harvest is ripe, Rev. xiv. 15. And *the Assyrian army,* like the careful husbandman, *in the valley of Rephaim,* where the corn was extraordinary, would not, if they could help it, leave an ear behind, would lose nothing that they could lay their hands on.

6. Yet *gleaning-grapes shall be left in,* as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel. v. 6.

At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. 3. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images.

Mercy is here reserved in a parenthesis, in the midst of judgment, for a remnant that should escape the common ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes. Though the Assyrians took all the care they could that none should slip out of their net, yet the neck of the earth were hid in the day of the Lord's anger, and had their lives given them for a prey, and made comfortable to them by their retirement to the land of Judah, where they had the liberty of God's courts.

1. They shall be but a small remnant, a very few which shall be marked for preservation; (v. 6.) a *gleaning-grape shall be left in it,* the body of the people were carried into captivity, but here there was one left behind, perhaps one of two in a bed, when the other was taken, Luke xvii. 34. The most desolating judgments in this world are short of the last judgment, which shall be universal, and which none shall escape. In times of the greatest calamity, some are kept safe, as in times of the greatest degeneracy some are kept pure. But the town yesterday that escapes, supposes the captivity of the far greatest part; those that are left, are as the poor remains of an olive-tree, when it has been carefully shaken by the owner; if there be two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, (out of the reach of that which shook it,) that is all. Such is the remnant according to the election of grace, very few in comparison with the multitudes that walk on in the broad way.

2. They shall be a sanctified remnant; (v. 7, 8.) these few that are preserved, are such as, in the prospect of the judgment approaching, had repented of their sins, and reformed their lives, and therefore were snatched thus as brands out of the burning; or, such as, being escaped, and becoming refugees in strange countries, were awakened, partly by the house of the distinguishing mercy of their deliverance, and partly by the distresses they were still in, to return to God. (1.) They shall look up to their Creator, shall inquire, *Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night,* in such a night of affliction as this? Job xxxv. 10, 11. They shall acknowledge his hand in all the events concerning them, merciful and afflictive, and shall submit to his hand; they shall give him the glory due to his name, and be suitably affected with his providences; they shall expect relief and succour from him, and depend upon him to help them; *their eyes shall have respect to him,* as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master, Ps. cxxiii. 2. Observe, It is our dur
9. In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uprooted branch, which they left, because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

10. Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength: therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: 11. In that day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flour: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

Here the prophet returns to foretell the woful desolations that should be made in the land of Israel by the army of the Assyrians.

1. That the cities should be deseterd; even the strong cities, which should have protected the country, shall not be able to protect themselves; they shall be as a forsaken bough, and an uprooted branch, of an old tree, which is gone to decay, forsaken of its leaves, and appears on the top of the tree, bare, and dry, and dead; so shall their strong cities look, when the inhabitants have deserted them, and the victorious army of the enemy pillaged and defaced them; (v. 9.) they shall be as the cities (so it may be supplied) which the Canaanites left, the old inhabitants of the land, because of the children of Israel, when God brake them in with a very sore plague, to take possession of that good land, cities which they builded not. As the Canaanites then fled before Israel, so Israel should now fly before the Assyrians. And herein the word of God was fulfilled, that if they committed the same abominations, the land should shew them out, as it shewed out the nations that were before them, (Lev. xxvi. 28.) and that as, while they had God on their side, one of them chased a thousand, so, when they had made him their Enemy, a thousand of them should flee at the rebuke of one; so that in the cities should be desolation, according to the threatening in the law, Lev. xxvi. 31. Deut. xxviii. 52.

2. That the country should be laid waste, v. 10.

11. Observe here, (1.) The sin that had provoked God to bring so great a destruction upon that pleasant land; it was for the iniquity of them that dwelt therein; "It is because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and all the great salvations he has wrought for thee, hast forgotten thy dependence upon him and obligations to him, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, not only who is himself a strong Rock, but has been thy strength many a time, or thou hadst been sunk and broken and destroyed long since." Therefore, (2.) The Rock of our strength; and our forgetfulness and unmindfulness of him are at the bottom of all sin; therefore we have perverted our way, because we have forgotten the Lord our God, and so we undo ourselves. (2.) The destruction itself, aggravated by the great care they took to improve their land, and to make it yet more pleasant. (1.) Look upon it at the time of the seedness, and it was all a garden and a vineyard; that pleasant land was replenished with pleasant plants, the choicest of its own growth; nay, so nice and curios were the inhabitants, that, not content with them, they sent to all the neighbouring countries for strange slips, the more valuable for being strange, uncommon, far-fetched, and dear-bought, though perhaps they had not the same taste to admire them; (Deut. vii. 20.) but in instnance of the great value and variety, (though more error) their affection to it, to lower our expectations from it.

12. Wo to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! 13. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall re-
In All

1. Triumphing over the people of God. They rely upon their numbers; the Assyrian army was made up out of divers nations, it is the multitude of many people, (v. 12.) by which weight they hope to carry the cause; they are very noisy, like the roaring of the seas; they talk big, hector and threaten, to frighten God's people from resisting them, and all their allies from sending in to their aid. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, in their speeches and letters, made a mighty noise, to strike a terror upon Hezekiah and his people; the nations that followed them, made a rushing like the rushing of many waters, and those mighty ones, that threaten to bear down all before them, and carry away every thing that stands in their way: the floods have lifted up their voice, have lifted up their waves; such is the tumult of the people, and the heathen, when they rage, Ps. ii. 1. — xxxvii. 3. They prevent the judgments of God. They think to carry their point by dint of noise, but wo to them, (v. 12.) for he shall rebuke them; God shall, one whom they little think of, have no regard to, stand in no awe of; he shall give them a check with an invisible hand, and then they shall flee afar off. Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, and the remains of their forces, shall run away in a fright, and shall be chased by their own terrors, as the chaff of the mountains which stand bleak before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, like thistle-down; so the margin; they make themselves as chaff before the wind, (Ps. xxxv. 5.) and then the angel of the Lord, (as it follows there,) the same angel that slew many of them, shall chase the rest. God will make them like a snail, or rolling thing, and then persecute them with his tempest, and make them afraid with his storm, Ps. lxxxiii. 13. 15. Note, God can dispirit the enemies of his church when they are most courageous and confident, and dissipate them when they seem most closely consolidated. This shall be done suddenly; (v. 14.) At evening-tide they are very troublesome, and threaten trouble to the people of God; but before morning, and before they are cast into a deep sleep, Ps. lxxvi. 5. 6. It was in the night that the angel routed the Assyrian army. God can in a moment break the power of his church's enemies, then when it appears most formidable; and this is written for the encouragement of the people of God in all ages, when they find themselves in an unequal match for their enemies; for this is the portion of the land that spoils us, they shall themselves be spoiled. God will plead his church's cause; and they that meddle, do it to their own hurt.

CHAP. XVIII.

Whatever country it is that is meant here by the land shadowing with wings, here is a wo denounced against it, for God has, upon his people's account, a quarrel with it. 1. They threaten God's people, v. 1. 2. All the neighbours are hereupon called to take notice what will be the issue, v. 3. III. Though God seem unconcerned in the distress of his people for a time, he will at length appear against their enemies, and will remarkably cut them off, v. 4-6. IV. This shall redound very much to the glory of God, v. 7.

1. WO to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled! 3. All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye. 4. For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. 5. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the spires with pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. 6. They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth; and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them. 7. In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.

Interpreters are very much at a loss where to find this land that lies beyond the rivers of Cush: some take it to be Egypt, a nation which, when fallen into decay, and courting Sybaris, which is said to have been invaded by Ethiopia, and to have been destroyed by them, which Tithakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews, as it were, under the shadow of his wings, by giving a powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country, at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem. Others take it to be Ethiopia, and read it, which lies near, or about, the rivers of Ethiopia, not that in Africa, which lie in the south of Egypt, but that which we call Arabia, which lay before Canaan, which Tithakah was now king of. He thought to protect the Jews, as it were, under the shadow of his wings, by giving a powerful diversion to the king of Assyria, when he made a descent upon his country; at the time that he was attacking Jerusalem. But, though by his ambassadors he bid defiance to the king of Assyria, and encouraged the Jews to fight against him, God, by the hand of Car, slighted him, and will not go forth with him; he may take his own course, but God will take another course to protect Jerusalem, while he suffers the attempt of Tithakah to miscarry, and his Arabian army to be bruised; for the Assyrian shall become a present or sacrifice to the Lord of hosts, and to the place of his inheritance, for the Lord will give the hand of Tithakah king of Ethiopia, v. 7. This is a very probable exposition of this chapter.

But from a hint of Dr. Lightfoot's in his Harmony of the Old Testament, I incline to understand this
chapter as a prophecy against Assyria; and so a
continuation of the prophecy in the three last verses
of the foregoing chapter, with which therefore this
should be joined. That was against the army of
the Assyrians, which rushed in upon Judah, this
against the land of Assyria itself, which lay beyond
the rivers of Arabia, the rivers of Euphrates and
Tigris, which bordered on Arabia Deserta. And
in calling it the land shadowing with wings, he
seems to refer to what he himself had said of it, (ch.
vi. 8.) that the stretching out of his wings shall fill
thy land, O Immanuel. The prophet might per-
haps describe the Assyrians in such dark expres-
sions or similes, and thus make known to the people
that St. Paul, in his prophecy, speaks of the Roman
empire by a periphrasis, He who now letteth, 2 Thess.
i. 7. Here is,
I. The attempt made by this land (whatever it is)
upon a nation scattered and peeled, v. 2. Swift
messengers are sent by water to proclaim war
against them, as a nation marked by Providence,
and meted out, to be trodden under foot. Whether
this be the Ethiopians waging war with the
Assyrians, or the Assyrians with Judah, it teaches us,
1. That a people which have been terrible from
their beginning, have made a figure, and borne a mighty
sway, may yet become scattered and peeled, and
may be spoiled even by their own rivers that should
enrich both the husbandman and the merchant.
Nations which have been foregathered together, they,
may, by a concurrence of accidents, become despisable, and an easy prey
to their insulting neighbours. 2. Princes and states
that are ambitious of enlarging their territories, will
still have some pretence or other to quarrel with
those whose countries they have a mind to; "It is
a nation that has been terrible, and therefore we
must be revenged on it; it is now a nation scattered
and peeled, meted out and trodden down, and there-
fore it will be an easy prey for us." Perhaps it is
not brought so low as they represent it. God's people
are trampled on as a nation scattered and peeled,
but whoever think to swallow them up, find them still as terrible as they have been from their
beginning; they are cast down, but not deserted,
not destroyed.
Very strange sounded to the nations about, by
which they are summoned to take notice of what
God is about to do, v. 3. The Ethiopians and As-
syrians have their counsels and designs, which they
have laid deep, and promise themselves much from,
and, in prosecution of them, send their ambassadors
and messengers from place to place; but let us now
inquire what the great God says to all this: 1. He
lifts up an ensign upon the mountains, and blows a
trumpet, by which he proclaims war against the
enemies of his church, and calls in all her friends
and well-wishers into her service. He gives notice
that he is about to do some great work, as Lord of
hosts. 2. All the world is bid to take notice of it;
all the dwellers on earth must see the ensign, and
hear the trumpet, must observe the motions of the
Divine Providence, and attend the directions of the
divine will. Let all enlist under God's banner,
and be on his side, and hearken to the trumpet of
his word, which gives not an uncertain sound.
III. The assurance God gives to his prophet, by him
to be given to his people; though he might seem for
a time to sit by as an unconcerned spectator, yet
he would certainly and seasonably appear for the
comfort of his people, and the confusion of his and their
enemies, and their enemies shall be put to flight. Is
there any occasion to doubt of God's removing
theirsaying, but God also will have it; and
as we may be sure his word shall stand, so he often
whispers it in the ears of his servants the prophets.
When he says, "I will take my rest," it is not as
he were weary of governing the world, or as if
he either needed or desired to retire from it, and
repose himself; but it intimates 1. That the great
God has a perfect, undisturbed, enjoyment of him-
self, in the midst of all the toil and storms and
changes of this world; the Lord is ever upon the
flock unshaken; the Eternal Mind is always
active. That sometimes he may seem to his people as if he took not wanted notice of what is done in this lower world;
they are tempted to think he is as one asleep, or as
one astonished; (Ps. xlv. 23. Jer. xiv. 9.) but even
then he knows very well what men do, and what he
himself will do.
(1.) He will take care of his people, and be a Shield
to them, he will regard his dwelling-place, his
eye and heart are, and shall be, upon it for good
delinitely. Zion is his rest for ever, where he will dwell;
and he will look after it; so some read it; he will lift
up the light of his comeliness upon it, will con-
sider over it what is to be done, and will be sure to
do all for the best; he will adapt the comforts and re-
freshments he provides for them, to the exigencies
of their case; and they will therefore be acceptable,
because seasonable. (2.) Like a clear heat after
rain, (so the margin,) which is very reviving and
pleasant, and makes the herbs to flourish. (3.)
Like a dew and a cloud in the heat of harvest, which
are very welcome, the dew to the ground, and the
cloud to the labourers. Note, There is that in
God, which is a shelter and refreshment to his
people in all disasters, and arms them against the
inconveniences of every season, when they are least
cool? There is that in his favour, which will warm
them. Is it hot? There is that in his favour, which
will cool them. Great men have their winter-house
and their summer-house; (Amos iii. 15.) but they
that are at home with God, have both in him.
(2.) He will reckon with his and their enemies,
v. 5, 6. When the Assyrian army promises itself
a plentiful harvest in the taking of Jerusalem, and
the plundering of that rich city, when the end of
that project is perfect, before the harvest is gather-
ed in, while the sour grape of their comity to He-
zkiah and his people is ripening in the flower, and
the design is just ready to put in execution, God
shall destroy that army as easily as the husbandman
cuts off the sprigs of the vine with pruning-hooks,
and saith, because the grape is sour and good for nothing:
and will not be cured, takes away, and cuts down,
the branches. This seems to point at the overthrow
of the Assyrian army by a destroying angel; when
the dead bodies of the soldiers were scattered like
the branches and sprigs of a wild vine, which the
husbandman has cut to pieces. And they shall be
left to the fowls of the mountains, and the beasts of
the earth, to prey upon, both winter and summer;
for as God's people are protected all seasons of the
year, both in cold and heat, (v. 4.) so their enemies
are at all seasons exposed; birds and beasts of prey
shall both summer and winter upon them, till they
are quite ruined.
IV. The tribute of praise which should be brought
to God from all this, v. 7. In that time, when this
shall be accomplished, shall the present be brought
to the Lord of hosts. 1. Some understand this of
the conversion of the Ethiopians to the faith of
Christ in the latter days; of which we have the spec-
cimen and beginning in Philip's baptizing the Ethi-
opian eunuch, Acts viii. 27. They that were a
people scattered and peeled, meted out, and trodden
down, (v. 2.) shall be a present to the Lord; and
though they seem useless and worthless, they shall
nevertheless be acceptable to God, who can make
men by the sincerity of their faith and love, not by
the pomp and prosperity of their outward condition.
Therefore the gospel was ministered to the Gen-
tiles, that the offering up of the Gentiles might
be acceptable, Rom. xv. 16. It is prophesied (Pp
xviii. 51. That Ethiopia should soon stretch out her hands unto God. 2. Others understand it of the spoil of Semmacheri, a city, out of which, as usual, presents were brought to the Lord of hosts, Numb. xxxi. 59. It was the present of a people scattered and pecked. (1.) It was won from the Assyrians, who were now themselves reduced to such a condition as they scornfully described Judah to be in, v. 3. They that unjustly trample upon others, shall themselves be justly trampled upon. (2.) It was offered by the people of God, who were, in the plenteous scattered and pecked. God will put honour upon his people, though men put contempt upon them. Lastly, Observe, the present that is brought to the Lord of hosts, must be brought to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts; what is offered to God, must be offered in the way that he has appointed; we must be sure to attend him, and expect him to meet us, there where he records his name.

CHAP. XIX.

As Assyria was a breaking rod to Judah, with which it was smitten, so Egypt was a broken reed, with which it was cheated; and therefore God had a quarrel with them both. We have before read the doom of the Assyrians, now here we have the burden of Egypt, a prophecy concerning that nation. 1. They should be greatly weakened and brought low, and should be as contemptible among the nations as now it was considerable, rendered so by a complication of judgments which God would bring upon them, v. 1-12. 2. That all Egypt's holy religion should be brought into Egypt, and set up there, in part by the Jews that should fly thither for refuge, but more fully by the preachers of the gospel of Christ, through whose ministry churches should be planted in Egypt in the days of the Messiah, (v. 18-25.) which would abundantly balance all the calamities here threatened.

1. THE burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rides upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. 2. And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. 3. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. 4. And the Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts. 5. And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up. 6. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. 7. The paper-reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more. 8. The fishes also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks, shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. 9. Moreover, they that work in fine flax, and weave net-works, shall be confounded. 10. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish. 11. Surely the princes of Zonah are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? 12. Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. 13. The princes of Zonah are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay of the tribes thereof. 14. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof: and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. 15. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do. 16. In that day shall Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. 17. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt; every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it.

Though the land of Egypt had of old been a house of bondage to the people of God, where they had been ruled with rigour, yet among the unbelieving Jews there still remained much of the humour of their fathers, who said, Let us make a captain, and return into Egypt. Upon all occasions they trusted to Egypt for help, (ch. xxx. 2.) and thither they fled, in disobedience to God's express command, when things were brought to the last extremity in their own country, Jer. xlix. 7. Rabshakeh upbraided Hezekiah with this, ch. xxxvi. 6. While they kept up an alliance with Egypt, and it was a powerful ally, they stood not in awe of the judgments of God; for against them they depended upon Egypt to protect them. Nor did they depend upon the power of God, when at any time they were in distress; but Egypt was their confidence. To prevent all this mischief, Egypt must be mortified, and many ways God here tells them he will take to do it. The gods of Egypt shall appear to them to be what they always really were, utterly unable to help them; (v. 1.) The Lord rides upon a cloud, a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt! as a judge goes in state to the bench to try and condemn the malefactors, or as a general takes the field with his troops to crush the rebels, so shall God come into Egypt with his judgments; and when he comes, he will certainly overcome. In all this burthen of Egypt comes the mention of an foreign enemy invading them; but God himself will come against them, and raise up the causes of their destruction from among themselves. He comes upon a cloud, above the reach of opposition or resistance. He comes, as it were, upon a swift cloud; for their judgment lingers not, when the time is come. He rides upon the wings of the wind, and far excelling the greatest pomp and splendour of earthly princes; he makes the clouds
ISAIAH, XIX.

his chariots, Ps. xix. 9.—civ. 3. When he comes, the idols of Egypt shall be moved, shall be removed, at his presence, and perhaps be made to fall, as Degen did before the ark. Isis, Osiris, and Apis, those celebrated idols of Egypt, being found unable to relieve their worshippers, shall be disowned and rejected by them. Idolatry had got deeper rooting in Egypt than all the land besides, whether among the governors; yet let now the idols shall be moved, and they shall be ashamed of standing.

When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, he executed judgements upon the gods of the Egyptians; (Numb. xxxiii. 4.) no marvel then if, when he comes, they begin to tremble. The Egyptians shall seek to the idols, when they are at their wits' end, and consult the charmers and wizards; (v. 3.) but all in vain; their days shall be spent hastening upon them notwithstanding.

II. The militia of Egypt, that had been famed for their valour, shall be quite dispirited and disheartened. No kingdom in the world was ever in a better method of keeping up a standing army than the Egyptians were; but now their heroes, that used to be celebrated for courage, shall be posted for cowardice. They are the Egyptians taking the spirit of it, like wax before the fire; (v. 1.) the spirit of Egypt shall fall, (v. 3.) They shall have no inclination, no resolution, to stand up in defence of their country, their liberty, their property; but shall tamely and ingloriously yield all to the invader and oppressor: The Egyptians shall be like women; (v. 16.) they shall be frightened, and put into confusion, by the least alarm; even those that dwell in the heart of the country, in the midst of it, and therefore furthest from danger, will be as full of fright as those that are situate on the frontier. Let not the bold and brave be proud or secure, for God can easily cut off the spirit of princes, (Ps. lxxxvi. 12.) and take away their hearts, Job xii. 24.

III. The Egyptians shall be embodied in endless dimensions and quarrels among themselves; there shall be no occasion to bring a foreign force upon them to destroy them, they shall destroy one another; (v. 2.) I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians. As these divisions and animosities are their sin, God is not the Author of them, they come from men's lusts; but God, as a Judge, permits them for their punishment, and by their destroying differences corrects them for their sinful agreements. Instead of helping one another, every man in his place for the common good, they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour, whom he ought to love as himself; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Psammuthus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made them all. A kingdom, thus divided against itself, would soon be brought to desolation. En quis discordia civis perduravit miseror.

—O the wretchedness brought upon a people by their disagreements among themselves! It is brought to this by a perverse spirit, a spirit of contradiction, which the Lord would mingle as an intoxicating draught made up of several ingredients, for the Egyptians. Instead of helping one another, every man in his place for the common good, they shall fight every one against his brother and neighbour, whom he ought to love as himself; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. Egypt was then divided into twelve provinces, or dynasties; but Psammuthus, the governor of one of them, by setting them at variance with one another, at length made them all. A kingdom, thus divided against itself, would soon be brought to desolation. En quis discordia civis perduravit miseror?

IV. Their politics shall be all blasted, and turned into foolishness; when God will destroy the nation, he will destroy the counsel thereof; (v. 3.) by taking away wisdom from those statesmen, (Job xii. 20.) setting them one against another, as Hushai and Ahithophel, or, by his providence, breaking their measures even then when they seemed well laid; so that the princes of Zaan are fools, they make foils of one another, every one betrays his own folly, and Divine Providence makes fools of them all, v. 11. Pharaoh had his wise counsellors, Egypt was famous for such; but their counsel is all become brutish, they have lost all their forecast, they would think they were become idiots, and were bereaved of a common sense. Let no man glory then in his own wisdom, but in the grace of God, whose wisdom is exceeding above all understanding. "Let the wise consider of the wisdom of those about him; for he that gives understanding, can, when he pleases, take it away. And from them it is most likely to be taken away, that beast of their policy, as Pharaoh's counsellors here did, and, to recommend themselves to places of public trust, boast of their great understanding. "I am the son of the wise, of the God of wisdom," (Job xii. 13.) or of the feigned, or of the privy-counselor of note, in his day, for wisdom; or of the antiquity and dignity of their families; "I am" (says another) "the son of ancient kings." The nobles of Egypt boasted much of their antiquity, producing fabulous records of their success for above 16,000 years. This humour prevailed much among them about this time, as apparent in their vessels, in their writings. But Egypt was some thousands of years more ancient than any other nation. "But where are they wise men?" (v. 12.) Let them now show their wisdom by foreseeing what ruin is coming upon their nation, and preventing it, if they can. Let them with all their skill know what the Lord of hosts has purposed upon Egypt, and arm themselves accordingly.

The Egyptians, not knowing that so far are they from doing this, that they themselves are, in effect, contriving the ruin of Egypt, and hastening it on; v. 13. The princes of Noph are not only deceived themselves, but they have seduced Egypt, by putting their kings upon arbitrary proceedings; (by which both themselves and their people were soon undone:) the governors of Egypt, that are the stay and corner-stones of the tribes thereof, are themselves undermining it. It is said with a people when those that undertake for their safety are helping forward their destruction, and the physicians of the state are her worst disease; when the things that belong to the public peace, are so far hid from the eyes of these that are entrusted with the public councils, that in every thing they blunder, and take wrong measures; so here, (v. 14.) They have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof; (they themselves, by false step; they always misstep either the end or the means, and their counsels were all unstable and uncertain, like the staggerings and stammerings of a drunken man in his vomit, who knows not what he says, nor where he goes. See what reason we have to pray for our privy-counsellors and ministers of state, who are the great supports and blessings of the state, if God give them a spirit of wisdom, but quite contrary, if he give their heart from understanding.

V. The rod of government shall be turned into the serpent of tyranny and oppression; (v. 15.) The Egyptians will I give over into the hand of a cruel lord; not a foreigner, but one of their own, one that shall rule over them by an hereditary right, but shall be a fierce king, and rule them with rigour; either the twelve tyrants of their Pharaoh's house that recovered the monarchy again; for he speaks of one cruel lord. Now the barbarous usage which the Egyptian taskmasters gave to God's Israel long ago, was remembered against them, and they were paid in their own coin by another Pharaoh. It is said with a people when the powers that should be for edification are for destruction, and those that should be for order, in order to impress alarm. 1 Sam. viii. 11.
VI. Egypt was famous for its river Nile, which was its wealth, its strength, and beauty, and was idealized by them. Now it is here threatened, that the waters shall fail from the sea, and the river shall be wasted and dried up, v. 5. Nature shall not bear them as she has done. Egypt was never watered with the rain of heaven, (Zech. xiv. 8.) and so shall it be, v. 5. She depended wholly upon the overflowing of their rivers; if that therefore be dried up, their fruitful land will so be turned into barrenness, and their harvests cease. Everything seen by the bows will wither of course, will be driven away, and be no more, v. 7. If the paper-reeds by the banks, at the very mouth of them, wither, much more the corn, which lies at a great distance from them, will wither. Yet this is not all; the drying up of their rivers is the destruction. 1. Of their fortifications, for they are broke of defence, (v. 6.) making the country difficult of access to an enemy; deep rivers are the strongest lines, and most hardly forced. Pharaoh is said to be a great dragon lying in the midst of his rivers, and guarded by them, bidden defiance to all about him, Ex. xix. 3. But these shall be emptied and dried up, not by an enemy, as Sennacherib with the sole of his foot dried up mighty rivers, (ch. xxxvii. 25.) and as Cyrus, who took Babylon by drawing Euphrates into many streams, but by the providence of God, which sometimes turns water-springs into dry ground, Ps. cxv. 3. 2. It is the destruction of their fish, which is nothing when the children of this world, and base reflection which the children of Israel made. (Numb. xi. 5.) We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely. The drying up of the rivers will kill the fish, (Ps. cvii. 19.) and that will ruin those who make it their business, (1.) to catch fish, whether by angling or nets; (v. 8.) they shall lament and languish, for their trade is at an end. There is nothing upon the children of this world, to cause them more heartily lament, than the loss of that which they used to get money by: Persaratur lacrymis amissa pecunia veris—Those are genuine tears, which are shed over lost money. (2.) To keep fish, that it may be ready when it is called for. There were those that made streets and ponds for fish, (v. 10.) but they shall be broken in the purposes thereof; their business will fall, either from the want of persons to fill their ponds, or from want of fish to replenish their waters. God can find ways to deprive a country even of that which is its staple commodity. The Egyptians may themselves remember the fish they have formerly eaten freely, but now cannot have for money. And that which aggravates the loss of these advantages by the river, is, that it is their own doing, (v. 6.) They shall turn the rivers for fish. Their kings and great men, to gratify their own fancy, will drain water from the main river to their own houses and grounds at a distance, preferring their private conveniences before the public, and so by degrees the force of the river is sensibly weakened. Thus many do themselves a greater prejudice at last than they think of: [1.] Who pretend to be wiser than nature, and to do better for themselves than nature has done. [2.] Who consult their own particular interest more than the common good. Such may gratify themselves, but surely they can never satisfy themselves, who, to serve a turn, contribute to a public calamity, which they themselves, at long run, cannot avoid sharing in. Herein is the cause of all the sorrow and trouble which the Red sea employed a vast number of men to make a ditch or channel for that purpose; in which attempt he impared the river, lost a hundred and twenty thousand of his men, and yet left the work unaccomplished.

VII. Egypt was famous for the linen manufacture; but that trade shall be ruined. Solomon's merchants traded with Egypt for linen yarn, 1 Kings x. 28. Their country produced the best flax, and the best hands to work it; but that which work in fine flax, shall be confounded, (v. 9.) either its want of flax to work on, or for want of a demand for that which they have worked at, or of opportunity to export it. The decay of trade weakens and wastes a nation, and by degrees brings it to ruin. The trade of Egypt must needs sink, for (v. 15.) There shall not be any work for Egypt to be employed in; and when there is nothing to be done, there is nothing to be got. There shall be an universal stop put to business, no work which either land or sea could ever do for them, for high or low, weak or strong, to do, no hire, Zech. viii. 10. Note, The flourishing of a kingdom depends much upon the industry of the people; and then things are likely to do well, when all hands are at work; when the head and trip branch do not disdain to labour, and the labour of the tail and rush is not disdained. But when the learned professions are unemployed, the principal merchants have no stocks, and the handcraftsman nothing to do, poverty comes upon a people as one that travelth, and as an armed man.

VIII. A general consternation shall seize the Egyptians; they shall be afraid, and fear, (v. 16.) which will be both an evidence of a universal decay, and a means and presage of utter ruin. Things shall put the Egyptians into a great fright. What they shall fear shall be taken from the land of Judah; that shall be a terror to Egypt, v. 17. When they hear of the desolations made in Judah by the army of Sennacherib, considering both the near neighbourhood, and the strict alliance that was between them and Judah, they will conclude it must be their turn next to become a prey to that victorious army. When their neighbour's house was in the fire, L. they could not but see their own danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians, that makes mention of Judah, shall be afraid in himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into his hands. 2. What they see in their own land. They shall fear, (v. 16.) because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, and (v. 7.) because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts; which, they first saw the shaking of his hand, they could not but see his own danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians, that makes mention of Judah, shall be afraid in himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into his hands. 2. What they see in their own land. They shall fear, (v. 16.) because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, and (v. 7.) because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts; which, they first saw the shaking of his hand, they could not but see his own danger; and therefore every one of the Egyptians, that makes mention of Judah, shall be afraid in himself, expecting the bitter cup shortly to be put into his hands.

18. In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts: one shall be called, The city of destruction. 19. In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. 20. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a-
They reside in the Nite, and shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria; and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land; 25. Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

Out of the thick and threatening clouds of the foregoing prophecy, here the sun of comfort breaks forth, and it is the sun of right light. The Lord has glorified Egypt; no so much by reviving their trade, and replenishing their river again, as by bringing the true religion among them, calling them to, and accepting them in, the worship of the one only living and true God; and these blessings of grace were much more valuable than all the blessings of nature, wherewith Egypt was enriched. We know not of any event in which this prophecy can be said to have its full accomplishment, short of the conversion of Egypt to the faith of Christ, by the preaching (as is supposed) of Mark the Evangelist, and the founding of many Christian churches there, which flourished for many ages. Many prophecies of this book point to the days of the Messiah; and why not this? It is no unusual thing to speak of gospel-graces and ordinances in the language of the Old Testament institution. And all these prophecies, those words, in that day, perhaps, have not always a reference to what goes immediately before, but have a peculiar significance pointing at that day which had been so long fixed, and so often spoken of, when the day-spring from on high shall visit this dark world. Yet it is not improbable, which some conjecture, that this prophecy was in part fulfilled when those Jews who fled from their own country to take shelter in Egypt, when Senachereb invaded their land, brought their religion along with them, and being awakened to great seriousness by the troubles they were in, made an open and zealous profession of it there, and were instrumental to bring many of the Egyptians to embrace it; which was an earnest and specimen of the more pleasing and blessed souls that should be brought to God by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Josephus indeed tells us, that Onias, the son of Onias the High Priest, living an outlaw at Alexandria in Egypt, obtained leave of Ptolemy Philometer, then king, and Cleopatra, his queen, to build a temple to the God of Israel, like that at Jerusalem, at Babastis in Egypt, and pret- tended a warrant in doing from this prophecy in Isaiah, viz. that there shall be an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt; the service of God, Josephus affirms, continued in it about 333 years, when it was shut up by Paulinus, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans see Joseph. Antiq. 1. 13. c. 6. and de Bell. Judae. 1. 7. c. 30. But that temple was all along looked upon by the Jews as so great an irregularity, and an affront to the temple at Jerusalem, that we cannot suppose this prophecy to be fulfilled in it.

Observe how the conversion of Egypt is here described.

I. They shall speak the language of Canaan, the holy language, the scripture-language; they shall not only understand it, but use it; (v. 18.) they shall introduce that language among them, and converse freely with the people of God, and not, as they used to do, by an interpreter, Gen. xliii. 23. Note, Con- necting grace, by changing the heart, they shall speak the language for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Five cities in Egypt shall speak this language; so many Jews shall come to reside in Egypt, and they shall so multiply there, that they shall soon replenish five cities; one of which shall be the city of Heces, or of the sun, Heliopolis, where the sun was worshipped, the most infamous of all the cities of Egypt for idolatry; even there shall be a wonderful reformation—they shall speak the language of Canaan. Or it may be taken thus, as we render it, That for every five cities that shall embrace religion, there shall be one (a sixth part of the cities of Egypt) that shall reject it, and that shall be called a city of destruction, because it resists the method of salvation.

II. They shall swear to the Lord of hosts; not only swear falsely, but the honour of appealing to him, as all nations did to the gods they worshipped; but they shall by a solemn oath and vow devote themselves to his honour, and bind themselves to his service. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and shall worship him not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to him as their King, to Christ, to whom all judgment is committed.

III. They shall set up the public worship of God in their land; (v. 19.) There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, an altar on which they shall do sacrifice and oblation; (v. 21.) therefore it must be understood spiritually. Christ, the great altar, who sanctifies every gift, shall be owned there, and the gospel-sacrifices of prayer and praise shall be offered up; for by the law of Moses there was to be no altar for sacrifice but that at Jerusalem. In Christ Jesus all distinction of nations is taken away; and a spiritual altar, a gospel-church, in the midst of the land of Egypt, is as acceptable to God as one in the midst of the land of Israel; and spiritual sacrifices of faith and love, and a contrite heart, please the Lord better than ten thousand burnt-offerings.

IV. There shall be a face of religion upon the nation, and an open profession made of it, discernible to all who come among them; not only in the heart of the country, but even in the borders of it, there shall be a pillar, or pillars, inscribed, to Jehovah, to his honour, as before there had been such pillars set up in honour of false gods. As soon as a stranger entered upon the borders of Egypt, he might soon find a standing test of the internal spirit of the nation. Those that serve God must not be ashamed to own him, but be forward to do any thing that may be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts, that even in the land of Egypt he had some faithful worshippers, who boasted of their relation to him, and made his name their strong tower, or bulwark, on their borders, with which their coasts were fortified against assault.

V. Being in distress, they shall seek to God, and he shall be found of them; and this shall be a sign and a witness for the Lord of hosts, that he is a God hearing prayer to all flesh that come to him, v. 20. See Ps. lix. 2. When they cry to God by reason of their oppressors, the cruel lords that shall rule over them, (v. 4.) he shall be entreated of them;
(v. 22.) whereas he had told his people Israel, who had made it their own choice to have such a king, that they should cry to him by reason of their king, and he would not hear them, 1 Sam. viii. 18.

VI. They shall have an interest in the great Redeemer. When they were under the oppression of cruel Lords, perhaps God sometimes raised them up mighty deliverers, as he did for Israel in the days of the judges; and by them, though he had smitten the land, he healed it again; and, upon their return to God in a way of duty, he returned to them in a way of mercy, and repaired the breaches of their offending states; for repenting Egyptians shall find the same favour with God that repenting Ninevites had. But all the events which were foretold of them as those for Israel, were but figures of gospel-salvation. Doubtless, Jesus Christ is the Saviour, and the Great One, here spoken of, whom God will send the glad tidings to the Egyptians, and by whom he will deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him without fear, Luke i. 74, 75. Jesus Christ delivered the Gentile nations from the service of dumb idols, and did himself both purchase and preach liberty to the captives.

VII. The knowledge of God shall prevail among them, v. 21. 1. They shall have the means of knowledge; for many ages, in Judah only was God known, for there only were the lively oracles found; but now the Lord, and his name and kingdom, were to be known in Egypt. Those who refer this passage, in part, to the translation of the Old Testament out of Hebrew into Greek by the LXX., which was done at Alexandria in Egypt, by the command of Ptolemy king of Egypt; and it was the first time that the scriptures were translated into any other language; by the help of this, (the Grecian monarchy having intermarried with the Egyptians,) the Egyptians shall be taught that the Lord was known to Egypt, and a happy omen and means it was of his being further known, v. 1. 2. They shall have grace to improve those means; it is promised not only that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, but that the Egyptians shall know the Lord; they shall receive and entertain the light granted to them, and shall submit themselves to the power of the Lord. The Lord is known to our nation, and yet I fear there are many of our nation that do not know the Lord. But the promise of the new covenant is, that all shall know the Lord from the least even to the greatest; which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is, that they shall own a vow to the Lord, and perform it. For those do not know God aright, who either are not willing to bind themselves to the Lord, or do not make good these obligations.

VIII. They shall come into the communion of saints; being joined to the Lord, they shall be added to the church, and be incorporated with all the saints.

1. All enmities shall be slain. Mortal feuds there have been between Egypt and Assyria, they often made war; but by this they shall have a highway between Egypt and Assyria, (v. 23.) a happy correspondence settled between the two nations; they shall trade with one another, and every thing that passes between them shall be friendly. The Egyptians shall serve, shall worship, the true God with the Assyrians; and therefore the Assyrians shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptians into Assyria. Note, It becomes those who have communion with the same God, through the same Mediator, to keep up an amicable correspondence with one another. The consideration of our meeting at the same throne of grace, and our serving with each other in the same business of religion, should put an end to all heats and animosities, and knit our hearts to each other in holy love.

2. The Gentile nations shall not only unite with each other in the gospel-fold under Christ the great Shepherd, but they shall all be united with the Jews. When Egypt and Assyria become partners in serving God, Israel shall make a third with them, (v. 24.) they shall become a three-fold cord, not easily broken; the ceremonial law, which had long been the partition-wall between Jews and Gentiles, shall be taken down, and then they shall become one sheath-fold, under one shepherd. Thus united, they shall be a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, v. 24, 25. (1.) Israel shall be a blessing to them all, because of the divine prophecies concerning the flesh, Christ came; and they were the natural line from whom all the Gentiles might did originally pertain its root and fitness, and the Gentiles were but grafted in among them, Rom. xi. 17. Israel lay between Egypt and Assyria, and was a blessing to them, both by bringing them to meet in that word of the Lord, which went forth from Jerusalem, and that church which was first set up in the land of Israel: Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio, inter se conveniant — They who meet in a third, meet in each other. Israel is that third in whom Egypt and Assyria agree, and is therefore a blessing; for those are real and great blessings to their generation, who are instrumental to unite those that have been at variance. (2.) They shall all be a blessing to the world; so the Christian church is, which spreads from nation to nation, kingdom to kingdom, recipients, and support, of the world. (3.) They shall all be blessed of the Lord: [1.] They shall all be owned by him as his. Though Egypt was formerly a house of bondage to the people of God, and Assyria an unjust invader of them, all this shall now be forgiven and forgotten, and they shall be as welcome to God as Israel. They are all alike his people, when they are brought to him. [2.] They shall be owned by him as his people. They are formed for him, for they are his inheritance, precious in his eyes, and dear to him, and from whom he has his rest of honour out of this lower world. [3.] They shall be owned by him as his people that are united in the love and blessing of God, ought, for that reason, to be united to each other in charity.

CHAP. XX.

This chapter is a prediction of the carrying away of multitudes both of Egyptians and Assyrians into captivity by the king of Assyria. Here is, 1. The sign by which this was foretold, which was, the prophet's going, for some time, barefoot and almost naked, like a poor captive, v. 1, 2. 2. The explication of that sign, viz. application to Egypt and Ethiopia, v. 3, 4. 3. The good use which the people of God should make of this, which is, never to trust in an arm of flesh, because thus will it deceive them, v. 6.

1. In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him,) and fought against Ashdod, and took it; 2. At the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot.

3. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and upon Ethiopia; 4. So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives,
young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. 5. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. 6. And the inhabitant of this isle shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria: and how shall we escape?

God, here, as King of nations, brings a sore calamity upon Egypt and Ethiopia, but, as King of saints, brings a far greater one out of Egypt and Ethiopia.

I. The date of this prophecy; it was in the year that Ashdod, a strong city of the Philistines, (but which some think was lately recovered from them by Hezekiah, when he smote the Philistines even unto Gaza, 2 Kings xviii. 8,) was besieged and taken by an army of the Assyrians: it is uncertain what year of Hezekiah that was, but the event was so remarkable, that the things which he did, could by that time have been a year or more. As the king of Assyria, is called Sargon, which some take to be the same with Semachrib; others think he was his immediate predecessor, and succeeded Shalmaneser. Tartan, who was general, or commander-in-chief, in this expedition, was one of Semachrib's officers, sent by him to bid defiance to Hezekiah, in concurrence with Rabishakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 17. In this year, Hezekiah had an expensive, and most magnificent, dress, when he walked abroad. He had been a sign to his own people of the melancholy times that were come, and coming, upon them, by the sackcloth which for some time he had worn, of which he had a gown made, which he girt about him. Some think he put himself into that habit of a mourner, upon occasion of the captivity of the ten tribes; others think sackcloth was what he commonly wore as a prophet, to show himself mortified to the world, and that he might learn to endure hardness; soft clothing better becomes those that attend in king's palaces, (Matth. xii. 8,) than those that go on God's errands. Elijah wore hair-cloth, (2 Kings i. 8,) and John Baptist, (Matth. iii. 4,) and those that pretended to be prophets, supported their pretensions by wearing rough garments; (Zech. xii. 8,) but Isaiah bade him to bid him to keep his sackcloth from his lions, not to exchange it for better clothing, but for none at all, no upper garment, no mantle, cloak or coat, but only that which was next to him; his shirt, we may suppose, waistcoat, and drawers; and he must put off his shoes, and go barefoot; so that, compared with the dress of others, and what he himself usually wore, he might be said to go naked. This was a great hardship upon him, but the prophet, it was a blemish to his reputation, and would expose him to contempt and ridicule; the boys in the streets would mock at him; and they who sought occasion against him, would say, The prophet is indeed a fool, and the spiritual man is mad, Hos. ix. 7. It might likewise be a prejudice to his health, he was in danger of catching a cold, which might threaten him with his life; but God bade him do it, that he might give a proof of his obedience to God in a most difficult command, and so shame the disobedience of his people to the most easy and reasonable precepts. When we are in the way of our duty, we may trust God both with our credit and with our safety. The hearts of that people were strangely stupid, and would not be affected with the warnings given them; but what God had taught by signs, and therefore Isaiah must do this for their edification: if the dress was scandalous, yet the design was glorious, and what a prophet of the Lord needed not to be ashamed of.

III. The exposition of this sign, v. 3, 4. It was intended to signify that the Egyptians and the Ethiopians should be led away captives by the king of Assyria, thus stripped, or in rags and very shabby clothing, as Isaiah was. God calls him his servant Isaiah, because in this matter particularly he had a ministry from God's willing, faithful, obedient servant; and for this very reason may it be supposed others laughed at him for, God gloried in him. To obey is better than sacrifice; it pleases God, and praiseth him more, and shall be more praised by him. Isaiah is said to have walked naked and barefoot three years, whenever in that time he appeared as a prophet; but some refer the three years, not to that sign, but to the prophet being signified; he was indeed naked and barefoot; there was a providence to the contrary, provided he did so once, there was enough to give occasion to all about him to inquire what was the meaning of his doing so; or, as some think, he did it three days, a day for a year; and this for a three years' sign and wonder, for a sign of that which shall be done three years hence, or which shall be three years in the doing. Three campaigns successively should the Assyrian army make, in stripping the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and carrying them away captive in this barbarous manner; not only the soldiers taken in the field of battle, but the inhabitants, young and old; and it being a very picturesque sight, and such as must needs move compassion in those that had the least degree of tenderness left them, to see those who had gone all their days well-dressed, and in the best clothing, and some of them, to cover their nakedness; that circumstance of their captivity is particularly taken notice of, and foretold, the more to affect them to whom this prophecy was delivered. It is particularly said to be the shame of Egypt, (v. 4,) because the Egyptians were a proud people, and therefore when they did fall into disgrace, it was the more shameful to them; and the higher they had lifted up themselves, the lower was their fall, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

IV. The use and application of this, v. 5, 6. 1. All that had any dependence upon, or correspondence with Egypt and Ethiopia, should now be ashamed of them, and afraid of having any thing to do with them. Those countries that were in dependence upon Egypt, and therefore of being overawed by Egypt, and the Assyrian army, that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, with his numerous forces, should put a stop to the progress of their victorious arms, and be a barrier to his neighbours; and with yet more assurance they gloried that Egypt, a kingdom so famous for policy and prowess, would do their business, would oblige them to raise the siege of Ashdod, and retire with precipitation; but instead of this, by attempting to oppose them, they do but expose themselves, and make their country a prey to him. Hereupon, all about them are ashamed that ever they promised themselves any advantage from two such weak and cowardly nations, and more afraid now than ever they were of the growing greatness of the king of Assyria, before whom Egypt and Ethiopia proved but as bricks and thorns put to stop a consuming fire, who do, but make it burn the more strongly. Note, Those who make any creature their expectation and glory, and so put it in the place of God, will, sooner or later, be ashamed of it, and their disappointment in it will but increase their fear. See Ezek. xxix. 6, 7. 2. The Jews in particular should be convinced of their folly in resting upon such broken reeds, and which would depend upon Egypt, or any other relief from them; (v. 6,) The inhabitants of this Isle, the land of Judah, situated upon the sea, though not surrounded by it; of this country, so the margin: every one shall now have his eyes opened, and shall say, Behold, such is our expectation, so vain, so foolish, and this is that
which it will come to; we have fled for help to the Egyptians and Ethiopians, and have hoped by them to be delivered from the king of Assyria; but now that they are broken thus, how shall we escape, that are not able to bring such armies into the field as they did?” Note, (1.) Those that confide in creatures will be disappointed, and will be made ashamed of their confidence, for vain is the help of man, and in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, or the height and multitude of the mountains. (2.) Disappointment in creature-confidence, instead of driving us to despair, as here, (How shall we escape?) should drive us to God, to whom if we flee for help, our expectation shall not be frustrated.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter we have a prophecy of sad times coming, and heavy burthens; 1. Upon Babylon, here called the desert of the sea, that it should be destroyed by the Medes and Persians with a terrible destruction, which yet God’s people should have advantage by, v. 1. 10. II. Upon Dusham, or Idumea, v. 11, 12. III. Upon Arabia, or Kedar, the desolation of which country was very near, v. 13. 17. These and other nations which the princes and people of Israel had so much to do with, the prophets of Israel could not but have something to say to: foreign affairs must be taken notice of as well as domestic ones, and news from abroad inquired after as well as news at home.

1. THE burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land. 2. A grievous vision is declared unto me; The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam: besiege, O Media: all the sighing thereof have I made to cease. 3. Therefore are my loins filled with pain; pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth: I was bowed down at the hearing of it; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. 4. My heart panted, fearfulness alighted me: the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me. 5. Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield. 6. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. 7. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he heartened diligently with much heed. 8. And he cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the daytime, and I am set in my ward whole nights; 9. And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground. 10. O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.

We had one burthen of Babylon before, (ch. 13.) here we have another prediction of its fall; God saw fit thus to possess his people with the benefit of this event by line upon line; because Babylon sometimes pretended to be a friend to them, (as ch. XXIX. 1.) and God would hereby warn them not to trust to that friendship, and sometimes was really an enemy to them, and God would hereby warn them not to be afraid of that country. Babylon is marked for ruin; and all that believe God’s prophets, can, through that glass, see it tumbling, see it tumbling, even then when with an eye of sense they see it flourishing, and sitting as a queen.

Babylon is destined to be the school of the sea, for it was a flat country, and full of licks, or loughs, (as they call them in Ireland,) like little seas, and was abundantly watered with the many streams of the river Euphrates. Babylon did but lately begin to be famous, Nineveh having cutshined it while the monarchy was in the Assyrian hands; but in a little time it became the lady of kingdoms; and before it arrived at that pitch of empire to which it was in Nebuchadnezzar’s time, God, by this prophet, plainly foretold its fall, again and again, that his people might not be terrified at its rise, nor despair of relief in due time when they were its prisoners, Job. v. 3. Ps. xxxvii. 25, 36. Some think it is here called a desert, because, though it was now a populous city, it should in time become a desert. And therefore the destruction of Babylon is so often prophesied of by this evangelical prophet, because it was typical of the destruction of the man of sin, the great enemy of the New Testament church, which is foretold in the Revelation in many expressions borrowed from these prophecies, which therefore must be consulted and collated by those who would understand the prophecy of the book. Here is.

I. The powerful irruption and descent which the Medes and Persians should make upon Babylon; (v. 1, 2.) They will come from the desert, from a terrible land. The northern parts of Media and Persia, where their soldiers were mostly bred, was waste and mountainous; terrible to strangers that were to pass through it, and producing soldiers that were very formidable. Elam, (Persia) is summoned to go up against Babylon, and in conjunction with the forces of Media, to besiege it; when God has work of this kind to do, he will find, though it be in a desert, in a terrible land, proper instruments to be employed in it. These forces come as whirlwinds from the south, so suddenly, so strongly, and so terribly; such a mighty noise shall they make, and things down every thing that stands in their way.

As is usual in such a case, some deserters will go over to them, the treacherous dealers will deal treacherously. Historians tell us of Gudatas and Gobrytas, two great officers of the king of Babylon, that went over to Cyrus, and, being well acquainted with all the avenues of the city, led a party directly to the palace, where Belshazzar was slain: thus with the help of the treacherous dealers the spoil was obtained. Some read it thus, There shall be a deceiver of that deceiver, Babylon, and a spoiler of that spoiler. Or, which comes all to one, The treacherous dealer has found one that deals treacherously, and the spoiler one that spoils, as it is expounded, ch. xxxiii. 1. The Persians shall pay the Babylonians in their own coin; they that by fraud and violence, cheating and plundering, unfriendly acts and deceitful dealing, hath ruined and destroyed their neighbours, shall meet with their match, and by the same methods shall themselves be made a prey of.

II. The different impressions made hereby upon those concerned in Babylon.

1. To the poor oppressed captives it would be some comfort; for they had been too long ago that Babylon’s dealings were not thought to be their destruction therefore when they hear that Elam and Media are coming up to besiege Babylon, all their sighing will be made to cease; they shall no longer mingle their
years with Euphrates' streams, but receive their harps, and smile when they remember Zion, which, before, they wept at the thought of. For the sighing of the needy the God of pity will arise in due time; (Ps. xvi. 3.) he will break the yoke from off their neck, will remove the rod of the wicked from off their lot, and set them up on high over their enemies. For the exaltation of his hand in justice he will be a grievous vision, (v. 2.) particularly to the king of Babylon for the time being, and it should seem that he it is who is here brought in, sadly lamenting his inevitable fate; (v. 3. 4.) Therefore are my lions filled with pain, pangs have taken hold upon me, &c. which was literally fulfilled in Belshazzar, for that very night in which the lard was eaten by the hand writing mystic characters upon the wall, his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another, Dan. v. 6. And yet that was but the beginning of sorrows; Daniel's decyphering of the writing could not but increase his terror, and the alarm which immediately followed, of the executioners at the door, would be but part of the accompanying torments. And those words, The night of my pleasure has he turned into fear to me, plainly refer to that aggravating circumstance of Belshazzar's fall, that he was slain on that night when he was in the height of his mirth and jollity, with his cups and concubines about him, and a thousand of his lords reveling with him; that night of his pleasure, when he promised himself an unpromised, unlooked-for enjoyment of the most exquisite gratifications of sense, with a particular defiance of God and religion in the profanation of the temple-vessels—that was the night that was turned into all this fear. Let this give an effectual check to vain mirth and sensuality pleasures, and forbid us ever to lay the reins on the neck of them—that we know not what heaviness the mirth may end in, or how soon laughter may be turned into mourning; but this we know, that for all these things God will bring us into judgment; let us therefore mix trembling always with our joys.

III. A representation of the posture in which Babylon should be found when the enemy should surprise it; all in festival garb; (v. 5.) Prepare the table with all manner of dainties, set the guards, let them watch in the watch-tower, while eat and drink and make mirth, and if any alarm should be given, the princes shall arise, and anoint the shield, and be in readiness to give the enemy a warm reception. Thus secure are they, and thus do they gird on the harness with as much joy as if they had put it off.

IV. A description of the alarm which should be given to Babylon, upon its being forced by Cyrus and Darius. The Lord, in vision, showed the prophet the watchman set in the watch-tower, near the palace, as is usual in times of danger; the king ordered those about him to post a sentinel in the most advantageous place for discovery, and according to the duty of a watchman, let him declare what he sees, v. 6. We read of a watchman thus set to receive intelligence, in the story of David, (2 Sam. xxi. 14.) and here, in vision, 2 Kings ii. 11. This watchman here discovered a chariot with a couple of horsemen attending it, in which we may suppose the commander-in-chief to ride; he then saw another chariot drawn by asses or mules, which were much in use among the Persians, and a chariot drawn by camels, which were likewise much in use among the Medes; so that (as Grotius thinks) these two express the chieftains of those two empires. Babylon, or rather, these chariots come to bring tidings to the palace; compare Jer. li. 31, 32. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, while he is revelling at the other end, and knows nothing of the matter. This watchman, seeing these chariots at some distance, hearteneditly with much heed, to receive the first tidings. And (v. 8.) he cried, A lion; this word, coming out of a watchman's mouth, no doubt gave him a more profound alarm than if he had known the meaning of it, though we do not know it now. It is likely that it was intended to raise attention; that he that has an ear to hear, let him hear, as when a lion roars; or he cried as a lion, very loud and in good earnest; the occasion being very urgent. And what has he to say? 1. He professes his constancy to his post assigned him; "I stand, my lord, according to my business, and the thing that was made known to me, I have discovered; thy servants have not made; (v. 9.) Here comes a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen; a vision representing the enemy's entry into the city with all their force, or the tidings brought to the royal palace of it.

V. A certain account is at length given of the overthrow of Babylon. He in the chariot answered and said, (when he heard the watchman speak,) Babylon shall be overthrown, (v. 10.) The prophet thus addresses the prophet inquirign concerning the issue of these affairs; "It is now come to this, Babylon is surely and irrecoverably fallen; Babylon's business is done now. All the graven images of her gods he has broken unto the ground." Babylon was the mother of harlots, of idolatry, which was one of the grounds of God's quarrel with her; but her idols shall now be so far from protecting her, that some of them shall be broken down to the ground, and others of them, that were worth carrying away, shall go into captivity, and be a burthen to the beasts that carried them, ch. xlv. 1, 2.

VI. Notice is given to the people of God, who were then captives in Babylon, that this prophecy of the downfall of Babylon was particularly intended for their comfort and encouragement, and that they should behold Babylon's downfall as a spectacle, and not as a subject of grief; (2.) True believers are the corn of God's floor; by poecrites are but as the chaff and straw, which take up a great deal of room, but are of small value, with which the wheat is now mixed, but from which it shall be shortly and for ever separated. (3.) The corn of God's floor, therefore, must be cherished with affections and persecutions. God's Israel of old was afflicted from her youth, often under the plunderer's plough, (Ps. cxviii. 12.) and the threaten's flail. (4.) Even then God owns it for his threshing, it is still; nay, the threshing of it is by his appointment, and under his restraint and direction. The threshers could have no power against it, but what is given them for their own good. (5.) From which we may rest in the conscience of the truth of what he had delivered to them, which therefore they might build their hopes upon, That which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that, and nothing else, that, and no
11. The burden of Danmah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? 12. The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come.

This prophecy concerning Danmah is very short, and withal dark and hard to be understood. Some think that Danmah is a part of Arabia, and that the inhabitants descended from Danmah are the Edomites of Kedar (y. 16, 17.) from Ishmael's second son, Gen. xxx. 13, 14. Others, because Mount Seir is here mentioned, by Danmah understand Idumea, the country of the Edomites. Some of Israel's neighbours are certainly meant, whose distress is foretold, not only for warning to them to prepare for it, but for warning to Israel not to depend upon the nations about them, for relief in a time of danger, but upon God only. We must see all creature-confidence failing us, and feel them breaking under us, that we may not lay more weight upon them than they will bear. But though the explication of this prophecy be difficult, because we have no history in which we find the accomplishment of it, yet the application will be clear.

1. A question put by an Edomite to the watchman. Some one or other calls out of Seir, somebody that was more concerned for the public safety and welfare than the rest, who were generally careless and secure; as the man of Macedonia, in a vision, desired Paul to come over and help them, (Acts xvi. 9.) so this man of mount Seir, in a vision, desired the prophet to inform and instruct them. If it calls not many it is well there are any, that all are not alike uncouthened about the things that belong to the public peace. Some out of Seir ask advice of God's prophets, and are willing to be taught, when many of God's Israel heed nothing. The question is serious. What of the night? It is put to a proper person, the watchman, whose office it is to answer such inquiries: he repeats the question, as one in ear, as one in ear, and desires to have an answer. Note, (1.) God's prophets and ministers are appointed to be watchmen, and we are to look upon them as such. They are as watchmen in the city in a time of peace, to see that all be safe, to knock at every door by personal inquiries; (Is. it locked? Is the fire safe?) to direct those that are at a loss, and check those that are disorderly, Gen. xxxiii. 7. They are as watchmen in the camp in time of war; (Ezek. xxxiii. 7.) they are to take notice of the motions of the enemy, and to give notice of them, to make discoveries, and then give warning; and in this they must deny themselves. (2.) It is our duty to inquire of the watchmen, especially to ask again and again, What of the night? For watchmen wake when others sleep. [1.] When the possessed of a city or nation are in such security, is it not time to rise, high time to awake out of sleep? Rom. xiii. 11. We have a great deal of work to do, a long journey to go; is it not time to be stirring? Watchman, what of the cock is it? After a long dark night is there any hope of the day dawning? [2.] What tidings of the night? What from the night? So some. What vision has the prophet had to-night? We are ready to receive it. Or rather, What occurs to-night? What weather is it? What news? We must expect an alarm, and never be secure the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night; we must prepare to receive the alarm, and resolve to keep our ground, and then take the first hint of danger, and to our arms presently, to our spiritual weapons.

2. The watchman's answer to this question. The watchman was neither asleep nor d梦; though it was a man of mount Seir that called to him, he was ready to give him an answer; he repeats the question, and answers it. He answers, (1.) By way of prediction; 'there comes first a morning of light, and peace, and opportunity. you will enjoy one day of comfort more; but afterward comes a night of trouble and calamity.' Note, In the course of God's providence, it is usual that morning and night are counter-changed, and succeed each other. It is night with the morning, and again it is morning with the night. He answers, (2.) By way of expostulation: If we will inquire, inquire ye. Note, It is our wisdom to improve the present morning in preparation for the night that is coming after it; Inquire, return, come. Be inquisitive, be penitent, be willing and obedient. The manner of expression is very observable, but we are put to our choice what we will do. If we will inquire, inquire ye; if not, it is at your peril; you cannot say but you have a fair offer made you. We are also urged to be at a point; If you will, say so, and do not stand passing; what you will do, do quickly, for it is no time to trifle. Those that return and come to God, will find they have a great deal of work to do, and but a little time to do it in, and therefore they have need to be busy.

13. The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedan. 14. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that felled. 15. For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. 16. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of a hiredling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: 17. And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it.

Arabia was a large country, that lay eastward and southward of the land of Canaan; much of it was desert, and many portions of it were uninhabited, Gen. xiv. 13. Dedan, Abraham's son by Keturah; the inhabitants of Tema and Kedar descended from Ishmael, Gen.
xxv. 3, 13, 15. The Arabians generally lived in tents, and kept cattle, were a hardy people, indured to labour; probably the Jews depended upon them as a sort of a wall between them and the more warlike eastern nations; and therefore, to alarm them, they shall hear the burden of Arabia, and see it sinking under a destroying army shall be brought upon them, with a sword, with a drawn sword, with a bow ready bent, and with all the grievousness of war, v. 15. It is probable that the king of Assyria, in some of the marches of his formidable and victorious army, took Arabi in his way, and meeting with little resistance, made an easy prey of them. The comparison of the grievousness of war should make them thankful for the blessings of peace.

2. The poor country people will hereby be forced to flee for shelter wherever they can find a place, so that the travelling companies of Dedanim, which used to keep the high-roads with their caravans, shall be obliged to quit them, and lodge in the forest in Arabia, (v. 13.) and shall not have the wonted convenience of their own tents, poor and weather-bitten as they are.

3. They shall stand in need of refreshment, being ready to perish for want of it, in their flight from the invading army: "Oh inhabitants of the land of Tema," (who probably, were next neighbours to the companies of Dedanim,) "bring ye water" (so the margin reads it) "to him that is thirsty, and prevent with your bread those that flee, for they are objects of your care not without regard, nor are they reduced to straits by any extravagance of their own, but they flee from the sword." Tema was a country where water was sometimes a scarce commodity, (as we find, Job vi. 19.) and we may conclude it would be in a particular manner acceptable to these poor distressed refugees. Let us learn hence, (1.) To look for distress ourselves; we know not what straits we may be brought into before we die. Those that live in cities, may be forced to lodge in forests; and those may know the want of necessary food, who now eat bread to the full. Our mountain stands not so strong but that it may be moved, rises not so high but that it may be scaled. These Arabians would the better bear these calamities, because in their way of living they had little use for themselves to caravans. (2.) To look with compassion upon those that are in distress, and with all cheerfulness to relieve them, not knowing how soon their case may be ours; "Bring water to them that are thirsty, and not only give bread to those that need and ask it, but prevent those with it that have need, give it them unasked." They that do so, shall find it remembered to their praise, (as (according to our reading) it is here remembered to the praise of the land of Tema, that they did bring water to the thirsty, and relieved even those that were on the falling side.

4. All that which is the glory of Kedar shall vanish away and fail. Did they glory in their numerous herds and flocks? They shall all be driven away by the enemy. It seems, they were famous above other nations for the use of the bow in battle; but their archers, instead of foiling the enemy, shall fall themselves; and the residue of their number, when they are reduced to a small number, shall be diminished; (v. 17.) their mighty, able-bodied men, and men of spirit too, shall become very few; for they being most forward in the defence of their country, were most exposed, and fell first, either by their own courage, or by the enemy's designs. Note, Neither the skill of archers, (though they be ever so good marksmen,) nor the courage of mighty men, can protect a people from the judgments of God, when they come with commission; they rather expose the undertakers. That is poor glory, which will thus quickly come to nothing.

5. All this shall be done in a little time; "Within one year, according to the years of a hireling, (within one year, precisely reckoned,)" this judgment shall come upon Kedar. If this fixing of the time be of no great use to us now, (because we find not either when the prophecy was delivered, or when it was accomplished,) yet it might be of great use to the Arabians then, to awaken them to repentance, that, like the men of Nineveh, they might prevent the judgment, when they were thus told it was just at the door. Or, when it begins to be fulfilled, the business shall be done, be begun and ended in one year's time. God, when he pleases, can do a great work in a little time.

6. It is all ratified by the truth of God; (v. 16.) "Thus hath the Lord said to me; you may take my word for it, that it is his word," and we may be sure no word of his shall fail to the ground. And again, (v. 17.) The Lord God of Israel hath spoken it; as the God of Israel, in pursuance of his gracious designs concerning them; and we may be sure the Strength of Israel will not lie.

CHAP. XXII.

We are now come nearer home, for this chapter is the burden of the valley of vision, Jerusalem; other places had their burden for the sake of their being concerned some way or other in connexion with Jerusalem, and were reckoned with either as spoilful enemies, or deceitful friends, to the people of God; but now let Jerusalem hear her doom. This chapter concerns 1. The city of Jerusalem itself, and the honourable marching up to it. 1 It makes mention of some things, (1.) Not having an eye to God in the use of the means of their preservation, v. 8., 11. (2.) Not humbling themselves under his mighty hand, v. 12., 13., 14. 2 The court of Hezekiah; and the officers of that court: 1. The dealing of Shebna, a bad man, and turning him out of the treasury, v. 15., 19., 25. 2. The preferring of Eliakim to his place, who should do his country better service, v. 20., 24.

1. THE burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops? 2 Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle. 3 All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers; all that are found in thee are bound together, which have fled from far. 4 Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me; because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. 5 For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains. 6 And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen, and Kir overcame the shield. 7. And it shall come to pass, that thy choicest valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at the gate.

The title of this prophecy is very observable; it is the burden of the valley of vision, of Judah and
Jerusalem: all so agree. Fitly enough is Jerusalem called a valley: for the mountains were round about it; and the land of Judah abounded with fruitful valleys. And by the judgments of God, though they had been as a towering mountain, they should be brought low, sunk and depressed, and become dark and dirty, as this valley. But most emphatically is it called a valley of vision, because there God was known, and his name great; there the prophets were made acquainted with his mind by visions, and there the people saw the goings of their God and King in his sanctuary. Babylon, being a stranger to God, though rich and great, was called the valley of the sons of Benjamin, being bereft with his oracles, is a valley of vision; blessed are their eyes, for they see, and they have seers by office among them. Where Bibles and ministers are, there is a valley of vision, from which is expected fruit accordingly; but here is a burden of the valley of vision, and a heavy burden it is. Note, Church-privileges, if they be not improved, will not secure men from the judgments of God; You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you. The valley of vision has a particular burden; Thou Capernaum, Matt. xi. 23. The higher any are lifted up in means, and mercies, the heavier will their doom be if they abuse them.

1. The constellation that the city should be in upon the approach of Sennacherib’s army. It used to be full of stirs, a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a tumultuous city. Sennacherib destroyed it, and laid it bare, made it a desolate heap of ruins; but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, (ch. 10.) and shall meet with the history of, ch. 36. It is here again prophesied of, because the desolation of many of the neighbouring countries, which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army. Note, Jerusalem knew what danger was at hand, but would not then put it into her hand, and though it will not be her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,  

2. The consternation that the city should be in upon the approach of Sennacherib’s army. It used to be full of stirs, a city of great trade, people hurrying to and fro about their business, a tumultuous city. Sennacherib destroyed it, and laid it bare, made it a desolate heap of ruins; but to the attempt made upon it by Sennacherib, which we had the prophecy of, (ch. 10.) and shall meet with the history of, ch. 36. It is here again prophesied of, because the desolation of many of the neighbouring countries, which were foretold in the foregoing chapters, were to be brought to pass by the Assyrian army. Note, Jerusalem knew what danger was at hand, but would not then put it into her hand, and though it will not be her a fatal cup, yet it will be a cup of trembling. Here is foretold,  

3. The great grief which this should occasion to all serious, sensible people, among them; which is represented by the prophet’s laying the thing to heart himself; he lived to see it, and was resolved to share with the children of his people in their sorrows, v. 4, 5. He is not willing to preach his sorrow, and therefore bids those about him to look away from him; he will abandon himself to grief, and indulge himself in it, will weep secretly, but weep bitterly, and will have none go about to comfort him, for his grief is not obstinate, and he is pleased with his pain. But what is the occasion of this grief? A poor prophet had little to lose, and had been unjustly abused by his master with his oracles, and barefoot; but it is for the spoiling of the daughter of his people. Note, Public grievances should be our griefs. It is a day of trouble and of treading down, and of perplexity; our enemies trouble us, and tread us down, and our friends are perplexed, and know not what course to take, to do us a kindness; the Lord God of hosts is now contending with the valley of vision, the city of Jerusalem, with their battering-rams are breaking down the walls, and we are in vain crying to the mountains, (to keep off the enemy, or to fall on us and cover us,) or looking for help to come to us over the mountains, or appealing, as God does, to the mountains, to hear our controversy, (Micah vi. 1.) and to judge between us and our injurious neighbours.

4. The increasing strength of the enemy, that should invade their country and besiege their city, v. 6, 7. Elam, the Persians, come with their quiver full of arrows, and with chariots of fighting men, and horsemen; Kir, the Medes, muster up their arms, unsheath the sword, and uncover the shield, and get every thing ready for battle, every thing ready for the besieging of Jerusalem; then the valley of vision, the enemy, with their battering-rams are breaking down the walls, and we are in vain crying to the mountains, (to keep off the enemy, or to fall on us and cover us,) or looking for help to come to us over the mountains, or appealing, as God does, to the mountains, to hear our controversy, (Micah vi. 1.) and to judge between us and our injurious neighbours.

5. And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. 9. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool: 10. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. 11. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool; but ye have not looked into the maker thereof, neither had respect unto
him that fashioned it long ago. 12. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: 13. And, behold, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. 14. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts.

What is meant by the covering of Judah, which, in the beginning of this paragraph, is said to be discovered, is not agreed. The fenced cities of Judah were a covering to the country; but those being taken by the army of the Assyrians, they ceased to be a shelter; so that the whole country lay exposed to be plundered. The weakness of Judah, its nakedness, and inability to help itself, now appeared more than ever; and thus the covering of Judah was discovered. Its magazines and stores, which had been locked up, were now laid open for the public use. Dr. Lightfoot gives another sense of it, that by this distress to which Judah should be brought, God would discover their covering, unloak their hypocrisy, would show all that was in their heart, as is said of Hezekiah upon another occasion, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 31. Now they discovered both their carnal confidence, (v. 9.) and their carnal security, v. 13. Thus, by one means or other, the iniquity of Ephraim shall be discovered, and the sin of Samaria, Hos. vii. 1. They were now in great fright, and in this fright they discovered two things much amiss: 1. A great contempt of God's goodness, and his power to help them. They made use of the means they could think of for their own preservation; and it is not that they are blamed for, but, in doing this, they did not acknowledge God. Observe, 1. How careful they were to improve all advantages that might contribute to their safety. When Sennacherib had made himself master of all the defenced cities of Judah, and Jerusalem was left as a cottage in a vineyard, they thought it was time to look about them; a council was immediately called, a council of war; and it was resolved to stand upon their defence, and not tamely to surrender. Pursuant to this resolve, they took all the prudent measures they could for their own security. We tempt God, if, in times of danger, we do not the best we can for ourselves. (1.) They inspected the magazines and stores, to see if they were well stocked with arms and ammunition. They looked to the armour of the house of the forest, which Solomon built in Jerusalem for an armoury, (1 Kings x. 17.) and thence they delivered out what they had occasion for. It is the wisdom of princes, in time of peace, to provide for the emergency of war, to be ready and seek when they shall use them, and perhaps upon a sudden emergency. (2.) They viewed the fortifications, the breaches of the city of David; they walked round the walls, and observed where they were gone to decay, for want of seasonable repairs, or broken by some former attempts made upon them. Those breaches were many; the more shame for the house of David, that they suffered the city of David to lie neglected. They had, probably, often seen those breaches; but now they saw them to consider what course to take about them. This we good should get by public distresses, we should be awakened by them to repair our breaches, and amend what is amiss. (3.) They made sure of water for the city, and did what they could to deprive the besiegers of it: Ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool, of which there was, probably, no great store, and of which, therefore, they could not make so much use as to make the towers thereof be good strongholds. See what a mercy it is, that, as nothing is more necessary to the support of human life than water, so nothing is more cheap and common; but it is bad indeed when that, as here, is a scarce commodity. (4.) They numbered the houses of Jerusalem, that every house might send in their quota of men for the public service, or contribute in money to it; and each house paid by a good husband. (5.) Because private property ought to give way to the public safety, those houses that stood in their way, when the wall was to be fortified, were broken down; which, in such a case of necessity, is no more an injury to the owner, than blowing up houses in case of fire. (6.) They made a ditch between the outer and inner wall, for the greater security of the city; and they contrived to draw the water of the old pool to it, that they might have plenty of water themselves, and might deprive the besiegers of it: for, seems, that was the project, lest the Assyrian army should come and find much water, (2 Chron. xxxiii. 4.) and so should be the better able to prolong the siege. If it be lawful to destroy the forest of a country, much more to put an end to the streams of its waters, for the straitening and starving of an enemy. 2. How regardless they were of God in all these preparations; but we have not looked unto the Maker thereof: of Jerusalem, (the city you are so solicitous for the defence of,) and of all the advantages which nature has furnished it with for its defence; the mountains round about it, (Ps. cxvii. 2.) and the rivers, which were such as the inhabitants might turn to their advantage to lay siege and defend their own city. Notice, (1.) It is God that made his Jerusalem, and fashioned it long ago, in his counsels. The Jewish writers, upon this place, say, There were seven things which God made before the world; meaning which he had in his eye when he made the world, the garden of Eden, the law, the just one, Israel, the throne of glory, Jerusalem, and Messiah the same. The gospel-church has God for its Maker. (2.) Whatever service we do, or endeavour to do, at any time, for God's Jerusalem, it must be with an eye to him as the Maker of it; and he takes it ill if we do not. It is charged upon them here, that they did not look to God. [1.] They did not design his glory, in what they did. They fortified Jerusalem because it was a rich city, and their own houses were in it; because it was the holy city, and God's house was in it. In all our cares for the defence of the church, we must look more at God's interest in it than at our own. [2.] They did not depend upon him for a blessing upon their endeavours, saw no need of it, and therefore sought not to him for it, but thought their own powers and policies sufficient for them. Of Hezekiah himself it is said, he made him strong; and, particularly upon this occasion; (2 Chron. xxxiii. 8.) but there were those about him, it seems, who were great statesmen and soldiers, but had little religion in them. [3.] They did not give him thanks for the advantages they had in fortifying their city from the waters of the old pool, which were fashioned long ago, as Kishon is called an ancient river, Job xiv. 12. Who, when ever in us, and for us, we must therein acknowledge the goodness of the God of nature; who, when he fashioned it long ago, fitted it to be so, and according to whose ordinance it continues to this day. Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and therefore, whatever use it is to us, we must look at him that fashioned it, bless him for it, and use it for him.
II. A great contempt of God's wrath and justice in contending with them, v. 12—14. Where observe,

1. What was God's design in bringing this calamity upon them; it was to humble them, bring them to repentance, and make them serious. In that day of trouble, and treading down, and perplexity, the Lord did thereby call to weeping, and mourning, and penitential prayer. The image of mourning, weeping, and girding with sackcloth; and all this, to lament their sins, by which they had brought those judgments upon their land, to enforce their prayers, by which they might hope to avert the judgments that were breaking in, and to dispose themselves to a reformation of their lives by a holy seriousness, and a tenderness of heart, under the weight of God. To this God called them by his prophets explaining his providences, and by his providences awakening them to regard what his prophets said. Note, When God threatens us with his judgments, he expects and requires that we humble ourselves under his mighty hand; that we tremble when the lion rear, and in a day of adversity consider.

2. In contrary they walked to this design of God; (v. 13.) Behold, joy and gladness, mirth and feasting, all the gaiety and all the jollity imaginable: they were as secure and pleasant as they used to be, as if they had no enemy in their borders, or were in no danger of falling into his hands. When they had taken the necessary precautions for their security, then they set all deaths and dangers at general shortness and uncertainty of let and life, and the nearness of death at all times. This was the language of the profane scorners who mocked the messengers of the Lord, and misused his prophets. (1.) They made a jest of dying; The prophet tells us we must die short, perhaps to-morrow, and therefore we should mourn and repent to-day; no, rather let us eat and drink, that we may be fattened for the slaughter, and may be good heart to meet our end; if we must have a short life, let it be a merry one. (2.) They ridiculed the doctrine of a future state on the other side death; for if there were no such state, the apostle grants there would be something of reason in what they said, 1 Cor. xiv. 52. If, when we die, there were an end of us, it was good to make ourselves as easy and merry as we could, while we live; but if for all these things God shall bring us into judgment, it is at our peril if we walk in the way of our heart and the sight of our eyes, Eccl. xi. 9. Note, A practical disbelief of another life after this, is at the bottom of the carnal security and brutish sensuality, which are the sin and shame and ruin of so great a part of mankind, as of the old world, when the deluge came upon it; and the Israelites, when God punished them for their sin. 3. How much God was displeased at it; he signified his resentment of it to the prophet, revealed it in his ears, to be by him proclaimed upon the house-top; Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, v. 14. It shall never be expunged with sacrifice and offering, any more than the iniquity of the house of Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 14. It is a sin against the remedy, a blemish on the utmost means of conviction, and rendering them ineffectual; and therefore it is not likely they should ever repent of it, or have it pardoned. The Chaldee reads it, It shall not be forgiven you till you die the second death. Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; with the froward he will show himself froward.

15. Thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, 16. What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that gaveth a habitation for himself in a rock? 17. Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. 18. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. 19. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down. 20. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah: 21. And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. 22. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. 24. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. 25. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it.

We have here a prophecy concerning the displacing of Shebna, a great officer at court, and the placing of Eliakim in the post of honour and power, that he was in. Such changes are common in the courts of princes, it is therefore strange that so much notice should be taken of it by the prophet here; but by the accomplishment of what was foretold concerning these particular persons, God designed to confirm his word in the mouth of Isaiah concerning other and greater events; and it is likewise to show, as God has burdens of both glory and trust committed to persons at home, and abroad, so he has for these particular persons at home, that are false friends to them, and betray them. It is likewise a confirmation in general of the hand of Divine Providence in all events of this kind, which to us seem contingent, and to depend upon the wills and fancies of princes and potentates; come neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; but God is the Judge, Ps. lxv. 6, 7. It is probable that this prophecy was delivered at the same time with that in the former part of the chapter, and began to be fulfilled before.
S. manerab's invasion; for now Shebna was over the house, but then Eliakim was, (ch. xxxvii. 5.) and Shebna coming down gradually, was only scribe. Here is,

1. The prophecy of Shebna's disgrace: he is called this treasurer, being intrusted with the management of the revenue; and he is likewise said to be over the house; for such was his boundless ambition and covetousness, that he was not only lord of the singular importance at court, would not content him. It is common for self-seekers thus to grasp at more than they can manage; and so the business of their places is neglected, while the pomp and profit of them wholly engage the mind. It does not appear what were the particular instances of Shebna's mal-administration, for which Isaiah is here charged against him; but he himself says, "He kept not in the office of the kings' son; and he entered not into the consultation with the king of Assyria, and was in treaty with him to deliver the city into his hands." However it was, it should seem that he was a foreigner, (for we never read of the name of his father,) and that he was an enemy to the true interests of Judah and Jerusalem; it is probable that he was first preferred by Ahaz. Hezekiah was himself an excellent prince, but the best masters cannot always be sure of good servants: we have need to pray for princes, that they may be wise and happy in the choice of those they trust. These were times of reformation, yet Shebna, a bad man, compiled so far as to keep his places at court; and it is probable that many others did like him, for which reason S. manerab is said to have been sent against a hypothetical nation, ch. x. 6. In this message to Shebna,

1. A reproof of his pride, vanity, and security; (v. 16.) "What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here? What a mighty noise and bustle dost thou make! Whist dost thou hast thou, here, that thou wast not to be? Whom hast thou here, what relations that thou art allied to? Art thou not man, and most obscure, filius podjdti—an utter heathen, that comest we know not whence? What is the meaning of this, thou hast built thee a fine house, hast graved thee a habitation?" So very nice and curious was it, that it seemed rather to be the work of an engraver than of a mason or carpenter. And it seemed even in a rock; so firmly was it founded, and so improbable was it. "Nay, thou hast hewed thee out a sepulcher;" as if he designed that his pomp should secure his fame more lasting than two places, and was named after his fathers' sepulchres, (as Nehemiah called it with a great deal of tenderness, Neh. ii. 3.) he designed it should be the place of his own; and therefore set up a monument for himself in his lifetime, set it up on high. They that make stately monuments for their pride, forget that, how beautiful soever they appear outwardly, within they are full of dead men's bones: but it is pity that the greater part of men's monuments were so made. See the issue of his fall, and the striking of his glory.

2. A prophecy of his fall, and the striking of his glory.

(1.) That he should now quickly be displaced and degraded; (v. 19.) "I will drive thee from thy station. High places are slippery places; and those are justly deprived of their honour, that are proud of it, and puffed up with it; and deprived of their power, and their settle. God will do it, who shows himself to be God, by looking upon proud men, and abusing them, Job xl. 12. To this, v. 23. refers. The mill that is now fastened in the sure place, Shebna, which thinks himself immovably fixed in his office, shall be removed, and cut down, and fall. These are mistaken, who think any place in this world a sure place, or themselves as nails fastened in it; for there is nothing here but uncertainty. When the nail falls, the batten that was upon it is cut off: when Shebna was disgraced, all that had a dependence upon him fell into contempt too. Those that are in high places will have many hanging upon them, as favourites whom they are proud of and trust to; but they are burdens upon them, and perhaps with their weight break the nail, and both fall together, and by deceiving ruin another—the common fate of great men and their flatterers, who expect more other than they other than performs.

(2.) That after awhile he would be driven from his station, but driven by his country; The Lord will carry thee away with the captivity of a mighty man, v. 17, 18. Some think the Assyrians seized him, and took him away, because he had promised to assist them, and did not, but appeared against them; or, perhaps, Hezekiah, finding out his treachery, banished him, and forbade him ever to return to the court. The reality was, that he was become obnoxious to the people, withdrew into some other country, and there spent the rest of his days in meanness and obscurity. Grotius thinks he was stanch with a leprosy, which was a disease commonly supposed to come from the immediate hand of God's displeasure, particularly for the punishment of the proud, as in the case of Miriam and Aaron, Numbers xii. 10: and so he was tossed like a ball out of Jerusalem. Those who, when they are in power, turn and toss others, will be justly turned and tossed themselves, when their day shall come to fall. Many who have thought themselves fastened like a nail, may come to be tossed like a ball; for here have we no continuing city. Shebna thought his place too strait for him, he had no room to thrive; God will therefore send him into a large country, where he shall have room to wander, but never find the way back again; for there he shall die, and lay his bones there, and not in the sepulchre he had hewn out for himself. And there the chariots which had been the chariots of his glory, in which he had ratted about the streets of Jerusalem, and which he took into banishment with him, should but serve to upbraid him with his former grandeur, to the shame of his lord's house, of the court of Ahaz, that had advanced him.

II. The prophecy of Eliakim's advancement, v. 20, &c. He is God's servant, has approved himself faithfully so in other employments, and therefore God will call him to this high station. These that are diligent in doing the duty of a low sphere, stand fairest for promotion in God's books. Eliakim does nothing more here than he does in his office, and is next against him; nor does he intrude into his office: but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to, we may expect he will own us in.

It is here foretold,

1. That Eliakim should be put into Shebna's place of lord chamberlain of the household, lord treasurer, and prime minister of state. The prophet must tell Shebna this; (v. 21.) "He shall have the robe, the badge of his office, and they shall call him, the badge of power; for he shall have thy government." To hear of it would be a great mortification to Shebna, much more to see it. Great men, especially proud men, cannot endure their successors. God undertakes the doing of it, not only because he would put it into the heart of Hezekiah to do it, and his hand must be acknowledged, guiding the hearts of men, and making an act against him; nor does he intrude into his office: but God calls him to it; and what God calls us to, we may expect he will own us in.

And since it is he that commiss the government into their hand, they must administer it according to his will, for his glory; they must judge for him, by which they judge, and decree justice, Prov. viii. 15. And they may depend upon him to furnish them for
what he calls them: according to the promise here, I will clothe him; and then it follows, I will strengthen him. Those that are called to places of trust and power, should seek unto God for grace to enable them to do the duty of their places, for that ought to be their chief care.

Eliakim's advancement is further described by the laying of the key of the house of David upon his shoulders, v. 22. Probably, he carried a golden key, by which the doors of his house were guarded; or he had one embroidered upon his cloak or robe, to which this alludes. Being over the house, and having the key delivered to him, as the seals are to the lord keeper, he shall open and none shall shut, shut and none shall open. He had access to the house of the precious things, the silver and the gold, and the scribes; to the house of the armour and the treasures, (ch. xxix. 2) and disposed of the stores there as he thought fit for the public service. He put whom he pleased into the inferior offices, and turned out whom he pleased. Our Lord Jesus describes his own power as Mediator by an allusion to this, (Rev. iii. 7.) that he has the key of David, wherewith he opens and no man shuts, he shuts and no man opens: his power in the kingdom of heaven, and in the kingdom of this world, is absolute, irresistible, and uncontrovertible.

2. That he should be fixed and confirmed in that office: he shall have it for life, and not durante benefic. —during pleasures; (v. 23.) I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place, not to be removed or cut down. Thus lasting shall the honour be, that comes from God, to all those who use it for him. Our Lord Jesus is as a nail in a sure place: his kingdom cannot be shaken, and he himself is still the same.

3. That he should be a great blessing in his office: and that is it that crowns the favours here conferred upon him. God makes his name great, for he shall be a blessing, Gen. xii. 2.

(1.) He shall be a blessing to his country; (v. 21.) He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. He shall take care not only of the affairs of the king's household, but all the public interests in Jerusalem and Judah. Note, Rulers should be fathers to those that are under their government; to teach them with wisdom, rule them with love, and correct what is amiss with tenderness; to protect them and provide for them in their necessities, as a man is for his own children and family. It is happy with a people, when neither court, nor city, nor country, has any separate interests, but all centre in the same, so that the courtiers are true patriots, and whom the court blesses, the country has reason to bless too; and when those who are fathers to Jerusalem, the royal city, are no less so to the house of Judah.

(2.) He shall be a blessing to his family; (v. 23, 24.) He shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house: the consummate wisdom and virtue which recommended him to this great trust made him the honour of his family, which, probably, was very considerable before, but now became much more. Children should aim to be a credit to their parents and relations. The honour men reflect upon their families by their piety and usefulness, is more truly valued than that which they derive from their families by their names and titles.

Eliakim being preferred, all the glory of his father's house was hung upon him; they all made their court to him, and his brethren's sheaves bowed to his. Observe, the glory of this world gives a man no intrinsic worth or excellency; it is but hung upon him as an appendage, and it will soon drop from him. Eliakim was compared to a nail in a sure place; in pursuance of which comparison, all the relations of his family, which, it is likely, were numerous, and that was the glory of it, are said to have a dependence upon him; as in a house the vessels that have handles to them, are hung up upon nails and pins. It intimates likewise, that he shall generously take care of them all, and bear the weight of that care; all the vessels, not only the fingers, but the cups, the vessels of small quantity, the meanest that belonged to the family, shall be provided for by him; and as a burthen they bring upon themselves, that undertake great trusts; they little think how much and how much will hang upon them, if they resolve to be faithful in the discharge of their trust. Our Lord Jesus having the key of the house of David, is as a nail in a sure place, and all the glory of his father's house hangs upon him, is derived from him, and depends upon him even to the meanest that belong to his church, are welcome to him, and he is able to bear the stress of them all. That soul cannot perish, nor that concern fail to the ground, though ever so weighty, that is by faith hung upon Christ.

CHAP. XXIII.

This chapter is concerning Tyre, an ancient wealthy city, situated for many ages one of the most celebrated cities for trade and merchandise in those parts of the world. The lot of the tribe of Asher bordered upon it; (Joshua xix. 29.) it is called the strong city Tyre. We seldom find an enemy to Israel, but sometimes their faithful ally, as in the reigns of David and Solomon; for trading cities maintain their grandeur, not by conquests of their neighbours, but by commerce with them. In this chapter is foretold, I. The lamentable desolation of Tyre, which was performed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldean army, about the time that they destroyed Jerusalem; and a hard task they had of it, as appears, Ezek. xxix. 13, where they are said to have surprised a hard service against Tyre, and yet to have no wages, v. 1-14. II. The restoration of Tyre after 70 years, and the return of the Tyrians out of their captivity to their trade again, v. 15-18.

1. The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in: from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them. 

2. Be still, ye inhabitants of the islands: thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. 

3. And by great waters the seed of Shohar, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations. 

4. Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins. 

5. As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre. 

6. Pass ye over to Tarshish: howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. 

7. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn. 

8. Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose Traffickers are the honourable of the earth? 

9. The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to sting the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth. 

10. Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish.
there is no more strength. 11. He stretched out his hand over the sea; he shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant-city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. 12. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon; arise, pass over to Chittim; there also shalt thou have no rest. 13. Behold, the land of the Chaldeans: this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin. 14. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for your strength is laid waste.

Tyre being a sea-port town, this prophecy of its overthrow fittingly begins and ends with, Howl, ye ships of Tarshish; for all its business, wealth, and honour depended upon its shipping; if that be ruined they are all undone. Observe,

1. Tyre flourishing. This is taken notice of, that hence we may more easily see the more dismal; 1. The merchants of Zidon were traders at sea; they had replenished her, v. 2. Zidon was the more ancient city, situated upon the same sea-coast, a few leagues more to the north, and Tyre was at first only a colony of that; but the daughter had outgrown the mother, and was become much more considerable. It may be a mortification to great cities to think how they were at first replenished. 2. Egypt had helped very much to raise her, v. 2. Sihor was the river of Egypt, by that river, and the ocean into which it ran, the Egyptians traded with Tyre: and the harvest of that river was her revenue. The riches of the sea, and the gains by goods exported and imported, are as much the harvest to trading towns, as that of hay and corn is to the country; and sometimes the harvest of the river proves a better revenue than the harvest of the land. Or, it may be meant of all the products of the Egyptian soil, which the men of Tyre traded in, and which were the harvest of the river Nile, owing themselves to the overflowing of that river. 3. She was become the mart of the nations; the great emporium of that part of the world. Some of every known nation might be found there, especially at certain times of the year, when there was a general rendezvous of merchants. This is enlarged upon by another prophet, Ezek. xxvii. 2, 3, &c. See how the hand of the diligent, by the blessing of God upon it, makes rich. Tyre became rich and great by industry, though she had no other ploughs going than those that plough the waters. 4. She was a joyous city, noted for mirth and jollity, v. 7. Those that were so disposed, might find there all manner of sports and amusements, as Beelus and neighbour cities were of ancient days, and she was proud of that, and that had been to make her secure; as if because she had been a city time out of mind, and her antiquity had been of ancient days, therefore she must continue a city time without end, and her continuance must be to the days of eternity. 5. She was a crowning city, (v. 8.) that crowned herself. Such were the power and pomp of her magistrates, that they crowned those who had dependence on her, and dealings with her; it is explained in the following chapters. Her merchant princes and merchant men of great weight and note, were like princes, for the case and state they take; and Tyre, to her, whatever country they go to, are the honourable of the earth, who are respected by all. How slightysoever some now speak of tradesmen, it seems, formerly, and among the wisest nations, there were merchants, and traders, and men of business, that were the honourable of the earth.

1. How is Tyre falling. It does not appear that she brought trouble upon herself by provoking her neighbours with her quarrels, but rather by tempting them with her wealth: but if that was it that induced Nebuchadnezzar to fall upon Tyre, he was disappointed; for after it had stood out a siege of 13 years, and could hold out no longer, the inhabitants got away by sea, with their families and goods, to other places where they had an interest, and left Nebuchadnezzar nothing but the bare city. See a history of Tyre in Sir Walter Raleigh's History of the World, lib. ii. cap. 7, sect. 3, 43. page 283, which will give much light to the prophecy, and that in Ezekiel concerning Tyre. See how the destruction of Tyre is here foretold:

1. The haven should be spoiled, or, at least, neglected; there shall be no convenient harbour for the ships of Tarshish. The Tyrians, Ezek. xxvii. (v. 1.) so that there shall be no house, no dock for the ships to ride in, no inns or public houses for the seamen, no entering into the port; perhaps it was choked with sand, or blocked up by the enemy; or, Tyre being destroyed and laid waste, the ships that used to come from Tarshish and Chittim into that port, shall now no more enter in; for it is revealed and made known to them, they have received the dismal news, that Tyre is destroyed and laid waste; so that there is now no more business for them there. See how it is in this world; those that are spoiled by their enemies are commonly slighted by their old friends.

2. The inhabitants are struck with astonishment. Tyre was an island; the inhabitants of it, who had made a mighty noise and bustle in the world, had no defence but in Tyre, and now be still and silent; (v. 2.) they shall sit down as mourners, so overwhelmed with grief, that they shall not be able to express it. Their proud boasts of themselves, and defiance of their neighbours, shall be silenced. God can soon quiet those, and strike them dumb, that are the noisy, busy people of the world. Be still; for God will do his work, (Ps. xlvii. 10. Zech. xii. 13.) and you cannot resist him.

3. The neighbours are amazed, blush, and are in pain for them; Zidon is ashamed, (v. 4.) by whom Tyre was at first replenished, for the rolling waves of the sea brought to Zidon this news from Tyre; and there the strength of the sea, a high spring-tide, proclaimed, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, now as I have done. I do not now bring up ships to load, or ships to unload, or ships to trade, or ships to fish, or ships to sail, or ships to row, or ships to bear goods in and out in trade and business, as I used to do; which was the thing that had made Tyre so rich and populous. Or, the sea, that was used to be loaded with fleets of ships about Tyre, shall now be as desolate as a sorrowful widow that is bereaved of all her children, and has none about her to nourish and bring up. Egypt indeed was a much larger, and more considerable country than Tyre, but Tyre had so much more as to have had so large a correspondence, upon the account of trade, that all the nations about shall be as much in pain, upon the report of the ruin of that one city, as they would have been, and not long after, were, upon the report of the ruin of all Egypt, v. 5. Or, as some read it, When the report shall reach to the Egyptians, they shall be sorely pained to hear it of Tyre; both because of the loss of their trade with
that city, and because it was a threatening step toward their own ruin; when their neighbour's house was on fire, they thought not of danger.

4. The merchants, as many as could, should transmit their effects to other places, and abandon Tyre, where they had raised their estates, and thought they had made them sure; (v. 6.) "Ye that have long been inhabitants of this island," (for it lay off in the sea about half a mile from the continent,) "it is time to howl now, for ye must pass over to Terath. The best course you can take, is to make the best of your way to Tarshish, to the sea." (to Tarssessus, a city in Spain; so some.) "or to some other of your plantations." Those that think their mountain stands strong, and cannot be moved, will find that here they have no continuing city. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed.

5. Those that could not make their escape, must expect no other than to be carried into captivity; for it was the way of conquerors, in those times, to take those they conquered to be bondmen in their own country, and send of their own to be freemen in theirs; (v. 7.) Her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn; she shall be hurried away on foot into captivity, and many a weary step they shall take toward their own destruction. Those that have lived in the greatest pomp and splendour, know not what hardships they may be reduced to before they die.

6. Many of those that attempted to escape should be pursued, and fall into the hands of the enemy. Tyre shall pass through her land as a river, (v. 10.) running down, one company after another, into the ocean or abyss of misery. Or, though they hasten away as a river, with the greatest swiftness, hoping to outrun the danger, yet there is no more strength, they are quickly tired, and cannot get forward, but fall an easy prey into the hands of the enemy. And as Tyre has no more strength, so her sister Zion has no more comfort; (v. 12.) Thou shalt have no rest, O oppressed virgin, daughter of Zion, that art now ready to be overpowered by the victorious Chaldeans; thy turn is next, therefore arise, pass over to Chittim; flee to Greece, to Italy, any whither, to shift for thy own safety; yet there also shalt thou have no rest; thine enemies shall disturb thee, and thine own fears shall disquiet thee, there where thou hopedst to find some repose.

Note. We deceive ourselves, if we promise ourselves rest anywhere in this world. Those that are uneasy in one place, will be so in another; and when God's judgments pursue sinners, they will overtake them.

But whence shall all this trouble come?

1. God will be the Author of it; it is a destruction from the Almighty. It will be asked, (v. 8.) "Who has taken this counsel against Tyre? Who has contrived it? Who has rid his mind of it? Who can find in his heart to lay such a stately, lovely city in ruins? And how is it possible it should be effectuated? To this it will be answered;

1. [God has designed it, who is infinitely wise and just, and never did, nor ever will do, any wrong to any of his creatures; (v. 9.) The Lord of hosts, that has all things at his disposal, and gives not accounts contrary to him! Who has resolved it?] Who can shall be done according to the counsel of his will; and that which he aims at herein, is, to stain the pride of all glory, to pollute it, profane it, and throw it to be trodden upon; and to bring into contempt, and make despicable, all the honourable ones of the earth, that they may not admire themselves, and be admired by others, as usual. God did not bring those calamities upon Tyre in a way of sovereignty, to show an arbitrary and irresistible power; but he did it to punish the Tyrians for their pride. Many other

sins, no doubt, reigned among them; idolatry, sensuality, and oppression; but the sin of pride is fastened upon, on which was fastened pride, in the judgment of God's controversy with Tyre, for he resists the proud. All the world observing, and being surprised at, the desolation of Tyre, we have here an exposition of it. God tells the world what he meant by it: First, He designed to convince men of the vanity and uncertainty of all earthly glory; to show them what a withering, fading, perishing thing it is, to be given to the world's reproach; and it would have been well if men would be thoroughly taught this lesson, though it were at the expense of so great a destruction. Are men's learning and wealth, their pomp and power, their interest in, and influence upon, all about them, their glory? Are their stately houses, rich furniture, and splendid appearances, their glory? Look upon the ruins of Tyre, and see all this glory stained, and sulfured, and buried in the dust. The honourable ones of heaven will be for ever such; but see the grandees of Tyre, some fled into banishment, others forced into captivity, and all impoverished; and you will conclude that the honourable of the earth, even the most honourable, know not how soon they may be brought into contempt. Secondly, He designed hereby to prevent their being exulted in the ruin and destruction of their glory, and with their cities rising up, and confident of the continuance of it. Let the ruin of Tyre be a warning to all places and persons to take heed of pride, for it proclaims to all the world, that he who exalts himself shall be abased.

2. God will do it, who has all power in his hand, and can do it effectually; (v. 11.) He stretched out his hand over the sea; he has done it, witness the dividing of the Red sea, and the drowning of Pharaoh in it. He has often shaken the kingdoms that were most secure; and he has now given commandment concerning this merchant-city, to destroy the strong holds thereof. As its beauty shall not intercede for it, but that shall be stained; so its strength shall not protect it, but that shall be broken. If any think it strange that a city so well fortified, and that has so many powerful allies, should be so totally ruined, let them know that it is the Lord of hosts that has given a commandment to destroy the strong holds thereof; and who can gainsay his orders, or hinder the execution of them?

3. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of it; (v. 13.) Behold the land of the Chaldeans; how easily they and their land were destroyed by the Assyrians. They had their own hands founded it, set up the tower of Babylon, and yet he, the Assyrian, brought it to ruin; whence the Tyrians might infer, that as easily as the old Chaldeans were subdued by the Assyrians, so easily shall Tyre be vanquished by those new Chaldeans. Babylon was built by the Assyrian, for them that dwell in the wilderness. It may be rendered, for the ships. The Assyrians founded it for ships and shipmen that traffic upon those seas. Tiglath-Pileser, divided the waters into two branches, and made two rivers to run into the Persian and Indian seas; for men of the desert; for Babylon is called the desert of the sea, ch. xxi. 1. Thus Tyre was built upon the sea for the like purpose. But the Assyrians (says Dr. Lightfoot) brought that to ruin, now lately, in Hezekiah's time, and so shall Tyre, hereafter, be brought to ruin by Nebuchadnezzar. And more upon the falling and withering of others, we should not be so confident as we commonly are of the continuance of our own flourishing and standing.

15. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king: after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as a harlot. 16. Take a harp, go about the city,
thou harlot that hast been forgotten: make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered. 17. And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the earth upon the face of the earth. 18. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

Here is,

I. The time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Tyre, which were not to be perpetual desolations; Tyre shall be forgotten 70 years, v. 15. So long it shall lie neglected, and buried in obscurity. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar much about the time that Jerusalem was, and lay as long as it did in its ruins. See the folly of that proud ambitious city. What would not Nebuchadnezzar have done for making himself master of Tyre, when all the inhabitants were driven out of it, and he had none of his own subjects to spare for the replenishing and fortifying of it? It is strange what pleasure men could take in destroying cities, and making their memorial perish with them, Ps. ix. 6. He trampled on the pride of Tyre, and therein served God's purpose; but with greater pride, for which God soon after humbled him.

II. A prophecy of the restoration of Tyre to its glory again; After the end of 70 years, according to the years of one king, or one dynasty, or family, of kings, that of Nebuchadnezzar; when that expired, the desolations of Tyre came to an end. And we may presume that Cyrus at the same time, when he released the Jews, and encouraged them to rebuild Jerusalem, released the Tyrians also, and encouraged them to rebuild Tyre. Thus the prosperity and adversity of places, as well as persons, are set the one over against the other; that the most glorious cities may not be secure, nor the most ruins despirable. It is foretold,

1. That God's providence shall again smile upon this ruined city; (v. 16.) The Lord will visit Tyre in mercy; for through his content, he will not contend for ever. It is not said, Her old acquaintance shall visit her, the colonies she has planted, and the trading cities she has had correspondence with; they have forgotten her; but, The Lord shall visit her by some unthought-of turn; he shall cause his indignation toward her to cease, and then things will run, of course, in their former channel. She shall cause her best endeavours to recover her trade again. She shall sing as a harlot, that has been some time under correction for her lewdness: but, when she is set at liberty, (so violent is the bent of corruption,) she will use her old arts of temptation. The Tyrians being returned from their captivity, and those that remained recovering new spirits thence, the Tyrians, v. 17, shall procure the best choice of goods, undersell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing; takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night, serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs. These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly and moderately and modestly used; but those that are attached to them should not be over fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them; because, whatever they are now, ancienly they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication: she shall have dealings in trade (for she carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the earth, that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of the world's wealth is a spirit which prevails, and therefore covetousness is spiritual idolatry.

3. That, having recovered her trade again, she shall make a better use of it than she had done formerly: and this good she should get by her calamities, (v. 18.) Her merchandise, and her hire, shall be holiness to the Lord: the trade of Tyre, and all the profit of her trade, shall be devoted to God, and to his honour, and employed in his service. It shall not be treasured and hoarded up, as formerly, to be the matter of their pride, and the support of their carnal confidence; but it shall be laid out in acts of piety and charity. What, they can spare from the maintenance of themselves and their families, shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, for the priests, the Levites, and the families of the Levites, in Jerusalem; not to maintain them in pomp and grandeur, but that they and theirs may eat sufficiently, may have food convenient for them, with as little as may be of that care which would divert them from their ministration; and that they may have, not rich and fine clothing, but durable clothing, that which is strong and lasting; clothing for all seasons; and the priests, though they were young, must wear such plain, grave clothing as old men used to wear. Now, (I.) This supposes that religion should be set up in New Tyre, that they should come to the knowledge of the true God, and into communion with the Israel of God. Perhaps their being fellow-captives with the Jews in Babylon, (who had prophets with them the Lord disposed them to join with them in their worship there, and turned them from idols, as it cured the Jews of their idolatry;) and when they were released with them, and, as they had reason to believe, for their sakes, when they were settled again in Tyre, they would send gifts and offerings to the temple, and presents to the priests. We find men of Tyre then dwelling in the land of Judah, Neh. xi. 29. And the Tyrians were then dispersed in religion in Christ's time, than the cities of Israel, for if Christ had gone among them, they would have repented, Matth. xi. 21. And we meet with Christians at Tyre, (Acts xxii. 3.) and, many years after, did Christianity flourish there. Some of the rabbins refer this prophecy of the conversion of Tyre to the days of the Messiah. (2.) It directs these to the warlike nation, to renew their use of them in the service of God and religion, and to reckon that best laid up, which is so laid out. Both the merchandise of the tradesman, and the hire of the day-labourers, shall be devoted to God. Both the merchandise, (the employment we follow,) and the hire, (the gain of our employment,) must be holiness to the Lord; alluding to the motto engraven on the frontlet of the High-Priest, (Exod. xxiii. 39.) Tyre shall procure the best choice of goods, undersell their neighbours, and be obliging to all customers; as a harlot that has been forgotten, when she comes to be spoken of again, recommends herself to company by singing and playing; takes a harp, goes about the city, perhaps in the night, serenading, makes sweet melody, and sings many songs. These are innocent and allowable diversions, if soberly and moderately and modestly used; but those that are attached to them should not be over fond of them, nor ambitious to excel in them; because, whatever they are now, ancienly they were some of the baits with which harlots used to entice fools. Tyre shall now by degrees come to be the mart of nations again; she shall return to her hire, to her traffic, and shall commit fornication: she shall have dealings in trade (for she carries on the similitude of a harlot) with all the kingdoms of the earth, that she had formerly traded with in her prosperity. The love of the world's wealth is a spirit which prevails, and therefore covetousness is spiritual idolatry.
Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usry, so with the giver of usry to him. 3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. 4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away; the world languisheth, and fadeth away: the haughty people of the earth do languish.

Chap. XXIV.

It is agreed that here begins a new sermon, which is concerning God's people. And the changes with which he is pleased, according to the directions he had received, doth, in many precious promises, say to the righteous, It shall be well with them: and, in many dreadful threatenings, he says, If so be thou winked, it shall be ill with them (ch. 10, 11) and these are interwoven, that they may illustrate each other. This chapter is, mostly, threatening; and as the judgments threatened are very sore and grievous indeed, so the things threatened with them are interwoven with many promises and very many. It is not the burthen of any particular city or kingdom, as those before, but the burthen of the whole earth. The word indeed signifies only the land, because our own land is commonly to us all as the earth. But it is here explained by promises, that it is not so confined, it is the world, v. 4. So that it must, at least, take in a whole neighbourhood of nations.

1. Some think (and very probably) that it is a prophecy of the great havoc that Sennacherib and his Assyrian army should now shortly make of most of the nations in that part of the world. Others make it to point at the like devastations which, about 100 years after, Nebuchadnezzar and his army should make, and the same counsels: going from one kingdom to another, not only to conquer them, but to ruin them, and lay them waste: for that was the method which those eastern nations took in their wars that were most successful with them. The threatenings, are intended for the support and comfort of the people of God in those very calamitous times. And since here are no particular nations named, either by name, or by what, those desolations should, by all means, be brought, I see not but it may refer to both these events. Nay, the scripture has many fulfils, and we ought to give it its full latitude; and therefore I incline to think that the prophet, from those, and from the instance, in which he had a particular eye, to designs here to represent in general the calamitous state of mankind, and the many miseries which human life is liable to, especially those the calamities of nations, and some threatenings be wrote, not only to foretell particular events, but to form the minds of men to virtue and piety, and for that end their prophecies were written and preserved, even for our learning, and therefore ought not to be looked upon as of private interpretation. Now, since a thorough conviction of the vanity of the world, and its insufficiency to make us happy, will go far toward bringing us to God, and drawing out our affections towards another world, the prophet here shows what vexation of spirit we must expect to meet with in these things, that we may never take up our rest in them, nor promise ourselves satisfaction short of the enjoyment of God. In this chapter, we have, 1. A threatening of desolating judgments for sin; (v. 1-12.) to this is added an assurance, that, in the midst of them, good providences would be. (v. 13.) 2. A threatening of the like desolations, (v. 16. 22.) to which is added an assurance, that, in the midst of all, God should be glorified.

1. Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty; and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. 2. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usry, so with the giver of usry to him. 3. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. 4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away; the world languisheth, and fadeth away: the haughty people of the earth do languish.

Earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. 6. Therefore hath the curse devourcd the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. 7. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. 8. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. 9. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. 10. The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in. 11. There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. 12. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.

It is a very dark and melancholy scene that this prophecy presents to our view; turn our eyes which way we will, every thing looks dismal. The desolations are here described in a great variety of expressions to the same purport, and all aggravating.

1. The earth is stripped of all its emblems and looks as if it were taken off its basis; it is made empty and waste, (v. 1.) as if it were reduced to its first chaos, Tuhu and Bohu, nothing but confusion and emptiness again, (Gen. 1. 2.) without form and void. It is true, earth sometimes signifies the land, and so the same word Eretz is here translated; (v. 3.) the land shall be utterly emptied; but see not why it should not there, as well as v. 1. be translated the earth; for most commonly, if not always, where it signifies some one particular land, it has something joined to it; or, at least, not far from it, which does so appropriate it; as, the land (or earth) of Egypt, or Canaan; or this land, or ours, or yours, or the like. It might indeed refer to some particular country; and an ambiguous word might be used to warrant such an application; for it is good to apply to ourselves, and our own lands, what the scripture says in general, of the vanity and vexation of spirit that attend all things here below; but it should seem designed to speak what often happens to many countries, and will do while the world stands, and what may, we know not how soon, happen to our own, and what is the general character of all earthly things, they are emptied of all solid comfort and satisfaction, a little thing makes them waste. We often see numerous families, and plentiful estates, utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled, by one judgment or other, or perhaps only by a gradual and insensible decay. Sin has turned the earth upside down; the earth is become quite a different thing to man from what a creature made it to be his habitation. Sin has also scattered abroad the inhabitants thereof; the rebellion at Babylonia was the occasion of the dispersion there. How many ways are there in which the inhabitants both of towns and of private houses are scattered abroad, so that near relations and old neighbours know nothing of one another? To the same purport, v. 4. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away, (v. 1. 22.) to which is added an assurance, that, in the midst of all, God should be glorified.
themselves too much with it, and lay it in their bosoms. And as the earth itself grows old, so they that dwell therein are desolate; men carry crazy, sickly bodies along with them, are often solitary, and confined by affliction, v. 6. When the earth languishes, and is not so fruitful as it used to be, then they that dwell therein, that make it their home, and rest, and portion, are desolate; whereas they that by faith dwell into God can rejoice in him, and flourish, when the fig-tree does not blossom. If we look abroad, and see how many places pestilences and burning fevers rage, and what multitudes are swept away by them in a little time, so that sometimes the living scarcely suffice to bury the dead, perhaps we shall understand what the prophet means, when he says, The inhabitants of the earth are burned, or consumed; and, if we compare the days of one man, and another, and there are but few men left, in comparison. Note, The world we live in is a world of disappointment, a vale of tears, and a dying world; and the children of men in it are but of few days, and full of trouble.

II. It is God that brings all these calamities upon the earth; the Lord that made the earth, and made it fruitful and agreeable for the service and comfort of man, now makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust. (v. 2.) What is it for its Creator, and will be its Judge; he has an incontestable right to pass sentence upon it, and an irresistible power to execute that sentence. It is the Lord that has spoken this word, and he will do the work; (v. 3.) it is his curse that has defored the earth, (v. 6.) the general curse which sin brought upon the earth, and the curse of man's fall, is the power of God; hence it is that they bring upon themselves by their enormous wickedness. See the power of God's curse, how it makes all empty, and lays all waste; those whom he curses, are cursed indeed.

III. Persons of all ranks and conditions shall share in these calamities; (v. 2.) It shall be, as with the people, so with the priest, &c. This is true of many of the common calamities of human life; all are subject to the same diseases of body, sorrows of mind, afflictions in relations, and the like; there is one event to those of very different stations; time and chance happen to them all. It is in a special manner true of the destroying judgments which God sometimes brings upon sinful nations; when he pleases, he can make them universal, so that none shall escape, and none be exempt from them; whether men have little or much, they shall all be destroyed. They that are the meaner rank smart first by famine; but those of the higher rank go first into captivity, while the poor of the land are left. It should be all alike, 1. With high and low; as with the people, so with the priest, &c. The dignity of magistrates and ministers, and the respect and reverence owing to both shall not securne them; the faces of elders are not hid from God, Lam. v. 10. The priests had been as corrupt and wicked as the people; and if their character serve not to restrain them from sin, how can they expect it should serve to secure them from judgments? In both, it is like people, like priest, Hos. iv. 8, 9. 2. With bond and free; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; they have all corrupted their way, and treated them as they thought fit even when the earth is made waste. 3. With rich and poor; those that have money beforehand, that are purchasing, and letting out money to interest, will fare no better than those that are so impoverished, that they are forced to sell their estates, and take up money at interest. There are judgments short of the great day of judgment, in which rich and poor meet together. Let not those that are advanced in the world, set their inferiors at too great a distance, because they know not how soon they may be set upon a level with them. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, in his own conceit; but it does not always prove so.

IV. It is sin that brings these calamities upon the earth; Therefore the earth is made empty, and fades away, because it is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; (v. 5.) it is polluted by the sins of men, and therefore it is made desolate by the judgments of God. They are the filthy nature of sin, that defiles the earth itself, and brings calamities upon it, and it is rendered unpleasant in the eyes of God and good men. See Lev. xviii. 23, 27, 28. Blood, in particular, defiles the land, Numb. xxxv. 33. The earth never spares out its inhabitants, till they have first defiled it by their sins. Why, what have they done? 1. They have transgressed the covenant of the earth, and not answered the ends of it; the bonds of the earth are not of their own making, but by them, and they have cast from them the cords of their obligations to the God of nature. 2. They have changed the ordinances of revealed religion, those of them that have had the benefit of that. They have neglected the ordinances; so some read it; and have made no conscience of observing them; they have passed over the laws, in the commission of sin, and so have perverted the end of the omission of duty. 3. Herein they have broken the everlasting covenant, which is a perpetual bond, and will be to those that keep it a perpetual blessing. It is God's wonderful condescension, that he is pleased to deal with men in a covenant-way; to do them good, and thereby oblige them to do him service.

V. These judgments shall humble men's pride, and mar their mirth; when the earth is made empty.

1. It is a great mortification to men's pride; (v. 4.) The haughty people of the earth do languish; for they have lost that which supported their pride, and for which they magnified themselves; those that have held their heads highest, God can make hang the head.

2. It is a great damp to men's pility; this is enlarged upon much; (v. 7—9.) All the merry-hearted do sigh; such is the nature of carnal mirth, it is but as the cracking of thorns under a pot. Eccl. vii. 6. Great laughers commonly end in a sigh: they that make the world their chief joy, cannot rejoice evermore. When God sends his judgments into the earth, he designs thereby to make those serious that were wholly addicted to their pleasures; Let your laughter be turned into mourning. When the earth is emptied, the noise of them that rejoice in its ends. Carnal joy is a noisy thing; but the noise of it will soon be at an end, and the end of it is heaviness.

Two things are made use of to excite and express vain mirth, and the jovial crew is here deprived of both; (1.) Drinking; the new wine murrins, it is grown sour for want of drinking; for, how proper your wine must be when turned to heart, (Prov. xxxi. 6.) it does not flourish then as it should. The merry-hearted, the vine languishes, and gives little hopes of a vintage, and therefore the merry-hearted do sigh; for they knew no other gladness than that of their corn and wine and oil increasing, (Ps. iv. 7.) and if you destroy their vines and their fig-trees, you make all their mirth to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. They shall not now drink wine with a song, as they used, Ps. xcv. 8. and with huzzas; but rather drink it with a sigh; nay, Strong drink shall be bitter to them that
drink it, because they cannot but mingle their tears with it; or, through sickness, they have lost the relish of it. God has many ways to imbitter wine and strong drink to them that love them, and have the highest gust of them: distemper of body, anguish of mind, the ruin of the estate or country, will make the strong drink bitter, and all the delights of sense tasteless and insipid. (2.) Music: The mirth of tabrets ceases, and the joy of the harp, which used to be at their feasts, ch. v. 12. The captives in Babylon hang their harps on the willow trees. In short, all joy is darkened, there is not a pleasant look to be seen, nor any one to have a smile; all the mirth of the land is gone, (v. 11.) and if it were that mirth which Solomon calls madness, there is no great loss of it.

VI. The cities will in a particular manner feel from these desolations of the country; (v. 10.) The city of confusion is broken, is broken down; so we read it; it lies exposed to invading powers, not only by the breaking down of its walls, but by the confusion that the inhabitants are in; every house is shut up; perhaps by reason of the plague, which has burned or consumed the inhabitants, so that there are few men left, v. 6. Houses infected are usually shut up, that no man may come in; or, they are shut up because they are deserted and inhabited. There is a crying for wine, for the spoiling of the vintage, so that there is little or none to be had. In the city of Jerusalem itself, that had been so much frequented, there shall be left nothing but desolation; grass shall grow in the streets, and the gate is smitten with destruction; (v. 12.) all that used to pass and repass through the gate, are smitten, and all the strength of the city is cut off. How soon can God make a city of order a city of confusion, and then it will soon be a city of desolation!

13. When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaming-grapes when the vintage is done. 14. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. 15. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the islands of the sea.

Here is mercy remembered in the midst of wrath; in Jerusalem and Jerusalem, and the neighbouring countries, when they are overrun by the enemy, Senachcril or Nebuchadnezzar, there shall be a remnant preserved from the general ruin, and it shall be a devout and pious remnant. And this method God usually observes, when his judgments are abroad; he does not make a full end, ch. vi. 13. Or, we may take it thus: Though the greatest part of mankind are by God’s measure the shaking of the earth, and the making of that desolation, yet there are some few who understand themselves better, who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and not in things below, and therefore can keep up their comfort and joy in God, even then when the earth mourns and fades away.

Observe, 1. The small number of this remnant: (v. 13.) ruin, and a ruin to ruin, there shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and the gleaming-grapes, here and there one, who shall escape the common calamity, (as Noah and his family, when the old world was drowned,) that shall be able to sit down upon a heap of the ruins of all their creature-comforts, and even then rejoice in the Lord, (Hab. iii. 16-18.) who, when all faces gather blackness, can lift up their heads with joy, Luke xxii. 26, 29. These few are dispersed, and at a distance from each other, like the gleannings of the olive-tree; and they are concealed, hid under the leaves. The Lord only knows them that are his, the world does not.

2. The great devotion of this remnant, which is the greater for their hazard of their lives, has expiated this great destruction; (v. 14.) They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing. (1.) They shall sing for joy in their deliverance; when the mirth of carnal worldlings ceases, the joy of the saints is as lively as ever; when the merry-hearted do sing because the vine languishes, the upright-hearted do sing because the covenant of grace, the fountain of their comforts, does not fail; though their hopes, never fails; they that rejoice in the Lord, can sing in tribulation, and by faith may be in triumphs, when all about them are in tears. (2.) They shall sing to the glory and praise of God; shall sing not only for the mercy, but for the majesty, of the Lord: their songs are awful and serious, and in their spiritual joys they have a reverent regard to the greatness of God, and keep at a humble distance, when they attend him with their praises. The majesty of the Lord, which is matter of terror to wicked people, furnishes the saints with songs of praise. They shall sing for the magnificence, or transcendent excellency, of the Lord, showed both in his judgments and in his mercies; for we must sing, and sing unto him, of both, Ps. cl. 1. Those who have only, or, as it were, a remnant of the land (that being emptied and made desolate) to them and the isles of the sea, shall from thence cry aloud; their dispersion shall help to spread the knowledge of God, and they shall make even remote shores to ring with his praises. It is much for the honour of God, if those who fear him rejoice in him, and praise him, even in the most melancholy times.

3. Their holy zeal to excite others to the same devotion; (v. 15.) they encourage their fellow-sufferers to do likewise. (1.) Those who are in the fires, in the furnace of affliction, these fires by which the inhabitants of the earth are burned, v. 6. Or, in the valleys, the low, dark, dirty places. (2.) Those who are in the isles of the sea, whether they be banished, or are forced to flee for shelter, and hide themselves remote from all the tumult; they went through fire and water; (Ps. lxxi. 12.) and both let them glorify the Lord, and glorify him as the Lord God of Israel. They who through grace can glory in tribulation, ought to glorify God in tribulation, and give him thanks for their comforts, which abound as their afflictions do abound. We must in every fire, even the hottest, in every isle, even the remotest, keep up our good thoughts of God; when, though he slay us, yet we trust in him; though, for his sake, we are killed all the day long, yet none of these things move us, then we glorify the Lord in the fires; thus the three children, and the martys that sang at the stake.

10. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, wo unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. 17. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. 18. And it shall come to pass, that he which fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the
The prevalency of wrath and judgment for that sin:

(1.) The inhabitants of the earth shall be punished from time to time, from place to place, by one mischief or other; (v. 17, 18.) Fear, and the pit, and the snare; these are upon them, wherever they are; for the sons of men know not what evil they may suddenly be snared in, Ecc. ix. 12. These three words seem to be chosen for the sake of an elegant parrheisma, or, as we now solemnly call it, a jingle of words; Pachad, and Pachath, and Pach; but the meaning is plain, (v. 18.) that evil pursues sinners, (Prov. xliv. 11.) that the curse shall overtake the transgressor, (Deut. xxiii. 15.) that those who are secure, because they have escaped one judgment, know not how soon another may arrest them. What this prophet threatens all the inhabitants of the earth with, another makes part of the judgment of Meah, Jer. xiviii. 43, 44. But it is a common instance of the calamitous state of human life, that, when we seek to avoid one mischief, we fall into a worse, and that the end of one trouble is often the beginning of another; so that we are least safe when we are most secure.

(2.) The earth itself shall be shaken to pieces; it will be literally so at last, when all the works therein shall be burnt up, and often, figuratively so, before that period; The windows from on high are open to pour down wrath, as in the universe I deluge upon the wicked; therefore, by frightening them from the fountains of the great deep being broken up, the foundations of the earth do shake of course, the frame of nature is unhinged, and all is in confusion. See how elegantly this is expressed; (v. 19, 20.) The earth is utterly broken down, it is cast down, it is moved exceedingly, moved out of its place; God shakes heaven and earth. Hag. ii. 6. See the misery of those who lay up their treasure in the things of the earth, and mind those things; they place their confidence in that which shall shortly be utterly broken down and dissolved; the earth shall reed to and fro like a drunken; so unstable, so uncertain, are all the motions of these things. Worldly men dwell in it as in a palace, as in a castle, as in an impregnable tower; but it shall be removed like a cottage so easily, so suddenly, and with so little loss to the great Landlord. This shaking down of the earth will be but like the pulling down of a cottage, which the country is willing to be rid of, because it does but harbour beggars; and therefore no care is taken to rebuild it, it shall fall and not rise again; but there shall be new heavens and a new earth, in which shall dwell nothing but righteousness.

But what is it that shakes the earth thus, and sinks it? It is the transgression thereof that shall be heavy upon it. Note, Sin is a burthen to the whole creation; it is a heavy burthen, a burthen under which it groans now, and will sink at last. Sin is the ruin of states, and kingdoms, and families; they fall under the weight of that talent of lead, Zech. v. 7, 8. (v. 21.) God will have a particular controversy with the kings and great men of the earth; (v. 21.) He will finish the host of the high ones; hosts of princes are no more before God than hosts of common men; what can a host of high ones do with their combined force, when the Most High, the Lord of hosts, contends with them to abase their height, and scatter their hosts, and break all their confederations? The high ones, that are on high, that are puffed up with their height and grandeur, that think themselves so high that they are out of reach of any danger, God will visit upon them all their pride and cruelty, with which they have oppressed and injured their neighbours and subjects, and it shall now return upon their own heads. The

These verses, as those before, plainly speak,

I. Comfort to saints; they may be driven, by the common calamities of the places where they live, into the uttermost parts of the earth, or perhaps they are forced thither for their religion; but they are singing not sighing; through the glad tidings of the grace of God, it is a comfort to us to hear them, to hear that good people carry their religion along with them, even to the most distant regions, to hear that God visits them there, and gives encouragement to hope that from thence he will gather them, Deut. xxxiv. 4. And this is their song, even glory to the righteous: the word is singular, and may import the righteous one, who is just in all he has brought upon us; this is glorifying the Lord in the fires; or, the meaning may be, These songs redound to the glory or beauty of the righteous that sing them. We do the greatest honour imaginable to ourselves, when we employ ourselves in honouring and glorifying God. This may have reference to the sending of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth, as far off as this island of ours, in the days of the Maccabees, and the glad tidings of which are echoed back in songs heard from thence, from churches planted there, even glory to the righteous God, agreeing with the angels’ song, Glory be to God in the highest, and glory to all righteous men; for the work of redemption was ordained before the world for our glory.

II. Terror to sinners; the prophet, having comforted himself and others with the prospect of a saved remnant, returns to lament the miseries he saw breaking in like a mighty torrent upon the earth; 

But I said, My leanness, my leanness, wo unto me, (v. 16.) the very thought of it frets me, and makes me lean. He foresees

1. The prevalency of sin, that iniquity should abound; (v. 16.) The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; this is itself a judgment, and that which provokes God to bring other judgments. (1.) Men are false to one another; there is no faith in man, but a universal dishonesty. Truth, that sacred bond of society, is departed, and there is nothing but treachery in men’s dealings. See Jer. ix. 1, 2. (2.) They are all false to their God; as to him, and their covenant with him, the children of men are all treacherous dealers, and have dealt treacherously with their God, in departing from their allegiance to him: this is the original, and this the aggravation of the sin of the world; and when men have been false to their God, how should they be true to any other?
kings of the earth shall now be reckoned with upon the earth, to show that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, and will render to the proudest of kings according to the fruit of their doings. Let those that are trampled upon by the high ones of the earth, comfort themselves with this, that, though they cannot, dare not, must not resist them, yet there is a God that will call them to an account, that will triumph over them upon their own dunghill; and the earth they are kings of, is, in the eye of God, no better. This is general only; it is particularly foretold, (v. 22.) that they shall be gathered together as prisoners; convicted, condemned prisoners are gathered in the pit, or dungeon, and though they cannot, dare not, must not resist them, the kings and high ones, who took all possible liberty themselves, and took a pride and pleasure in shutting up others, shall now be themselves shut up. Let not the free man glory in his freedom, any more than the strong man in his strength, for he knows not what restraints he is reserved for; but after many days they shall be visited. Either, [1.] They shall be visited in wrath; it is the same word, in another form, that is used, v. 21. The Lord shall punish them; they shall be reserved to the day of execution, as condemned prisoners are, and as fallen angels are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, Jude 6. Let this account for the delays of divine vengeance; sentence is not executed speedily, because execution-day does not always come to persons in a month or after many days; but it is certain, that the wicked is reserved for the day of destruction, and is therefore preserved in the mean time, but shall be brought forth to the day of wrath, Job xxi. 50. Let us therefore judge nothing before the time. [2.] They shall be visited in mercy, and be discharged from their imprisonment, and shall again obtain, if not their liberty, at least such liberty as befitted their character in his conquest made many kings and princes his captives, and kept them in the dungeon in Babylon, and, among the rest, Jehoiachin King of Judah; but, after many days, when his head was laid, his son visited them, and granted (as should seem) some reviving to them all in their bondage; for it is made an instance of his particular kindness to Jehoiachin, that he set his throne above the throne of the rest of the kings that were with him, Jer. lii. 52. If we apply it to the general state of mankind, it denotes a revolution of conditions; those that were high are punished, those that were punished are relieved, after many days; that none in this world may be secure, though their condition be ever so prosperous, nor any despair, though their condition be ever so deplorable.

3. Glory to God in all this, v. 23. When all this comes to pass, when the proud enemies of God's church are humbled and brought down, (1.) Then it shall appear, beyond contradiction, that the Lord reigns; which is always true, but not always evident. When the kings of the earth are punished for their tyranny and oppression, then it is proclaimed to all the world, that God reigns. King above them, by whom they are conquerable. King over them, to whom they are accountable; he reigns as Lord of hosts, of all hosts, of their hosts; that he reigns in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem: in his church, for the honour and welfare of that, pursuant to the promises on which that is founded, reigns in his word and ordinances; that he is prevalent over his enemies before all his saints, especially before his ministers, the elders of his church, who have their eye upon all the outgoings of his power and providence, and, in all these events, observe his hand. God's ancients, the old disciples, the experienced Christians, that have often, when they have been perplexed, gone into the sanctuary of God in Zion and Jerusalem, and acquainted themselves with his manifestations of himself there, they shall see more than others of God's dominion and sovereignty in these operations of his providence. (2.) Then it shall appear, beyond comparison, that he reigns gloriously, in such brightness and lustre, that as heaven shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, as the lesser lights are eclipsed and extinguished by the greater. Great men, who thought themselves to have as bright a lustre as and as vast a dominion, as the sun and moon, shall be ashamed when God appears above them, much more when he appears against them: then shall they be face to face with shame, that they may see God's name. The eastern nations worshipped the sun and moon; but when God shall appear so gloriously for his people against his and their enemies, all these pretended deities shall be ashamed that ever they received the homage of their deduced worshippers. The glory of the Creator infinitely outshines the glory of the brightest creatures. In the great day, when the Judge of heaven and earth shall shine forth in his glory, the sun shall by his transcendent lustre be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood.

CHAP. XXV. After the threats and wrath in the foregoing chapter, we have here, 1. Thankful praises for what God had done, which the prophet, in the name of the church, offers up to God, and teaches us to offer the like, v. 1. 2. 11. Precious promises of what God would yet further do for his church, especially in the grace of the gospel, v. 6. 8. 11. The church's triumph in God over her enemies thereupon, v. 8. 11. This chapter looks as pleasantly upon the church as the former looked dreadfully upon the world.

1. O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name: for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. 2. For thou hast made of a city a heap; of a defended city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. 3. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. 4. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. 5. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.

It was said, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that the Lord of hosts shall reign gloriously; and in compliance with that, the prophet here speaks of the glorious majesty of his kingdom, (Ps. civy. 12.) and gives him the glory of it; and however it might have an accomplishment in the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity there, it seems to look further, to the praises that should be offered up to God by the gospel-church, for Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, and the comforts he has provided for all believers. Here,

I. The prophet determines to praise God himself: for they that would stir up others, should in the first place stir up themselves, to praise God: (v. 1.) "O Lord, thou art my God, a God who
unt with me." When God is punishing the kings of the earth upon the earth, and making them tremble b. fore him, a poor psalmist says (xxv. 2): "And with an humble boldness, say, O Lord, thou art my God; and therefore I will exalt thee. I will praise thy name. Those that have the Lord for their God, are obliged to praise him; for therefore he took us to be his people, that we might go into him for a name, and for a praise. Jer. xiii. 11. In praise of him not that we can make him higher than he is; but we must make him to appear to ourselves and others higher than he does. See Exod. xvi. 2.

II. He pleases himself with the thought that others also shall be brought to praise God; (v. 3) "Therefore, because of the desolations thou hast made in the earth by the providence, (Ps. xlviii. 8.) and to subdue tyranny thou hast taken on thine and thy church's enemies, therefore shall the strong people glorify thee in concert, and the city (the metropolis) "of the terrible nations" (or the cities of such nations) "shall fear thee." This may be understood, 1. Of those people that have been strong and terrible against God; those that have been enemies to God's kingdom, and have fought against the interests of it with a great deal of strength and terror, which shall end in terror and glory; God by joining with his people in his service, or, at least, convinced, so as to own themselves conquered. Those that had been the terror of the mighty, shall be forced to tremble before the judgments of God, and call in vain to rocks and mountains to hide them. Or, 2. Of those that shall be now made strong and terrible for God and him, through before they were weak and trampled upon. He shall so visibly appear for them, and with them, that fear God and glorify him, that all shall acknowledge them a strong people, and shall stand in awe of them. There was a time when many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of the Jews fell upon them, (Esther vii. 17.) and when they that knew their God, were strong, and did exploit, (Dan. xi. 32.) for which they glorify God.

III. He observes what is, and ought to be, the matter of this praise; we and others must extol God, and praise him for,

1. He has done wonders according to the counsel of his own will; (v. 1) We extol God by admiring what he has done as truly wonderful; wonderful helper, beyond what any creature could perform; and wonderful proofs of his goodness and power, beyond what such sinful creatures as we are could expect. These wonderful things, which are new and surprising to us, and altogether unthought of, are, according to his counsels of old, devised by his wisdom, and designed for his own glory, and the comfort of his people. All the operations of providence are acts of God's eternal counsels, (and these faithfulness and truth itself,) and consistent with his attributes, consistent with one another, and sure to be accomplished in their season.

2. He has in particular humbled the pride, and broken the power, of the mighty ones of the earth; (v. 2) "Thou hast made of a city, of many a city, a habitation of rubbish; of many a defended city, that the wise and strong walled over by nature and art, and the multitude and strength of their pride, of them thou hast made a ruin." What created strength can hold out against Omnipotence? "Many a city, so richly built, that it might be called a palace, and so much frequented and visited by persons of the best rank from all parts, that it might be called a palace of strangers, than hast made to be no city; it is levelled with the ground, and not one stone left upon another, and it shall never be built again." This has been the case of many cities in divers parts of the world, and is common to all. Even to distant cities, that are no more frequented or visited by persons of rank or station, that might be called cities of gods, are now like the dunghill, and in our own nation particularly; cities that flourished once, are gone to decay, and lost, and it is certain that they shall be no more inhabited (as cities generally are out of the earth) where they stood. How many of the cities of Israel have long since been heaps and ruins! God hereby teaches us, that here we have no continuing city, and must therefore seek one to come, which will never be a ruin, or go to decay.

3. He has seasonably relieved and succoured his necessities and distressed people; (v. 4) Thou shalt be my praise, thou shalt be my praise, when he needeth strength, and when his distress drives him to God. And as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults: he is a Refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a Shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient Protection to his people in all weathers, both hot and cold, wet and dry; the armour of God is capable thus to protect us. But (v. 5) Thou shalt be my praise, when he is in need and distress, and when his distress drives him to God. And as he strengthens them against their inward decays, so he shelters them from outward assaults: he is a Refuge from the storm of rain or hail, and a Shadow from the scorching heat of the sun in summer. God is a sufficient Protection to his people in all weathers, both hot and cold, wet and dry; the armour of God is capable thus to protect us.
6. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

If we suppose (as many do) that this refers to the great joy that should be in Zion and Jerusalem, either when the army of the Assyrians was routed by an angel, or when the Jews were released out of their captivity in Babylon, or upon occasion of some other equally surprising deliverance; yet we cannot avoid making it to look further, to the grace of the gospel, and the glory which is the crown and consummation of that grace; for it is at our resurrection that all things must first be brought to pass; then and not till then, (if we may believe St. Paul,) it shall have its full accomplishment; death is swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. xv. 54. This is a key to the rest of the promises here connected together. And so we have here a prophecy of the salvation and the grace brought unto us by Jesus Christ, into which the prophets inquired, and searched diligently, 1 Pet. ii. 10.

1. That the grace of the gospel should be a royal feast for all people; not like that of Ahasuerus, which was intended only to show the grandeur of the master of the feast; (Esther i. 4.) for this is intended to gratify the guests, and therefore, whereas all there was for show, all here is for substance. The preparations made in the gospel for the kind reception of penitents and suppliants with God, are often in the New Testament set forth by the similitude of a feast; as Matth. xxii. 1, &c. which seems to be borrowed from this here. (1.) God himself is the Master of the feast, and, we may be sure, he prepares him himself, as becomes him to give, rather than as becomes us to receive. The Lord of hosts makes this feast. (2.) The guests invited are all people. Gentiles as well as Jews. (3.) The guesthouse is everywhere. There is enough for all, and whoever will, may come, and take freely, even those that are gathered out of the highways and the hedges. (3.) The place is mount Zion; thence the preaching of the gospel takes rise, the preachers must begin at Jerusalem. The gospel-church is the Jerusalem that is above, there this feast is made, and to it all the invited guests are called. (4.) The principal and eminently so fine; a feast which supposes abundance and variety; it is a continual feast to believers, it is their own guilt if it be not. It is a feast of fat things and full of marrow; so richishing, so nourishing, are the comforts of the gospel to all those that feast upon them, and digest them. The returning prodigal was entertained with the fatted calf and the best. (5.) The price of all this is paid, not by us, with God, with which his soul is satisfied as with narrow and fasting. It is a feast of wines on the lees; the strongest-bodied wines, that have been kept long upon the lees, and then are well refined from them, so that they are clear and fine. There is that in the gospel, which, like wine soberly used, makes glad the heart, and raises the spirits, and is fit for those that are of a heavy heart, being under convictions of sin, and mourning for it, that they may drink, and forget their misery, (for that is the proper use of wine, it is a cordial for those that need it, Prov. xxxi. 6, 7.) may be of good cheer, knowing that their sins are forgiven, and may be vigorous in their spiritual work and warfare, as a strong man refreshed with wine.

2. That the world should be freed from that darkness of ignorance and mistake, in the midst of which it has been so long lost and buried; (v. 7.) He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering, (the covering of all faces, with which all people are covered, (heedwinked or blindfolded,) so that they cannot see their way, nor go about their work, and by reason of which they wander endlessly. Their faces are covered as men condemned, or as dead men. There is a veil spread over all nations, to all they sat in darkness and in nothing, which the Jews themselves, among whom God was known, had a veil upon their hearts, 2 Cor. iii. 13. But this veil the Lord will destroy, by the light of his gospel shining in the world, and the power of his spirit opening men's eyes to receive it. He will raise these to spiritual life, that had long been dead in trespasses and sins.

3. That death should be conquered, the power of it broken, and the property of it altered; He will swallow up death in victory, v. 8. (1.) Christ will come upon earth in his second coming, when death will break its bands, its bars, asunder, and cast away all its cords. The grave seemed to swallow him up, but really he swallowed it up. (2.) The happiness of the saints shall be cut off the reach of death, which puts a period to all the enjoyments of this world, imbibers them, and stains the beauty of them. (3.) Believers may triumph over death, and look up in a conquered enemy; O death, where is thy sting? (4.) When the dead bodies of the saints shall be raised at the great day, and their mortality swallowed up of life, then death will be for ever swallowed up of victory; and it is the last enemy. 4. That grief shall be banished, and there shall be perfect and endless joy; The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces. Those that mourn for sin, shall be comforted, and have their consciences pacified. In the covenant of grace there shall be that provided, which is sufficient to balance all the sorrows of this present time, to wipe away our tears, and to refresh us. Those particularly that suffer for Christ, shall have consolations abounding as their afflictions do abound. But in the joys of heaven, and no where short of them, will fully be all their griefs and sorrows. It is then fittingly said, that it is God that shall wipe away all tears, Rev. xvi. 17.—xxiv. 4. And therefore there shall be no more sorrow, because there shall be no more death. The hope of this should now wipe away all excessive tears, all the weeping that hinders sowing.

5. That all the reproach cast upon religion and the serious professors of it, should be for ever rolled away; The rebukes characterized, which they have borne in the soul, with God, by which his face was covered, the insolence and cruelty with which their persecutors have triumphed on them and trodden them down, shall be taken away. Their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, in the view of all the world, who shall be convinced they are not such as they have been invincibly characterized, which they have suffered from the injuries done them, as such shall be wrought out. Sometimes in this world God does that for his people, which takes away their reproach from among men. However, it will be done effectually at the great day, for the Lord has spoken it, who can, and will, make it good. Let us patiently bear sorrow and shame now, and improve both; for shortly both will be done away.

9. And it shall be said in that day, Lo,
this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. 10. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dung-hill. 11. And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim; and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. 12. And the fortress of the high fortified walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.

Here is,  
I. The welcome which the church shall give to these blessings promised in the foregoing verses; (v. 9.) It shall be said in that day, with a humble, holy triumph and exultation, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him! Thus will the deliverance of the church out of long and sore troubles be celebrated; thus will it be as life from the dead. With such a retrospect of joy and praise will those entertain the glad tidings of the Redeemer, who looked for him, and for redemption in Jerusalem by him; and with such a triumphant song as this, will glorified saints enter into the joy of the Lord. 1. God himself must have the glory of all; "Lo, this is our God, this is the Lord." This which is done, is his doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Herein he hath displayed his power, and magnified his own wisdom, power, and goodness. Herein he has done for us like our God, a God in covenant with us, and whom we serve." Note, Our triumphs must not terminate in what God does for us, and gives to us; but must pass through them to himself, who is the Author and Giver of them; This is our God. Have any of the nations of the earth such a God to trust to? No, their rock is not as Rock; there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun. (2.) The longer it has been expected, the more welcome it is. "This is he whom we have waited for, in dependence upon his word of promise, and a full assurance that he would come in the set time, in due time, and therefore we were willing to wait his time. And now we find it is not in vain to wait for him; for the mercy comes at last, with an abundant recompense for the delay." (3.) It is matter of joy unspeakable; "We will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. We that share in the benefits of it will concur in the joyful thanksgivings for it." (4.) It is an encouragement to hope for the continuance and perfection of this salvation; We have waited for him, and he will save us, will carry on what he has begun; for, as for God, our God, he will work in a manner of further blessings for the securing and perpetuating of these. 1. The power of God shall be engaged on them, and shall continue to take their part; in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, v. 10. The church and people of God shall have continued proofs of God’s presence with them, and residence among them, his hand shall be continually stretched out to them, to protect and guard them, and continually stretched out to them, for their supply. Mount Zion is his rest for ever; here he will dwell.

2. The power of their enemies, that is engaged against them, shall be broken. Moab is here put for all the adversaries of God’s people, that are vexatious to them; they shall all be trodden down, or crushed, for then they beat out the corn by trampling it, and shall be thrown out as straw to the dung-hill, being good for nothing else. God having caused his hand to rest upon this mountain, it shall not be a hand that hangs down, or is folded up, feeble and inactive; but he shall spread forth his hands, in the midst of his people, like one that swims; which intimates that he will employ and exert his power for them vigorously, that he will be doing for them on all sides; that he will easily and effectually put by the opposition that is given to his gracious intentions for them, and thereby further and push forward his good work among them; and that he will be continually active on their behalf, for so the swimmer is. It is foretold, particularly, what he shall do for them; (1.) He shall bring down the pride of their souls (which Moab was notoriously guilty of, ch. xvi. 6.) by one humbling judgment after another, stripping them of that which they are proud of. (2.) He shall bring down the spoils of their hands, shall take from them that which they have get by spoil and rapine; he shall bring down the arms of their hands, which are lifted up against God’s Israel; he shall quite break their power, and disable them to do mischief. (3.) He shall ruin all their fortifications. v. 12. Moab has his walls, and his high forts, with which he hopes to secure himself, and from which he designs to annoy the people of God; but God shall bring them all down, lay them low, bring them to the ground, to the dust; and so they who trusted to them will be left exposed. There is no fortress impregnable to God’s power. There is no high, but the arm of the Lord can overtop it, and bring it down. This destruction of Moab is typical of Christ’s victory over death, (spoken of v. 8.) his spoiling principalties and powers in his cross, (Col. ii. 15.) his pulling down of Satan’s strong holds by the preaching of his gospel, (2 Cor. x. 4.) and his reigning till all his enemies be made his footstool, Ps. cx. 1.

CHAP. XXVI.

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God had engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies, are celebrated: it is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgiving, when he is coming to take his place with his people, and it appears that the people of God are here taught, I. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general, and of every particular member of it, under the divine protection, v. 1. - 4. II. To triumph in God’s providences and providence, v. 5. - 11. III. To triumph in God, and wait for him, in the worst and darkest times, v. 7. - 9. IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive, v. 10. - 11. V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good, (v. 12, 14.) engaging themselves to continue in his service, v. 13. VI. To recollect the providences of God that had respected them in the past, and to regulate and conduct their under those providences, v. 15. - 18. VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them, (v. 19.) and to retire in the expectation of it. v. 21. And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God’s people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world are come.

1. In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. 2. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. 4. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.
To the prophecies of gospel-grace very fitting is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory, and take to ourselves the comfort, of that grace: In that day, the gospel-day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old Testament church was typical of, (to some of which perhaps this has a primary reference,) in that day, this song shall be sung; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung in the land of Judah, which was a figure of the gospel-church; for the gospel-covenant is said to be made with the house of Judah, Heb. viii. 8.

Glorious things are here said of the church of God:
1. That it is strongly fortified against those that are without, and keeps the peace of all that are within, is a matter incorporated by the charter of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment; it is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a Wall of fire round about it; so strong that none would have believed that an enemy could ever have entered into the gates of Jerusalem, Lam. iv. 12. The church is a strong city, for it has walls and bulwarks, or counterscarps, and those of God's own appointing; for he has, in his promise, appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are designed for salvation will find that to be their protection, 1 Pet. i. 4.

2. That it is not only replenished with those that are within, and they are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, Zech. xii. 5. The gates are here ordered to be opened, that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in; (v. 2.) they had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now they are driven to and fro, and they are to go in to enter in again. Or, There is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God has done great things for any place or people, he expects that they should render according to the bounty done unto them; they should be kind to his people, and take them under their protection, and right of fellowship, (v. 3.) It is (not) only that they are members of the church, of the church of God, a term of which will have a commanding influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles, fixed in the head, will produce good resolutions in the heart, and good practices in the life. (2.) It is the interest of states to countenance such, and court them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

3. That all who belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour. (1.) This is here the matter of a promise; (v. 3.) Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace, inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events; this peace shall be his portion; (v. 4.) His peace and quietness, the possession of, (in the church,) shall be set upon God, because it trusts in him. It is the character of every good man, that he trusts in God; puts himself under his guidance and government, and depends upon him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. They that trust in God, must have their minds stayed upon him; must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction, as is staying upon God, because it trusts in him. It is the character of every good man, that he trusts in God; puts himself under his guidance and government, and depends upon him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. They that trust in God, must have their minds stayed upon him; must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction, as is staying upon God, because it trusts in him. Such as do so, God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad, they shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are fixed, trusting in the Lord, Ps. cxlix. 7. (2.) It is the matter of a precept; (v. 4.) Let us make ourselves easy by trusting in the Lord for ever; since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise, but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever, at all times, when you have nothing to do but to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion, which will be for ever. Whatever we trust to the world for, it will be but for a moment; all we expect from it, is confined within the limits of time; but what we trust in God for, will last as long as we shall last. For in the Lord Jehovah, Jehovah, in him who was, and is, and is to come, there is a rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon; and the house built on that rock will not be destroyed by a storm of persecution. They that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive from him, everlasting strength, strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is for ever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away or change their confidence.

5. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. 6. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy. 7. The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

8. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. 9. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. 10. Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. 11. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.

Here the prophet further encourages us to trust in the Lord for ever, and continue waiting on him, for, 1. He will make humble souls that trust in him, to triumph over their proud enemies; (v. 5, 6.) that exalt themselves shall be abased, for he brings down them that dwell on high; wherein they dwell proudly, he is, and will be, above them; even the lofty city, Babylon itself, or Nineveh, he lays it low, ch. xxvi. 12. He can do it, be it ever so fortified. He has often done it; he will do it, for he resists the proud, it is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by looking on the proud, and abusing them, Job xl. 12. But, on the contrary, they that humble themselves shall be exalted; for the feet of the poor shall tread upon the lofty cities, v. 6. He does not say, Great cities shall be for ever cut off; but, When God will have it done, even the feet of the poor shall do it; (Mal. iv. 3.) Ye shall tread down the wicked; come, set your feet on the necks of these kings. See Ps. cxlix. 6. Rom. xvi. 20.

II. He takes cognizance of the way of his people, and has delight in it; (v. 7.) The way of
ISAIAH, XXVI.

the just is evenness; so it may be read it is their endeavour and constant care to walk with God in an even course of obedience and holy conversa-
tion; My foot stands in an even place, goes in an even path, Ps. xxxii. 12. And it is their hap-
piness, that God makes their way plain and easy before them; Thou, most upright, dost level, or make even the path of the just, by preventing or removing those things that would be stumblingblocks to them, Ps. xxxvi. 11, 12. God weights it; (so we read it;) he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the up-
right, God will show himself upright.

III. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires toward him, in the darkest and most discouraging times, v. 8, 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even then when God has frowned upon them: 1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him; "In the way of thy judgments we have still waited for thee; when thou hast corrected us, we have looked to no other hand than thine to relieve us," as the servant looks only to the hand of his master, till he have mercy upon him, Ps. cxlviii. 2. We cannot stop our looking to God, but continue asking. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a road of judgments, (so the word sig-
nifies,) yet we must not be weary, but continue waiting. 2. To send up holy desires toward him; our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of count with our religion, nor turn us away from God; still the desire of our soul must be to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and in the night, the darkest, longest night of affliction, with our souls we must desire him. (1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire that that may be glorified, whatever be-
comes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for; "Father, glorify thy name, and we are satisfied." (2.) Our great con-
fort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great sup-
port and pleasure; and though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be to-
ward the remembrance of him, and we must take
pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind. (3.) Our desires toward God must be in-
ward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him, (Ps. xlix. 1.) and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought, and the closest appli-
cation of mind, we must seek him. We make noth-
ing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it. (4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction, our desires must be toward God, as our Sun and Shield; for however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the best is to be found out of God's providence, but in himself. If our desires be indeed toward God, we must evi-
dence it by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. They that would seek God, and find him, must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come ever so early, we shall find him ready to receive us. God will not suffer his dearly beloved and depending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him: When thy judgments are upon the earth, laying all waste, then we have reason to ex-
pect that not only God's professing people, but even the inhabitants of the world will learn right-
ousness; will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknow-
ledge God's righteousness in punishing them; will repent of their own uprightness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to pro-
duce this effect; and though many continue obsti-
nate, yet some, even of the inhabitants of the world, will profit by this discipline, and will learn right-
ousness; surely they will, they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of affliction is, to teach them righteousness; and blessed is the man from whom God chastises him, though he will not see, Diceite justitium, misertis, et non temere divers—Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from desiring the gods. Virg.

V. Those are wicked indeed, that will not be wrought upon by the favourable methods God takes to reduce and reform them; and it is necessary that God should deal with them in a severe way by his judgments, which shall prevail to humble those that would not otherwise be humbled. Observe,

1. How sinners walk contrary to God, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reforma-
tion, and to answer the intentions of them, v. 10.

(1.) Favour is showed to them; they receive many mercies from God, he causes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, upon them, nay he predisposes them, and in many respects blesses them, but does not visit them, v. 10. If God's judgments continue long, if it be a road of judg-
ments, (so the word signifies,) yet we must not be weary, but continue waiting. 2. To send up holy desires toward him; our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of count with our religion, nor turn us away from God; still the desire of our soul must be to his name, and to the remembrance of him; and in the night, the darkest, longest night of affliction, with our souls we must desire him. (1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire that that may be glorified, whatever be-
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pect that not only God's professing people, but even the inhabitants of the world will learn right-
ousness; will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknow-
ledge God's righteousness in punishing them; will
for when he judges, he will overcome; They will not see, but they shall see; they shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel, what now they will not believe, That it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it, and the deliverances in which God will plead his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy toward them, and the ill usage of such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill will to God's people, have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable is it; and sooner or later, they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, They shall see, and be confounded for the zeal of the people, by the zeal God will show for his people; when the Lord's people are in danger, they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people, and would not. Their doom therefore is, that, since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, the fire of his enemies shall devour them, that fire which is prepared for his enemies, and with which they shall be devoured, the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, That is enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

12. Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. 13. O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. 14. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. 15. Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified; thou hast removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. 16. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. 17. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. 18. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen. 19. Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

The prophet, in these verses, looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both; and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe, 1. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church, he finds, 1. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them, and had done great things for them; (v. 12.) Thou hast wrought all our works in us, or for us. Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to God's good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts, if at any time they be there, and that works in us both to will and to do his good pleasure. Act. 17. 25. Being actuated, we act. And if any kindness be showed us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us; and every creature, every favor, that are any way serviceable to our comfort, it is he that makes them to be so. Sometimes he makes that to work for us, which seemed to make against us.

In particular, (v. 13.) Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, so that a little one has become a thousand; in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterward in Canaan; so that they filled the land; and in this there was a rebuke of the multitudes of people is the honour of the people, and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is therefore to be rejoiced in, because it is the increase of these that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his rebukes. (1.) The neighbouring nations had sometimes expressed them, and tyrannized over them; (v. 15.) O Lord our God, thou hast laid the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain, (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that other lords, beside thee, have had dominion over us. Not only in the day of the Judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hands of their enemies; or rather, by their iniquities they sold themselves, ch. lii. 2-5. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service and the service of the kingdoms of the world. It may be understood, that the Lord's enemies, the sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitions and laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols Boads, lords,) had dominion over them, beside God. But now they promise that it shall be no more: "From henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name; we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed." The same may be our penitent reflection, Other lords, beside God, have had dominion over us; every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and it has been long enough, and too long, that we have, thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same therefore must be our plea of resolution, that henceforth we will make mention of God's name only, and to him only; that we will keep close to God and to our duty, and never desert it.

(2.) They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies; (v. 15.) The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and destroyed; and all the review and reproofs is as to the utmost parts of heaven, as is threatened, Deut. xxx. 4.—xxxviii. 64. But observe, betwixt the mention of the increasing of them, and that of the removing of them, it is said, Thou art glorified; for
the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins, are for his honour, as well as the mercy he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

(3.) He remembers that when they were thus oppressed, and carried captive, they cried unto God; which was a good evidence that they neither had quite forsaken him, nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under; (v. 16.) Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. This is usual with the psalmists of Israel, and frequent with the prophets of the judges; when other lords had dominion over them, they humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous, 2 Chron. xii. 6. See here, [1.] The need we have of afflictions; they are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, In trouble they have visited thee, it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him at all; and when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours. [2.] The benefit we often have by afflictions; they bring us to God, quicken us to our duty, and show us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God, now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him, before, prayer came dry, but now they have poured out prayer; it comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out a secret prayer; so the margin; praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret prayer; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him, than we can be in public. In affliction, those will seek God early, who before sought him slowly, Hos. v. 18. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer; "They poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out, when thy chastening was upon them." But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

(4.) He complains that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but that they had not been successful, v. 17, 18.

[1.] They had the threes and pangs they dreaded; "We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs. We have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts;" as when Moses came to deliver Israel, the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. It was a comfort and satisfaction to them, in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight; he was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers; Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee, Ps. xli. 1. It was a thing of great advantage to them when they were presented before the Lord with their complaints and petitions, they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail.

[2.] They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for; "We have been with child; we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes, and have been in travail with ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery, John xvi. 21. But alas, we have as it were brought forth wind; it has proved a false conception, our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travailling ones; we have had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved fruitless; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, for ourselves or for our friends and allies; but neither have made our own case and theirs worse; neither have inhabited the world, whom we have been contending with, fallen before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and arrogant as ever." Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man; and yet for a great while may suffer, and the point not be gained.

(5.) His prayers and hopes are very pleasant. In general, " Thou wilt ordain peace for us," (v. 12.) all that good which the necessity of our case calls for, What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining. And we may comfort ourselves with this, That what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the end of these men is peace. And if God by his Spirit will do all our works in us, he will ordain peace for us; for the work of righteousness shall be peace. And that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God ordains; for to those that have it, it shall be unchangeable as the ordinances of the day and of the night. And from what God has done for us, we may encourage ourselves; And it is not to hope that he will yet further do us good, "Thou hast visited us, the work of thy hands, and therefore wilt;" (Ps. x. 17.) and when this peace is ordained for us, then by thee only will we make mention of thy name; (v. 13.) we will give the glory of it to thee only, and not to any other. And we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so. We cannot praise God's name, but by his strength.

Two things in particular the prophet here computes among the chief blessings of God.

1. The amazing ruin of her enemies; (v. 14.) They are dead, those other lords that have had dominion over us; their power is irrecoverably broken, they are quite cut off and extinguished; and they shall not live, shall never be able to hold up the head any more. Being deceased, they shall not rise, but, like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews, they shall sink like a stone. Because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore, in pursuance of that sentence, God himself has visited them in wrath, as a righteous Judge, and has cut off both the men themselves, (he has destroyed them,) and the remembrance of them; they and their names are buried together in the dust. He has made all their memory to perish; they are either forgotten, or made mention of with detestation. Note, The cause that is made by God and his kingdom against his enemies, though it may prosper awhile, will certainly sink at last, and all that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors, comparing this with v. 19. infer, that the resurrection of the dead belongs to the Jews only, and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better; that all who are in Christ shall rise, will die, and be buried, and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death.

2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, v. 19. Though the church rejoices not in the birth of the man-child, of which she travailed in pain, but has as it were brought forth wind, (v. 18.) yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equiva- lent; They that are dead shall live; and this will appear sooner than they expected; and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death.

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All they arise. If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time is come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcase to which the eagles are gathered together. Of the dead also, God's favour shall be given to raise them. And we shall see them all raised from the grave. If you are cast down today, you must consider that you may be raised again in a short time. 5. When the Gentiles shall live, with my body they shall arise; they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body; (says he;) they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of him. 20. And as the spring-dews, that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it, to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again, and the earth shall cast out the dead, as it casts the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored, neither the dew of heaven, nor the fatness of the earth; neither shall any of the servants of God suffer to perish in it. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated, (1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, _Hor. Hebr. in Job_ xii. 24. The Gentiles shall live, with my body they shall arise; they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body; (says he;) they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall rise as part of him. 20. To the last resurrection; when dead saints shall live, and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he rose as the First-Fruits, and believers shall rise by virtue of their union with him, and their communion in his resurrection.

20. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain. These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song, which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of others. Dr. Lightfoot makes, Come, and enter into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail. Exod. ix. 21. (1.) "Come into chambers of distinction; come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babelon. Come out from among them, and be ye separate," 2 Cor. vi. 17, Rev. xvii. 4. 13. If God has set apart them that are holy for himself, they ought to set themselves apart. (2.) Into chambers of defence; in which, by the secrecy, of them, or the strength, you may be safe in the worst of times.

The attributes of God are the secret of his tabernacle, Ps. xxvii. 5. His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, Prov. xviii. 10. We must, by faith, find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves with a holy security and serenity of mind, we must put ourselves under the divine protection. Come, as Noah into the ark, for he shut the doors about him; when dangers are threatening, it is good for us to retire by the brook Cherith. (3.) Into chambers of devotion; "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, Matth. vi. 6. Be private with God; enter into thy chamber, to examine thyself and commune with thy own heart, to pray, and humble thyself before God." This work is to be done in times of distress and danger; and thus we hide ourselves; we must seek a refuge from the violence and wrath of God, and our enemies will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors, when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, the blood on the door-posts will not secure them. So must Rahab and her family, when Jericho is destroyed. Those are most safe, that are least seen. Qui bene latuit, bene vixit—He has lived well, who has kept hid his den. (4.) Hold up thy hand, Isa. viii. 10. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time; that they should not long be in any fright or peril; "Hide thyself for a moment, the smallest part of time we can conceive, like an atom of matter; nay, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a little moment, and that with a quick too, as it were, for a little moment, less than you think of; when it is over, it will seem as going to you, you will wonder how it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment; the indignation will presently be overpast; the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage, which force you to abscend; when the wicked rise, a man is hid. This will soon be over, God will cut them off, will break their power, defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement." When Athanasius was banished Alexandria by an edict of Julian, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bid them be of good cheer; _Nubicula est quia, cito_ _pertransibit—It is a little cloud that will soon blow over. You shall have tribulation ten days; that is all, Rev. ii. 10. This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

3. He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution, v. 21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed. Here is, (1.) The judgment set, and process issued out; _The Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, in angry, unfavourable ways._ There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but, though they all combine in it, though hand in hand to carry it on, yet it shall not go unpunished. Beside the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men go on with such great obstinacy, at about them, when they have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 13. God comes out of his place, to punish; he shows himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the firmament of his power, from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace; he is raised up out of his holy habitation, where he seemed before to conceal himself; and now he will do something great, the product of his wise; just, and secret counsels; as a prince that goes to take the chair, or take

_Vol. IV.—Q_
the field, Zech. ii. 13. Some observe, that God's place is the mercy-seat, there he delights to be; when he punishes, he comes out of his place, for he has no pleasure in the death of sinners. (2.) The criminals convicted by the notorious evidence of the fact; The earth shall disclose her blood; the innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which has been shed upon the earth like water, and has soaked into it, and been concealed and covered by it, shall now be brought to light, and brought into account; for God will make imputation for it, and will give those that shed it blood to drink, for they are worthy. Secret murderers, and other secret wickednesses, shall be discovered, sooner or later. And the slain which the earth has long covered, she shall no longer cover, but they shall be produced as evidence against the murderers. The voice of Abel's blood cries from the earth, Gen. iv. 10, 11. Those sins which seem to have been buried in oblivion, will be called to mind, and called over again, when the day of reckoning comes. Let God's people therefore wait awhile with patience, for, behold, the Judge stands before the door.

CHAP. XXVII.

In this chapter, the prophet goes on to shew, I. What great things God would do for his church and people, which should soon shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib, and the destruction of the Assyrian army; but it is expressed generally, for the encouragement of the church in after ages, with reference to the power and prevalence of her enemies. 1. That proud oppressors should be reckoned with, v. 1. 2. That the slayer taken of the church, and of God's vineyard, v. 2. 3. That God would let fall his controversy with the people, upon their return to him, v. 4. 5. That he would greatly multiply and increase them, v. 6. That as to their afflictions, the property of them should be altered; (v. 7.) they should be mitigated and moderated, (v. 8.) and sanctified, v. 9. That though the church might be laid waste, and made desolate, for a time, (v. 10.) yet she should afterwards be gathered together again, v. 12. 13. II. All this is applicable to the grace of the gospel, and God's promises to, and providences concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

1. IN that day the Lord, with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. 2. In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. 3. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. 4. Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. 5. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. 6. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy.

1. Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church; (v. 1.) tribulation to them that trouble it. 2 Thess. i. 6. When the Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth, (ch. xxvi. 21.) he will be sure to punish leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea; every proud, oppressing tyrant, that is the terror of the mighty, and, like the leviathan, is so fierce, that none dare stir him up, and his heart as hard as a stone, and when he raises up himself, the mighty are afraid, Job xli. 10, 24, 25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was, in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his; and Antiochus in his; so Pharaoh had been formerly, and he is called leviathan, and the dragon, P. xlvii. 14. ch. ii. 9. Ezek. xxxix. 3. The New Testament church has had its leviathanisms, we read of a people as blind as leviathan, ready to devour souls with their teeth. Those malignant persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan, for bulk and strength, and the mighty bliste they make in the world; to dragons, for their rage and fury; to serpents, piercing serpents, penetrating in their consuls, quick in their motions, which, if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole globe; crossing like a bar, so the margin, standing in the way of all his neighbours, and obstructing them; to crooked serpents, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are, in God's account, as dragons and serpents, and plagues of mankind; and the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with, and call to an account, and therefore the great God will take the doing of it into his own hands.

He shall slay leviathan, and strong sword, wherewith to do execution upon them, when the measure of their iniquity is full, and their day is come to fall. It is emphatically expressed in the original; The Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, this cruel criminal, and it shall be capital punishment; he shall slay the dragon, that is in the sea; for the wages of his sin is death. This shall not only be a prevention of his doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God has a strong sword for the doing of this; variety of judgments, sufficient to humble the proud, and break the most powerful, of his enemies; and he will do it when the day of execution comes. In that day, he will punish; his day which is coming P. xxxvii. 13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out, the prince of this world, but, with his strong sword, the virtue of his death, and the preaching of his gospel, he does, and will, destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, that great leviathan, dragon, serpent, and wickedness, which shall be bound, that he may not deceive the nations, and that is a punishment to him, Rev. xx. 2. 3. And, at length, for deceiving the nations, he shall be cast into the lake of fire, Rev. xx. 10.

2. Of mercy to the church; in that same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful; let those that attend her, sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances; let it be sung in her assemblies. 1. That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, v. 2. 3. She is, in God's eye, a vineyard of red wine. The world is as a fruitless, worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has got out care and provision for it, and is guarded over, and from which precious fruits are gathered, where with they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of red wine, yielding the best and choicest grapes; intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, ch. v. 4.

Now God takes care, (1.) Of the safety of this vineyard; I the Lord do keep it. He speaks this,
as glorying in it, that he is, and has undertaken to be, the Keeper of Israel: those that bring forth fruit to God, are, and shall be always, under his protection. Is the speaker, or does he assume the character that shall be so? I the Lord, that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, I do keep it, lest any hurt it; I will keep it night and day. God’s vineyard in this world lies much exposed to injury; there are many that would hurt it, would tread it down, and lie waste; (Ps. lxxx. 13.) but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to his vineyard that is, the church, to be done good out of it. He will keep it constantly, night and day; and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to do it a mischief. God will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God’s people shall be preserved, not only from the pestilence that worketh in darkness; but from the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. Ps. xci. 6. This vineyard shall be well fenced. 

2. That though sometimes he contends with his people, yet, upon their submission, he will be reconciled to them, v. 4, 5. Fury is not in him toward his vineyard; though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he does not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true, if he find in it briers and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him, (as indeed that in the vineyard, which is not for him, is against him,) he will tread them down, and burn them; but otherwise, “If I am angry with my people, they know what course to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so take hold of my strength with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will turn away my wrath from them, and will not deal with them after their inward thoughts. God sees the sins of his people, and is displeased with them; but, upon their repentance, he turns away his wrath.

This may very well be construed as a summary of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment. (1.) Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man; for here is a battle fought to the death. It is an old quarrel, ever since sin first entered; it is, on God’s part, a righteous quarrel, but, on man’s part, most unrighteous. (2.) Here is a gracious invitation given us to make up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated; “Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God, take hold on his strength, on his strong arm, which is lifted up against the enemy, and peace to be made.” It is an arm to be laid on by application keep back the stroke; let him wrestle with me, as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing: and he shall be Israel—a prince with God.” Pardoning mercy is called the power of our Lord; let him take hold on that, Christ is the Arm of the Lord, ch. lii. 1. Christ crucified is God; (Col. i. 19.) let him by a lively faith take hold on him, as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank, that is in his reach; or as the malefactor took hold on the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled. (3.) Here is the fold cord of arguments to persuade us to do this. 

[1.] Time and space are given to us to do it, for fury is not in God; he does not carry it towards us as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in fault, and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration; it is, with them, but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon pacified, especially when their anger; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them: but it is not so with God; he considers our frame, is slow to anger, does not stir up his wrath, nor always chide. (2.) It is in vain to think of contending with him. If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it, that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match for Omniscience. Wo unto him therefore that strives with his Maker! He knows not the power of his anger. (3.) This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation; “Let him take this course to make peace with me, and I will turn away my wrath from him, and will not deal with him after his inward thoughts.” God is willing to be reconciled to us, if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

3. That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body; (v. 6.) In times to come, (so some read it,) in due time, when these calamities are over, in the days of the gospel, the latter days, he shall cause Jacob to take root, deeper root than ever yet; for the gospel-church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread further. Or, He shall cause them of Jacob, that come back out of their captivity, or, as we read it, them that come of Jacob, to take root downward, and bear fruit upward, ch. xlviii. 31. They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they shall blossom and bud, and give hopeful prospects of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for they shall fill the face of the world with fruit. Many shall be brought into the church, proselytes shall be numerous; some out of all the nations about, that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise; and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness; the preaching of the gospel brought forth fruit in all the world, (Col. i. 6.) fruit that remains, John xv. 16.

7. Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? 8. In measure, when he shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this, therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sundry, the groves and images shall not stand up. 10. Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. 11. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off; the women come and set them on fire
for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favour. 12. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not, as before, judgment to the enemies, and mercy to the church; but judgment to the church, and mercy mixed with that judgment.

I. Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel; they shall blossom and bud, v. 6. But, v. 1. They shall be smitten and slain; (v. 7.) some of them shall. If God finds any thing amiss among them, he shall lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God. God has this in view, as of all the families of the earth, he will punish in the first place.

2. Jerusalem, their defenced city, shall be desolate, v. 10, 11. God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which, as to many, have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste, which was accomplished when Jeru-

salem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that habitation was for a long time forsaken. If lesser judgments do not do the work, God will send greater: for, when he judges, he will overcome; Jerusalem had been a defenced city, not so much by art or nature, as by grace and the divine protection; but when God was provoked to withdraw, her defense was departed from her, and then she was left like a wilderness. And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there, and shall be no more disturbed, or driven away there, they shall be levent and couchant,* and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit-trees; which perhaps further signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies; when the boughs thereof are withered as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts, and not pruned, they shall be broken off for fuel, and the women and children come forth, and set them on fire. There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed. And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard, (v. 2.) when it brought forth wild grapes; (ch. v. 2.) and our Saviour seems to refer to this, when he says of the branches of the vine which abide not in him, that they are cast forth and withered, and men gather them up and burn them; and they are burned, (John xvi. 6.) which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews.

The similitude is explained in the following words; It is a people of no understanding, brutish and sottish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all those sins for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first, and afterwards their infidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns are of no understanding; and their ignorance being wilful, that shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation; for were he that made them, that gave them their being, will not have mercy on them, nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves; and he that formed them into a people, formed them for himself, to show forth his praise, seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new-formed, will reject them, and show them no favour and then they are undone; he who that made use of his power, do not make us happy in his favourite people, nor have we made them for the benefit of this world, nor have we made them for the benefit of this world, nor have they been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity; at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful, and because he is their Maker; but here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be; for if they be of no understanding, he that made them, though he made them, and hates nothing that he has made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand themselves as to apply themselves to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy, and will show them no favour.

II. Here is a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment; for there are good people mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate, a remnant according to election, that God will have mercy on, and to whom he will show favour; and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, for which God would graciously provide these allays.

1. Though they should be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree, and in that manner, that their enemies shall be smitten and slain; (v. 7.) God has smitten Jacob and Israel, and he is slain; many of them that understand among the people, shall fall by the sword and by flame many days, Dan. xi. 33. But it shall not be as these are smitten and slain. (1.) Who smote him formerly, who were the rod of God's anger, and the staff in his hand, which he made use of for the correction of his people, and to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that: the child is spared, but the rod is burned. (2.) Who shall afterward be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion, and repay them in their own coin; or slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented. [1.] As struggling with each other; so the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be in this world; the one shall strike, and the other shall strike on both sides. God makes use of wicked men, not only to smite, but to slay his people; for they are his sword, Ps. xvii. 13. But when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits: the seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent has his head crushed and burnt. God is not more exact with his persecuted people may be great losers, and greatly suffer; but yet they that oppress them, will prove to be greater losers, and greater sufferers, at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, Rev. xviii. 6. [2.] As sharing together in the calamities of this present time, they are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is one event to the negligent and the great, whether they be his enemies as he regards them, or as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people, and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

4. Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure, and the affliction shall be mitigated, moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not
He will deal out affections to them, as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patient, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when a vein is opened: thus God orders the troubles of his people, not suffering them but tempted about what they are able, 1 Cor. x. 13. He measures out their affections by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure; for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and does not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out, and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity; he considers what is best done, where to stop, and when he precedes in his controversy, so that it is the day of his east-wind, which is not only bustling and noisy, but blasting and noxious, yet he stays his rough wind, checks it, and sets bounds to it, does not suffer it to blow so hard as it was feared; when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God has the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check; Hitherto it shall go, but no further. Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds ever so rough, ever so high, God can say unto them, Peace, be still.

3. Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father does the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; (v. 9.) By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged. This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means, and, by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect; it shall mortify the habits of sin; by the hardness of the east wind it may, I say, shall, by it, be driven away; it shall break them off from the practice of it; this is all the fruit, this is it that God intends, this is all the harm it will do them, to take away their sin; than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. Therefore, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction: and because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of, was the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people, and to which they were strangely addicted. Ephraim is joined to idols. But by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? Jacob then has his sin taken away, his beloved sin, when he makes all the stones of the altar, of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, as chalch-stones that are beaten in sundry; he not only has them in contempt, and values them not as stones of gold, but drives them away with an indignation at them, and, in a holy revenge, beats them asunder as easily as chalch-stones are broken to pieces: the groves and the images shall not stand before this pentent, but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry; (Deut. vii. 5.) and, according to this promise, the captivity in Babylon to people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews.

Note, The design of affliction is to part between us and sin, especially that which has been our own iniquity; and then it appears that the affliction has done us good, when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, Ps. cxxix. 67.

4. Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed; (v. 12, 13.) though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, Ezek. xxxiv. 10—12. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites, (1.) From whence they shall be fetched; The Lord shall gather them out of all the countries, from among them or beat them out as corn out of the ear; he shall find them out, and separate them from those whom they dwelt among, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east unto Nile the stream of Egypt, which lay south-west; those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessaries, and ready to despair of deliverance; and those that were outcasts in the land of Egypt, whither many of those that were left behind, after the captivity into Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command, (Jer. xxxii. 6, 7.) and there lived as outcasts: God has mercy in store for them all, and will make it to appear, that though they were driven out, yet they shall return. In what manner they shall be brought back; Ye shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in, first one, and then another. This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved, consists but of few, and these saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall be brought forth out of Babylon, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit. (3.) By what means they shall be gathered together; The great trumpet shall be blown, and then they shall come. Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their slumber to bestir themselves; it was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release; this is applicable to the preaching of the gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the grace of God, such as were outcasts and ready to perish; those that were afar off are made nigh; the gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord. It is applicable also to the angel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that lay as outcasts in their graves. (4.) For what end they shall be gathered together, to worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem. When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was, the worship of God: the holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, the place of the altar, Gen. xliii. 4. Liberty to worship God is the most excellent of all the blessings of the gospel, and, after restraints and dispersions, a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. These that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel-trumpet, are brought in to worship God, and added to the church, and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together, to serve God day and night in his temple.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter, I. The Ephraimites are reproved and threatened for their pride and drunkenness, their secu-
What to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome with wine! 2. Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which is as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. 3. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet. 4. And the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which, when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up. 5. In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people; 6. And for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate. 7. But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. 8. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.

Here. 1. The prophet warns the kingdom of the ten tribes, of the judgments that were coming upon them for their sins, which were soon after executed by the king of Assyria, who laid their country waste, and carried the people into captivity. Ephraim had his name from fruitfulness, their soil being very fertile, and the products of it abundant, and the best of the kind of they had a rare and dainty fruit. (v. 1, 4.) and Samaria, which was situated on a hill, was, as it were, on the head of the fat valleys; their country was rich and pleasant, and as the garden of the Lord: it was the glory of Canaan, as that was the glory of all lands: their harvest and vintage were the glorious beauty on the head of their valleys, which were covered over with corn and vines. 1. What an ill use they made of their plenty; what God gave them to serve him with, they perverted, and abused, by making it the food and fuel of their lusts. (1.) They were puffed up with pride by it; the goodness with which God crown'd their years, which should have been to him a crown of praise, was to them a crown of pride. They that are rich in the world, are not to be high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Their king who were the crown, was proud that he ruled over so rich a country; Samaria, their royal city, was no place for pride. Perhaps it was usual at their festivals, for men to make him a crown made up of flowers and ears of corn, which they wore, in honour of their fruitful country. Pride was a sin that generally prevailed among them, and therefore the prophet, in his name who resists the proud, boldly proclaims a 1/6 to the crown of pride. If those who wear crowns be proud of them, let them not think to escape this woe. What men are proud of, be it ever so mean, is to them in a crown; that pride which is proud thinks himself as great as a king; but wo to those who thus exalt themselves, for they shall be abased; their pride is the preface to their destruction. (2.) They indulged themselves in sensuality; Ephraim was notorious for drunkenness, and excess of wine; Samaria, the head of the fat valleys, was full of those that were overcome with wine; were broken with it, so the margin. See how foolishly drunkards act, and no marvel, when, in the very commission of the sin, they make fools and brutes of themselves; they yield, [1.] To be conquered by the sin; it overcomes them, and brings them into bondage, (2 Pet. ii. 19.) they are led captive by it, and the captivity is the more shameful and lingering, as it is voluntary. Samuel was conscious of the good which he had himself owned that there is not a greater drudgery in the world than hard drinking. They are overcome not with the wine, but with the love of it. [2.] To be ruined by it: they are broken by wine; their constitution is broken by it, and their health ruined; they are broken in their callings and estates, and their families are brought down by it; their peace with God is broken, and their very soul in danger of being eternally undone, and all this for the gratification of a base lust. Wo to these drunkards of Ephraim! Ministers must bring the general woe of the word home to particular places and persons. We must say, Wo to drunkards; their condition is a woful condition, their brash'd pleasures are to be pitied, and not envied; they shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. vi. 10.) the curse is in force against them, Deut. xxix. 19, 20. Nay, we must go further, and say, Wo to the drunkards of such a place; that they may hear and fear; nay, and, Wo to this or that person, if he be a drunkard. There is a particular woe to the drunkards of Ephraim, for they are of God's professing people, and it becomes them worse than any other they know better, and therefore should give a better example. Some make the crown of pride to belong to the drunkards, and to mean the garlands with which they were crown'd, that get the victory in their wicked drinking-matches, and drank down the rest of the company; they were proud of being mighty to drink wine; but wo to them who thus glory in their shame. The glory of God in taking away their plenty from them, which they thus abused. 'Their glorious beauty, the plenty they were proud of, is but a fading flower, it is meat that perishes. The most substantial fruits, if God blast them, and blow upon them, are but fading flowers, v. 1. God can easily take away their corn in the season thereof, (Hos. ii. 8.) and recover locum vastatum—ground that has been alienated; and it is right that he should dispose of his, which they prepared for Baal. God has an officer ready to make a severe for him, he's one at his beck, a mighty and strong one, who is able to do the business, even the king of Assyria, who shall cast down to the earth with the hand, shall easily and effectually, and with the turn of a hand, destroy all that which they are proud of, and pleased with, v. 2. He shall throw it down to the ground,
to be broken to pieces with a strong hand, with a
hand that they cannot oppose. Then the crown of
pride, and the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trod-
der under foot; (v. 5.) they shall be exposed to
contempt, and shall not be able to recover them-
selves. Drinkards, in their folly, are apt to talk
proudly, and taunt themselves most then when
they most shame themselves; but they render them-
Aves the more ridiculous by it. The beauty of
their valleys, which they gloried in, will be, (1.)
Like a fading flower; (as before, v. 1.) it will wither
of itself, and has in itself the principles of its own
corruption; it will perish in time by its own moth
and mildew. (2.) Like the hasty fruit, which as soon
as it is discovered, is plucked and eaten up; so
the wealth of this world, beside that it is apt to de-
cay of itself, is subject to be devoured by others, as
greedily as the first ripe fruit, which is earnestly
desired, Mic. vii. 1. Thieves break through and
steal. The harvest which the working is proud of
the hungry eat up; (Job. v. 5.) no sooner do they
see the prey, but they catch at it, and swallow up
tall they can lay their hands on. It is likewise eas-
ily devoured, as that fruit which, being ripe before
it is grown, is very small, and is soon eaten up;
and there being little of it, and that of little worth, it is
not reserved, but used immediately.

11. He next turns himself to the kingdom of Judah,
whom he calls the residue of his people, (v. 5.) for
the kings of the ten tribes.

1. He promises them God's favours, and that
they should be taken under his guidance and pro-
tection, when the beauty of Ephraim shall be left
exposed to be trodden down and eaten up, v. 5. 6.
In that day, when the Assyrian army is laying Israel
waste, and Judah might think that their neighbour's
house was on fire, (as it was, the day of trouble and perplexity,
then God will be to the residue of his people all they need,
and can desire; not only to the kingdom of Judah, but
to those of Israel, who had kept their integrity, and,
as was, probably, the case with some, betook them-
Eves to the land of Judah, to be sheltered by good
king Hezekiah. When the Assyrian, that mighty
one, was in Israel as a tempest of hall, noisy and
battering, as a destroying storm bearing down all
before it, especially at sea, and as a flood of mighty
waters overflowing the country, (v. 2.) then in
that day will the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, distinguish
by peculiar favours his people who have distin-
guished themselves by a steady and singular ad-
herence to him, and that which they most need he will
graciously bestow on them. This is a repetition of the
worth of the promises, that God, covenanting to be
to his people a God all-sufficient, undertakes to
be himself all that to them that they can desire.
(1.) He will put all the credit and honour upon
them, which are requisite, not only to rescue them
from contempt, but to gain them esteem and reputa-
tion. He will be to them a crown of glory, and
favour, a Diem of beauty, and a Diem of grace, to drink wine, Prov. xxxi. 4. The prophets were
of pride looked upon God's people with disdain,
and trampled upon them, and they were the song of the
drinkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for
them by his providence, as to make it evident that
they have his favour toward them, and that shall
be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory
can any people have, than for God to be to them as
his Diem of grace, to drink wine, and a Diem of
beauty: for what greater beauty can any person
have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those
that have God for their God, have him for a Crown
of glory, and a Diem of beauty; for they are made
to him kings and priests. (2.) He will give them
all the wisdom and grace necessary to the due dis-
charge of the duty of their place. He will himself
be a Spirit of judgment to them that sit in judg-
ment; the privy-councillors shall be guided by wis-
don and discretion, and the judges govern by jus-
tice and equity. It is a great mercy to any people,
when those that are called to places of power and
public trust are qualified for their places: when
those that sit in judgment have a spirit of judg-
ment, a spirit of government. (3.) He will give
them all the courage and boldness requisite to carry
them resolutely through the difficulties and opposi-
tions they are likely to meet with. He will be for
strength to them that turn the battle to the gate, to
the enemies of the enemy whose cities they besiege, and
their own gates, when they sally out upon the ene-
 mies that besiege them. The strength of the sol-
diery depends as much upon God as the wisdom of
the magistracy; and where God gives both these, he
is to that people a Crown of glory. This may well
be supposed to refer to Christ, and so the Chaldee
Paraphrase understands it; in that day shall Mes-
siah be a Crown of glory; Simeon calls him the
Glory of his people Israel: and he is made of God
to us Wisdom, Righteousness, and Strength.

2. He complains of the corrupts that were
found among them, and the many corrupt ones;
(v. 7.) But they also, many of them of Judah, have
erred through wine. There are drunkards of Je-
rusalem, as well as drunkards of Ephraim; and
God's people are reproved for the same thing. They
were more admired, that he has not blasted the glory
of Judah, as he has done that of Ephraim. Sparing
mercy lays us under peculiar obligations, when it is
thus distinguishing. Ephraim's sins are found in
Judah, and yet not Ephraim's sins. They have
erred through wine; their drinking to excess is it-
self a practical error; the drunkenness of the Jews
is not the worst thing, but their judgment, and so put
a cheat upon themselves; they think to preserve their
health by it, and help digestion, but they spoil their
constitution, and hasten diseases and deaths. And
it is the occasion of a great many errors in prin-
ciple; their understanding is clouded, and con-
sciences debouched, by it; and therefore, to support
themselves in it, they espouse corrupt actions, and
with their hands and hearts give a cheat to their hosts. Pro-
ably, some were drawn in to worship idols by their
love of the wine and strong drink, which there was
plenty of at their idolatrous festivities; and so they
erred through wine, as Israel, for love of the daugh-
ters of Moab, joined themselves to Baal-porr.

Three things are here observed as aggravations of
this sin:

(1.) That those were guilty of it, whose business
it was to warn others against it, and to teach them
better, and therefore who ought to have set a better
e xample: The priest and the prophet are swal-
lowed up of wine; their office is quite drowned
and lost in it. The priests, as sacrificers, were obliged
by a particular law to be temperate, (Lev. x. 9.)
and this ruled them as much as any. The spirit of pride
looked upon God's people with disdain, and
trampled upon them, and they were the song of the
drinkards of Ephraim; but God will so appear for
them by his providence, as to make it evident that
they have his favour toward them, and that shall
be to them a crown of glory; for what greater glory
can any people have, than for God to be to them as
his Diem of grace, to drink wine, and a Diem of
beauty: for what greater beauty can any person
have than the beauty of holiness? Note, Those
that have God for their God, have him for a Crown
of glory, and a Diem of beauty; for they are made
to him kings and priests. (2.) That the consequences of it were very
pernicous, not only by the ill influence of their exam-
ple, but the prophet, when he was drunk, erred in
vision; the false prophets plainly discovered them-
selves to be so, when they were in drink. The
priest stumbled in judgment, and forgot the law;
(Prov. xxxi. 5.) he reeled and staggered as much in
the operations of his mind as in the motions of
ISAIAH, XXVIII.

his body. What wisdom or justice can be expected from those that sacrifice reason, and virtue, and conscience, and all that is valuable, to such a base lust as the love of strong drink is? Happy art thou, O land, when thy princes eat and drink for truth, and not for drunkenness. Eccl. x. 17.

(3.) That the disease was epidemic, and the generality of those that kept any thing of a table, were infected with it; all tables are full of vomit, v. 8. See what an odious thing the sin of drunkenness is, what an affront it is to human society; it is rude and ill-mannered, enough to sicken the beholders; for to the place where they eat their meals, it is full of vomit. Thus have they been made to partake of the sins of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom; their tables are full of vomit. So that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people, when so settish a sin as drunkenness is, becomes national.

9. Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. 10. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 11. For with stammering lips, and another tongue, will he speak to this people. 12. To whom he said, This is the rest where with ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. 13. But the word of the Lord was unto them, precept upon precept, precept upon precept: line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

The prophet here complains of the wretched stupidity of this people, that they were unteachable, and made no improvement of the means of grace which they enjoyed; they still continued as they were; their mistake is not rectified, their hearts not softened, their lives stained with the marks of this sin, which the sinners declare as Sodom; their tables are full of vomit. So that the victor, instead of being proud of his crown, ought rather to be ashamed of it. It bodes ill to any people, when so settish a sin as drunkenness is, becomes national.

I. What it was that their prophets and ministers designed and aimed at; it was to teach them knowledge, the knowledge of God and his will, and to make them understand doctrine, v. 9. This is God's way of dealing with men, to enlighten men's minds first with the knowledge of his truth, and thus to gain their affections, and bring their wills into a compliance with his laws; thus he enters in by the door, whereas the thief and robber climb up another way.

II. What method they took; in pursuance of this design; they left no means untried, to do them good, but taught them as children are taught, little children that are beginning to learn, that are taken from the breast to the book; (v. 9.) for among the Jews it was common for mothers to nurse their children till they were three years old, and almost ready to go to school. And it is good to begin betimes with children, to teach them, as they are capable, the good knowledge of the Lord, and to instruct them, even when they are but newly weaned from the milk.

The prophets taught them as children are taught, for—

1. They were constant and industrious in teaching them; they took great pains with them, and with great prudence, teaching them as they needed it, and were able to bear it; (v. 10.) Precept upon precept. It must be so, or, as some read it, It has been so. They have been taught, as children are taught to read, by precept upon precept, and taught to write, by line upon line; a little here, and a little there, a little of one thing, and a little of another, that they might have the variety of instructions might be pleasing and inviting; a little at one time, and another at another time, that they might not have their memories overcharged; a little from one prophet, and a little from another, that every one might be pleased with his friend, and him he admired. Note, For a reformation in the things of God, it is requisite that we have precept upon precept, and line upon line; that one precept and line should be followed, and so enforced, by another; but, that precept of justice must be upon the precept of piety, and the precept of charity upon that of justice.

Nay, it is necessary that the same precept and the same line should be often repeated, and inculcated upon us; that we may the better understand them, and the more easily recollect them when we have occasion for them. Teachers should accommodate themselves to the capacity of the learners, give them what they most need, and can best bear, and little at a time. Dott. vi. 6, 7.

2. They accosted them in a kind manner, v. 12. God, by his prophets, said to them, 'This way that we are directing you to, and directing you in, it is the rest, the only rest, wherewith you may cause the weary to rest; and this will be the refreshing of your own souls, and will bring rest to your country from the wars and other calamities with which it has been assailed, precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.'

III. What little effect all this had upon the people; they were as unapt to learn as young children newly weaned from the milk, and it was impossible to fasten any thing upon them; (v. 9.) nay, one would choose rather to teach a child of two years old than undertake to teach them; for they have not only (like such a child) no capacity to receive what is taught them, but they are prejudiced against it. As children, they have need of milk, and cannot bear strong meat, Heb. v. 12. 1. They would not hear, (v. 12.) no, not that which would do them good, and is salt and savoury to the palate; what would make it easy for them to hear it; the word of God commanded their serious attention, but could not gain it; they were where it was preached, but they turned a deaf ear to it, or, as it came in at one ear, it went out at the other. 2. They would not heed; it was unto them freecet upon precept, and line upon line; (v. 13.) they went on in a road of external performances, they kept up the old custom of attending upon the prophet's preaching, and it was continually sounding in their ears; but that was all, it made no impression upon them; they had the letter of the precept, but no experience of the power and spirit of it; it was continually beating upon them, but it beat nothing into them. Nay, 3. It should seem, they ridiculed the prophet's preaching, and bantered it; the word of the Lord was unto them, but they made sport of it. They were wont to laugh at the prophet's words, and sang it when they were merry over their wine; David was the song of the drunkards. It is great impolicy, and a high affront to God, thus to make a jest of sacred things; to speak of that vainly which should make us serious. IV. How severely God would reckon with them for this;—

1. He would deprive them of the privilege of plain preaching, and speak to them with stammering lips and another tongue, v. 11. They that will not understand what is plain and level to their capacity
but despise it as mean and trifling, are justly annoyed with that which is above them. Or, God will send foreign armies among them, whose language they understand not, to lay their country waste. Those that will not hear the comfortable voice of God's word, shall be made to hear the dreadful voice of his rod. Or, these words may be taken as denoting God's gracious condescension to their capacity in his dealing with them; he spied to them in their own language, as nurses do to their children, with flattering lips to put out their tears; he changed his voice, tried first one way, and then another; the apostle quotes it as a favour, (1 Cor. xiv. 21.) applying it to the gift of tongues, and complimenting that yet for all things they would not hear.

2. He would bring utter ruin upon them; by their profane contempt of God and his word they are but hastening on their own ruin, and ripening themselves for it; it is that they may go and fall backward, may grow worse and worse, may depart further and further from God, and proceed from one sin to another, till they be quite broken, and snared, and taken, and ruined, v. 13. They have here a little, and there a little, of the word of God; they think it too much, and say to the seers, See not; but it proves true, for when they see it, and they will prove enough to condemn them. If it be not a suavium of life unto life, it will be a suavium of death unto death.

14. Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: 15. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste. 17. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. 18. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. 19. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night; and it shall be a tion only to understand the report. 20. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. 21. For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. 22. Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined, upon the whole earth.

The prophet, having reproved those that made a jest of the word of God, here goes on to reprove those that made a jest of the judgments of God, and set them at nought for lies and false God, and will not suffer either his ordinances or his prejudices to be brought into contempt. He addresses himself to the scornful men who ruled in Jerusalem, who were the magistrates of the city, v. 14. It is bad with a people, when their thrones of judgment become the seats of the scornful, when rulers are scorners; but that the rulers of Jerusalem should be an act of such enormity, that they should make light of God's judgments, and scornfully take notice of the tokens of his displeasure, is very sad. Who will be mourners in Zion, if they are scorners?

Observe,

I. How these scornful men bullied themselves asleep in carnal security, and even challenged God Almighty to do his worst; (v. 15.) Ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and the overflowing scourge shall pass through our country, and others shall fall under it, yet it shall not come to us, nor reach us, though it extend far, not bear us down, though it is an overflowing scourge. It is the greatest folly imaginable for impenitent sinners to think that either in this world or the other they shall fare better than their neighbours. But what is the ground of their confidence? Why, truly, We have made lies our refuge. Either,

I. Those things which the prophets told them, would be lies and falsehood to them, and would deceive, though they themselves looked upon them as substantial fences. The protection of their idols, the promises with which their false prophets soothed them, their policy, their wealth, their interest in the people; these they confided in, and not in God; nay, these they confided in against God. Or, 2. These things which they liked to have for their enemies, the enemy, who was flagellum Dei—the scourge of God, the overflowing scourge; they would secure themselves by imposing upon the enemy with their stratagems of war, or their feigned submissions in treaties of peace. The rest of the cities of Judah were taken because they made an obstinate defence, but the rulers of Jerusalem hope to succeed better, they think they can secure themselves by the submission of the country towns; they will compliment the king of Assyria with a promise to surrender their city, or to become tributaries to him, with a purpose at the same time to shake off his yoke as soon as the danger is over, not caring though they be found liars to him; as the expression is, Deut. xxxii. 29. And they have acted. Those put a cheat upon themselves, that this will go a long way, that they will cover cheats upon those they deal with. Those that pursue their designs by trick and fraud, by mean and paltry shifts, may perhaps compass them, but cannot expect comfort in them. Honesty is the best policy. But such refuges as these are they driven to that depart from God, and throw themselves out of his protection.

II. How God, by the prophet, awakens them out of this sleep, and shows them the folly of their security,
1. He tells them upon what grounds they might be secure; he does not disturb their false confidences, till he has first shown them a firm bottom on which they may prop themselves. (v. 16.) Behold I lay in Zion a foundation, a stone. This foundation is, (1.) The promises of God in general; his word, upon which he has caused his people to hope; his covenant with Abraham, that he would be a God to him and his; this is a foundation, a foundation of stone, firm and lasting, for faith to build upon; it is a tried stone, for all the saints have staked their expectations on it, and they find it solid and stable. (2.) The promise of Christ in particular, for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, 1 Pet. ii. 6–8. He is that Stone which is become the Head of the corner. The great promise of the Messiah and his kingdom, which was to begin at Jerusalem, was sufficient to make God's people easy in the worst of times; for they knew well that till he was come, the scripture should not depart from Judah. Zion shall continue while this Foundation is yet to be laid there. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, for the comfort of those that dare not make their refuge; "Behold, and look upon me, as one that has undertaken to lay in Zion a Stone." Jesus Christ is a Foundation of God's laying; this is the Lord's doing. He is laid in Zion, in the church, in the temple, in the heart; a stone, as some; a Touch-stone that shall distinguish between true and counterfeit. He is a precious Stone, for such are the foundations of the New Jerusalem; (Rev. xxi. 19.) a Corner-stone, in whom the sides of the building are united; the Head-stone of the corner. And he that believes these promises, and rests upon them, shall not make haste, shall not run to and fro in a hurly-burly; as men at their wits' end, shall not be shifting here and there for his own safety, nor be driven to his feet by any terrors, as the wicked man is said to be, (Job xviii. 11.) but with a fixed heart shall quietly wait the event, saying, Welcome the will of God. He shall not make haste, in his expectations, so as to anticipate the time set in the divine counsels, but, though it tarry, will wait the appointed hour, knowing that he shall come, will come, and will not tarry. He that believes will not make more haste than good speed, but he satisfied that God's time is the best time, and wait with patience for it. The apostle, from the LXX. explains this, (1 Pet. ii. 6.) He that believes on him shall not be confounded; his expectations shall not be frustrated, but far outdone.

2. That which is laid upon the foundations on which they now built on, they could not be safe, but their confidences would certainly fail them; (v. 17.) Judgment will lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet. This denotes, (1.) The building up of his church; having laid the foundation, (v. 16.) he will raise the structure, as builders do, by line and plummet. Zech. iv. 10. Righteousness shall be the foundation of the temple; the place being founded on Christ, shall be formed and reformed by the scripture, the standing rule of judgment and righteousness. Judgment shall return unto righteousness, Ps. xciv. 15. Or, (2.) The punishing of the church's enemies, against whom he will proceed in strict justice, according to the threatenings of the law; he will give them their deserts, and make them to pass through such a wasting and destruction as they themselves are not able to evade; but, as the psalmist says, "He will tread under foot the wrath of the nations, and will make the earth waste by his indignation." confession of the work of God as the righteous Judge of the earth. Secondly, He will do it now against his people, as formerly he did it against their enemies; by which his justice will appear to be impartial; he will now rise up against Jerusalem, as, in David's time against the Philistines in mount Perazim, (2 Sam. xx. 20.) and as, in Joshua's time, against the Canaanites in the valley of Gilboa. If those that profess themselves members of God's church, by their pride and

3. They design to make lies their refuge; but it will indeed prove a refuge of lies, which the
scornfulness make themselves like Philistines and Canaanites, they must expect to be dealt with as such. Thirdly, This will be his strange work, his strange act, his foreign deed: it is work that he is backward to, he rather delights in showing mercy, and does not afflict willingly: it is work that he is not used to; as his own people, he protects and favours them: it is a strange work indeed, if he turn to be their enemy, and fight against them; (eb. xiii. 10.) it is a work that all the neighbours will stand amazed at; (Deut. xxxix. 24.) and therefore the ruins of Jerusalem are said to be an astonishment, Jer. xxxv. 10. We have the use and application of all this; (v. 22.) "Therefore he ye not mockers; dare not to ridicule either the reproofs of God's word, or the approaches of his judgments." Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin. The consideration of the judgments of God that are coming upon hypocritical professors, should effectually silence mockers, and make them serious; "Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong; both the bands by which you are bound under the dominion of sin," (for there is little hope of the conversion of mockers;) "and the bands by which you are bound over to the judgments of God." God has bands of justice strong enough to hold those that break all the bands of his law insummer, and cast away all his cords from them. Let not mockers make light of divine proceedings, for the prophet (who is one of those with whom the secret of the Lord is) assures them that the Lord God of hosts has, in his hearing, determined a consummation upon the whole earth; and can they think to escape? Or shall their unbelief invalidate the threatening? 23. Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. 24. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? 25. When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat, and the appointed barley, and the rye, in their place? 26. For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. 27. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. 28. Bread-corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horses. 29. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. This parable, which (as many of our Saviour's parables) is borrowed from the husbandman's calling; is ushered in with a solemn preface demanding attention; God's words are to be heard, let him hear, and understand, v. 23. I. The parable here is plain enough, that the husbandman applies himself to the business of his calling with a great deal of pains and prudence, secundum artem—according to rule, and, as his judgment directs him, observes a method and order in his work. 1. In his ploughing and sowing; Does the ploughman plough all day to sow? Yes, he does, and he ploughs in hope, and sows in hope, 1 Cor. ix. 10. Does he open and break the clods? Yes, he does, that it may be fit to receive the seed. And when he has thus made plain the face thereof, does he not sow his seed, seed suitable to the soil? For the husbandman knows what grain is fit for chary ground, and what for sandy ground, and accordingly he sows each in its place; wheat in the principal place, (so the margin reads it;) for it is the principal grain, and was a staple-commodity of Canaan, (Ezek. xxvii. 17.) and barley in the appointed place. The wisdom and goodness of the God of nature are to be observed in this, that, to oblige his creatures with a grateful variety of productions, he has suited them to a several variety of earth: 2. In his threshing, v. 27, 28. This also shows the propriety of the grain that is to be threshed out; the fitches and the cummin, being easily got out of their husk or ear, are only threshed with a staff and a rod; but the bread-corn requires more force, and therefore that must be bruised with a threshing instrument, a sledge shod with iron, that was drawn to and fro over it, to beat out the corn; and yet he will not be ever threshing it, nor any longer than is necessary to loosen the corn from the chaff; he will not break it, or crush it into the ground with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it to pieces with his horses; the grinding of it is reserved for another operation. Observe, by the way, what pains are to be taken, not only for the earning, but for the preparing of our necessary food. And this parable (as it speaks excellently of the life of Christ) doth also teach us how we should labour with much more for the meat which endures to everlasting life? Bread-corn is bruised; Christ was; it pleased the Lord to bruise him, that he might be the Bread of life to us. II. The interpretation of the parable is not so plain. Most interpreters make it a further answer to those who seek the judgements of God. (xii. 1.) "Let them know that as the husbandman will not be always ploughing, but will at length sow his seed, so God will not be always threatening, but will at length execute his threatenings, and bring upon sinners the judgments they have deserved; but in wisdom, and in proportion to their strength, that they shall not be put to death, but reformed, and brought to repentance, by them." But let us consider this parable a greater latitude in the exposition of it. 1. In general; that God, who gives the husbandman this wisdom, is, doubtless, himself infinitely wise. It is God that instructs the husbandman to discretion, as his God, v. 26. Husbandmen have need of discretion, wherewith to order their affairs, and ought not to undertake that business unless they do in some measure understand it; therefore they should by observation and experience endeavour to improve themselves in the knowledge of it. Since the kingdom itself is served of the field, the advancing of the art of husbandry is a common service to mankind, more than the cultivating of most other arts. The skill of the husbandman is from God, as every good and perfect gift is of the Lord. This is a type of the yielding of the weight and terror of the sentence passed on mankind for sin, that when God, in execution of it, sent man to till the ground, he taught him how to do it most to his advantage, else, in the greatness of his folly, he might have been for ever tillling the sand of the sea, labouring to no purpose. It is he that gives men capacity to yield to himself an inclination to it, and a delight in it; and if some were not by evidence cut out for it, and made to rejoice, as Issachar, that tribe of husbandmen, in their tents, notwithstanding the toil and fatigue of this business, we should soon want the supports of life. If some are more discreet and judicious in managing these or any other affairs than others are, God must be acknowledg'd, and in the husbandmen must seek for direction in their business; for they, above
other men, have an immediate dependence upon the divine providence. As to the other instance of the manœuvre made in the Chaldean and Assyrian army, it is said, This army cometh from the Lord of hosts, v. 29. Even the plainest dictates of sense and reason must be acknowledged to come from the Lord of hosts. And if it is from him that men do things wisely and discreetly, we must needs acknowledge him to be wise in counsel, and excellent in working. God's working is according to his will, he never acts against it; as he does, if he do, and there is a counsel in his whole will; he is therefore excellent in working, because he is wonderful in counsel.

2. God's church is his husbandry. 1 Cor. iii. 9. If Christ is the true Vine, his Father is the Husbandman, (John xv. 1.) and he is continually, by his word and ordinances, cultivating it. Does the ploughman plough all day, and break the clods of his ground, that it may receive the seed, and does not God by his ministers break up the fallow ground? Does not the ploughman, when the ground is fitted for the seed, cast in the seed in its proper soil? He does so, and so the great God sows his word by the hand of his ministers, (Matth. xiii. 19.) who are to divide the word of truth, and give every one their portion. Whatever the soil of the heart is, there is some seed or other of the word proper to improve it. as the word of God, so the rod of God, is thus wisely made use of. Afflictions are God's threshing instruments, designed to loosen us from the world, to part between us and our chaff, and to prepare us for use. And as to these, God will make use of them as there is occasion; but he will proportion them to our strength, they shall be no heavier than there is need. If the rod and the staff will answer the end, he will not make use of his cart-wheel and his horsemen. And where these are necessary, as for the bruising of the bread-corn, (which will not otherwise he get clean from the straw,) yet he will not be ever threatening it, will not always chide, but his anger shall endure but for a moment; nor will he crush under his feet the prisoners of the earth. And herein we must acknowledge him wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

CHAP. XXIX.

This is to Ariel, which we have in this chapter, as the name which the burden of the valley of Vision bears in ch. xxvii. and (it is very probable) points at the same event—the besieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army, which was cut off there by an angel; yet it is applicable to the destruction of the Chaldeans, when that nation was proscribed by the Romans. Herein is I. The event itself foretold, that Jerusalem should be greatly distressed; (v. 1-4, 6.) but that their enemies, who distressed them, should be haled and defeated, v. 4, 7, 8. II. A reason given for it, as to three sorts of sinners; I. Those that were stupid and regardless of the warnings which the prophet gave them, v. 9, 12, 2. Those that were formal and hypocritical in their religious performances, v. 13, 14. Those pious and divine enemies of God, who were profusely despised God's providence, and set up their own projects in competition with it, v. 15-17. III. Precious promises of grace and mercy to a distinguishing remnant whom God would sanctify, and in whom he would be glorified when his enemies and persecutors should be cut off, v. 18, 19, 24.

1. WO to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! add ye year to year: let them kill sacrifices. 2. Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. 3. And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. 4. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust. 5. Moreover, the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away; yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. 6. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. 7. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision. 8. It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be, that fight against mount Zion.

That it is Jerusalem which is here called Ariel, is agreed, for that was the city where David dwelt: that part of it which was called Zion, was in a particular manner the city of David, in which both the temple and the palace were; but why it is so called is very uncertain; probably, the name and the reason were, then, well known. Cities, as well as persons, are sometimes termed enemies, the lion of God, or the strong lion; as the lion is king among beasts, so was Jerusalem among the cities, giving law to all about her; it was the city of the great King. (Ps. xlvii. 1, 2.) it was the head city of Judah, who is called a lion's whelp, (Gen. xlix. 9.) and whose ensign was a lion; and he that is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, was the glory of it. Jerusalem was a type of the Lord's everlasting dwelling, and, while she was a righteous city, was bold as a lion. Some make Ariel to signify the altar of burnt-offerings, which devoured the beasts offered in sacrifice, as the lion does his prey. Wo to that altar in the city where David dwelt; that was destroyed with the temple by the Chaldeans. I rather take it as a wo to Jerusalem, Jerusalem; it is repeated here, as it is Matth. xxiii. 37. that it might be the more awakening. Here is,

I. The distress of Jerusalem foretold; though Jerusalem be a strong city, as a lion, though a holy city, as a lion of God, yea, if iniquity be found there, wo be to it. It was the city where David dwelt, it was he that brought that to it, which was its glory, and which made it a type of the gospel-church, and of Christ's dwelling in his church. In this was typified the Lion's residence in his church. This is mentioned as an aggravation of Hypocrities sin, that in it were set both the testimony of Israel, and the thrones of the house of David.

1. Let Jerusalem know that her external performance of religious services will not serve as an exemption from the judgments of God; (v. 1.) * Add ye year to year; go on in the road of your annual feasts, let all your males appear there three times a year before the Lord, and none empty, according to the law and custom, and let them never miss any of these solemnities; let them kill the sacrifices, as they used to do, but, as long as their lives are unformed, and their hearts unhumbled, let them not think thus to pacify an offended God, and to turn away his wrath." Note, Hypocrizes may be found
ISAIAH, XXIX.

133

in a constant track of devout exercises, and treading around in them, and with these they may flatter themselves, but can never please God, or make their peace with him.

2. Let her know that God is coming forth against her in displeasure, that she shall be visited of the Lord of hosts, (v. 6.) her sins shall be inquired into, and punished; God will reckon for them with terrible judgments, with the frightful alarms and ruthless desolations of war, which shall be like thunder and earthquakes, storms and tempests, and devouring fire, especially upon the account of the great noise. When a foreign enemy was not in the borders, but in the bowels of their country, robbing and ravaging, and they were especially such an army as that of the Assyrians, who were the most insolent, as appears by the conduct of Rabshak, the common soldiers, no doubt, were much more rude; they might see the Lord of these hosts visiting them with thunder and storm. Yet this being here said to be a great noise, perhaps it is intimated that they shall be worse frightened than hurt. Particularly,

(1.) Jerusalem shall be besieged, strictly besieged. He does not say, I will destroy Ariel, but, I will dismiss Ariel; and she is therefore brought into distress, that, being thereby awakened to repent and reform, she may not be brought to destruction; (v. 3.) I will camp against their round about. It was the enemy’s army that encamped against it; but God says, I will encamp against them, for they are his hand, he does it by them. God had often, and long, by a host of angels, encamped for them round about them, for their protection and deliverance; but now he was turned to be their Enemy, and fought against them. The siege laid against them was of his laying, and the forts raised against them were of his raising. Note, When men fight against us, we may trust in him that fights against them.

(2.) She shall be in grief to see the country laid waste, and all the fenced cities of Judah in the enemies’ hand; There shall be heaviness and sorrow; so these two words are sometimes rendered. Those that are most merry and jovial, are, commonly, when they come to be in distress, most overwhelmed with heaviness and sorrow; and when their laughter is turned into mourning. “All Jerusalem shall then be unto me as Ariel, as the altar, with fire upon it, and slain victims about it!” so it was, when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; and many, no doubt, were slain, when it was besieged by the Assyrians. The whole city shall be an altar, in which sinners, falling by the judgments that are abroad, shall be as victims to divine justice. Or thus: There shall be heaviness and sorrow; they shall repent, and reform, and return to God, and then it shall be to me as Ariel. Jerusalem shall be like itself, shall become to me a Jerusalem again, a holy city, ch. i. 26.

(3.) She shall be humbled and mortified, and made submissive; (v. 4.) Thou shalt be brought down from the height of arrogancy and insolence to which thou art come; the proud looks and the proud language shall be brought down by one humiliating providence after another. Those that despised God’s judgments, shall be humbled by them; for the proudest sinners shall either bend or break before him. They had talked big, had lifted up the horn on high, and had gone on with a stiff neck, (Ps. lxxv. 3.) but now thou shalt speak out of the ground, out of the dust; as one that has a familiar spirit, whispering out of the dust. This intimates that they should be faint and feeble, not able to speak up, nor to say all they would say; but, as those who are sick, or whose spirits are ready to fail, their speech shall be low and interrupted; and that they should be fearful, and in consternation, forced to speak low as being afraid lest their enemies should overhear them, and take advantage against them; and that they should be tamed, and obliged to submit to the conquerors. When Haz.iah submitted to the king of Assyria, saying, I have offended, that which I shall utter is now before me, (2 Kings xviii. 14.) then his speech was low, out of the dust. God can make those to cringe, that have been most daring, and quite dispit them.

II. The destruction of Jerusalem’s enemies is foretold, for the comfort of all that were her friends and well-wishers in this distress; (v. 5, 7.) Thou shalt be brought down, (v. 4.) to speak out of the ground, out of the dust; so low shalt thou be spoken of. But (so it may be rendered) “the multitude of them that tread and thy terrible ones, the numerous armies of the enemy, shall themselves be like small dust, not able to speak at all, or so much as whisper, but as chaff that passes away. Thou shalt be abased, but they shall be quite dispersed, smitten and slain after another manner, (ch. xxvii. 7.) they shall pass away, yea, it shall be at an instant, suddenly; the enemy shall be surprised with the destruction, and you with the salvation.” The army of the Assyrians was by an angel laid dead upon the spot, in an instant, suddenly. Such will be the destruction of the enemies of the gospel-Jerusalem; in one hour is their judgment come, Rev. xviii. 10. Again, (v. 6.) Thou shalt be visited; or, as it was used to be rendered, Thou shalt be visited with thunder and a great noise. Thou shalt be put into a fright which thou shalt soon recover. But (v. 7.) the multitude of the nations that fight against her shall be as a dream of a night-vision; they and their prosperity and success shall soon vanish past recall. The multitude of the nations that fight against Zion, shall be as a hungry man, who dreams that he eats, but still is hungry; to be sure, God and his people will be made a prey of Jerusalem, and to enrich themselves with the plunder of that opulent city, their hopes shall prove vain dreams, with which their fancies may please and sport themselves for awhile, but they shall be disappointed. They fancied themselves masters of Jerusalem, but shall never be so. 2. They themselves, and all their pomp, and power, and prosperity, shall be like a dream that one awakes; shall be of as little value, and as short continuance, Ps. lxxiii. 20. He shall fly away as a dream, Job xx. 8. The army of Sennacherib vanquished and was gone quickly, though it had filled the country as a dream fills a man’s head; especially as a dream of meat fills the head of him that went to bed hungry.

Many understand these verses as part of the threatening of wrath, when God comes to distress Jerusalem, and lay siege to her. (1.) The multitude of her friends, whom she relies upon for help, shall do her no good; for though they are terrible ones, they shall be like the small dust, and shall pass away. (2.) The multitude of her enemies she may think she can do her much hurt; but, when they have devoured her much, still she shall be but like a man who dreams he eats, hungry, and greedy to devour more.

9. Stay yourselves and wonder; cry ye out, and cry; they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. 10. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath he covered. 11. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men
deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. 12. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I am not learned. 13. Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: 14. Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. 15. Wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? 16. Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?

Here,

I. The prophet stands amazed at the stupidity of the greatest part of the nation. They had Levites, who taught the good knowledge of the Lord, and had encouragement from Hizkiah in doing so, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. They had prophets, who brought them messages immediately from God, and signified to them what were the causes, and what should be the effects, of God's displeasure against them. Now one would think, surely this great nation, that has all the advantages of divine revelation, is a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. But alas! it was quite otherwise, v. 9. This prophet directs himself to the sober thinkers of the part of them, calling upon them to be affected with the general carelessness of their neighbours. It may be read, "They delay, they put off their repentance, but wonder ye that they should be so sotish; they sport themselves with their own deceivings, they riot and revel, but do ye cry out, lament their folly, cry to God by prayer for them. The more insensible they are of the hand of God gone out against them, the more do you lay to heart these things." Note, The security of sinners in their sinful ways is just matter of lamentation and wonder to all serious people, who should think themselves concerned to pray for those that do not pray for themselves. But what is the matter? What are we thus to wonder at?

I. We may well wonder that the generality of the people are so sottish and brutish, and so insatiated, as if they were intoxicated; They are drunken, but not with wine; (not with wine only, with that they were often drunk;) and they erred through wine, ch. xxviii. 7. They were drunk with the love of pleasures, with prejudices against religion, and with the corrupt principles they had imbibed; like drunken men, they know not what they do or say, or whether they go. They are not sensible of the divine reproofs they are under. They have beaten me, and I felt it not, says the drunkard, Prov. xxiii. 35. God speaks to them once, yea twice; but, like men drunk, they perceive it not, they understand it not, but forget the law. They stagger in their counsels, are unstable and unsteady, and stumble at every thing that lies in their way. There is such a thing as spiritual drunkenness.

2. It is yet more strange that God himself has poured out upon them a spirit of deep sleep, and has closed their eyes, (v. 10.) that he who bids them awake, and shows them their error, and lays them asleep, and slant their eyes; but it is in a way of righteous judgment, to punish them for their loving darkness rather than light, their loving sleep. When God by his prophets called them, they said, Yet a little sleep, a little slumber; and therefore he gave them up to strong delusions, and said, Sleep on now. This is applied to the unbelieving Jews, as they did neglect the gospel of God before it was hardened, and are now caught in that lassitude, till wrath came upon them to the uttermost; (Rom. xi. 8.) God has given them the spirit of slumber. And we have reason to fear it is the woful case of many who live in the midst of gospel-light.

3. It is very sad that this should be the case of those who were their prophets, and rulers, and seers; that they who should have been their guides, are themselves blindedfolded; and it is easy to see what the fatal consequences will be when he blind lead the blind. This was fulfilled when, in the latter days of the Jewish church, the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, were the great opposers of Christ and his gospel, and brought themselves under a judicial infatuation.

The manner of this is spoken of in the means of conviction, knowledge, and grace, which they enjoyed, were ineffectual, and did not answer the end; (v. 11, 12.) "The vision of all the prophets, true and false, is become to you as the words of a book, or letter, that is sealed up; you cannot discern the truth of the real visions, and the falsehood of the pretended ones." Or, every vision particularly that this prophet had ever had, was to him, and put from him, was become unintelligible; they had it among them, but were never the wiser for it, any more than a man (though a good scholar) is for a book delivered to him sealed up, and which he must not open the seals of. He sees it is a book, and that is all, he knows nothing of what is in it. So they knew that what Isaiah said was a vision and a prophecy; but the meaning of it was hid from them; it was only a sound of words to them, which they were not at all alarmed by, or affected with: it answered not the intention, for it made no impression at all upon them. Neither the learned nor the unlearned were the better for all the messages God sent them by his servants the prophets, nor desired to be so. 'The ordinary sort of people expected themselves to regard what the prophets said, with their want of learning and a liberal education; as if they were not concerned to know and do the will of God, because they were not bred scholars; It is nothing to me, I am not learned. These of better rank pretended that the prophet had a peculiar way of speaking, which was obscure to them, and which, though they were men of letters, they had not been used to; and, Sir, you must not be understood, you deserve to be neglected. Both these are groundless pretences; for God's prophets have been no unfaithful debtors either to the wise or to the unwise,Rom. i. 14. Or, we may take it thus; the book of prophecy was given to them sealed, so that they could not read it, as a just judgment upon them; because it had often been delivered to them unsealed, and they would not take pains to learn the language of it, and then made excuse for their not reading it, because they were not learned. "But observe, The vision is become thus to you, whose minds the god of this world has blinded; but it is
not so in itself, it is not so to all; the same vision which to you is a savour of death unto death, to others is, and shall be, a savour of life unto life. Knowledge is easy to him that understands. 

11. The prophet, in God's name, threatens those who were formal and hypocritical in their exercises of devotion, v. 13, 14. Observe here, 

1. The sin that is here charged upon them—is despising God in their religious performances. v. 13. He that makes light of the heart, and cannot be imposed upon with shows and pretences, charges it upon them, whether their hearts condemn them for it, or no. He that is greater than the heart, and knows all things, knows that though they draw nigh to him with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, yet they are not sincere in it. To worship God is to make up our approaches to him, and present our adorations of him; it is to draw nigh to him as those that have business with him, with an intention therein to honour him. This we are to do with our mouth and with our lips, in speaking of him, and in speaking to him; we must render to him the calves of our lips, Hosea xiv. 2. And if the heart be full of his love and fear, out of the abundance of the mouth, were there many whose religion is lip-labour only. They say that which expresses an approach to God and an adoration of him, but it is only from the teeth outward. For, (1.) They do not apply their minds to the service; when they pretend to be speaking to God, they are thinking of a thousand impertinences; They have removed their hearts far from him, and pray not in his sight, nor come within reach of the word. When work was to be done for God, which required the heart, that was sent out of the way on purpose, with the false eyes into the ends of the earth. (2.) They do not make the word of God the rule of their worship, nor his will their reason; Their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men. They were shaming God in his great reformer, not only in his appointment, but their own inventions; the directions of their false prophets or their idolatrous kings, or their usages of the nations that were round about them; the tradition of the elders was of more value and validity with them than the laws which God commanded Moses. Or, if they did worship God in some conformable to his institution, in the days of Hezekiah, he looked upon them as having an eye to the precept of the king than to God's command. This our Saviour applies to the Jews in his time, who were formal in their devotions, and wedged to their own inventions, and pronounces concerning them, that in vain they did worship God. Matt. xv. 8, 9.

2. It is a spiritual judgment with which God threatens to punish them for their spiritual wickedness; (v. 14.) I will add to do a marvellous work. They did one strange thing, they removed all sincerity from their hearts; now God will go on and do another, he will remove all saggerry from their heads; the wisdom of their wise men shall perish. They played the hypocrite, and thought to put a cheat upon God, and now they are left to themselves, to play the fool; and not only to put a cheat upon themselves, but to be easily cheated by all about them. Those that make religion no more than a pretence, to serve a turn, are out in their politics; and it is just with God to deprive those of their understanding, who part with their uprightness. This was fulfilled in the wretched infatuation which the Jewish nation were manifestly under, after they had rejected the gospel of Christ; they removed their hearts far from God, and therefore God justly removed wisdom far from them, and hid from their eyes the things that belonged even to their temporal peace. This is a marvellous work; it is surprising, it is astonishing, that wise men should of a sudden lose their wisdom, and be given up to strong delusions. Judgments on the mind, though least taken notice of, are to be most wondered at.

III. He shows the folly of these that thought to act separately and secretly from God, and were carrying on designs independent upon God, and which they projected to conceal from his all-seeing eye. Here we have, 1. Their politics described; (v. 15.) They seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, that he may not know either what they do, or what they design; they say, "Who sees us? No man, and therefore not God himself." The consultations they had about their own safety, they kept to themselves, and never asked God's advice concerning them; now, they knew they were doing pleasing to him, but thought they could conceal them from him; and if he did not know them, he could not baffle and defeat them. See what foolish, fruitless pains sinners take in their sinful ways; they seek deep, they sink deep, to hide their counsel from the Lord, who sits in heaven, and laughs at them. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is a capital thing in the carnal worshippers and of the carnal confidences of hypocrites; Ps. xcvii. 7. Ezek. viii. 12.—ix. 9.

2. The absurdity of their politics demonstrated; (v. 16.) "Surely your turning of things upside down thus, your various projects, turning your affairs this and that way to make them shape as you would have them; or, rather, your inverting the order of things, the way of making your desiderata come, will not your counsels, with as much ease and as absolute a power, as the potter forms and fashions his clay, to how God despairs and therefore what little reason we have to dread, these contrivances of men, that are carried on without God, particularly these against him. They that think to hide their counsels from God; (1.) They do, in effect, deny him to be their Creator. It is as if the work should say of him that made it, "He made me not, I made myself." If God made us, he certainly knows us, as the potter knows the clay, he has marked out the shapes they want, how they who say that he does not see them, might as well say that he did not make them. Much of the wickedness of the wicked arises from this, they forget that God formed them, Deut. xxxii. 18. Or, (2.) Which comes all to one, they deny him to be a wise Creator; The thing framed with him that framed it. He had a full understanding, for if he had understanding to make us so curiously, especially to make us intelligent beings, and to put understanding into the inward part, (Job xxxviii. 36.) no doubt he has understanding to know us, and all we say and do. As they that quarrel with God, so they that think to conceal themselves from him, do, in effect, charge him with folly; but he that formed the eye, shall he not see? Ps. xcviii. 9.

17. Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? 18. And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. 19. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For the terrible one is brought
to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: 21. That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. 23. But when he seeth his children, the work of my hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. 24. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

They that thought to hide their counsels from the Lord, were said to turn things upside down, (v. 16.) and they intended to do it unknown to God; but he had given them the means of doing it, and shown them what their proceedings were. Let us see whose word shall stand, his or theirs. They disbelieve Providence; "Wait awhile," says God, "and you shall be convinced by ocular demonstration, that there is a God who governs the world, and that he governs it, and orders all the changes that are in it, for the good of his church." The wonderful revolution here foretold may refer primarily to the happy settlement of the affairs of Judah and Jerusalem after the defeat of Sennacherib's attempt, and the repose which good people then enjoyed, when they were delivered from the alarms of the sword both of war and persecution. But it may look further, to the rejection of the Jews at the first planting of the gospel, (for their hypocrisy and infidelity were here foretold, v. 15.) and the admission of the Gentiles into the church.

In general, it is a great and surprising change that is here foretold, v. 17. Lebanon, that was a forest, is turned into a fruitful field; and Carmel, that was a fruitful field, shall become a forest. It is a counter-change. Note, Great changes, both for the better, and for the worse, are often made in a very little while. It was a sign given them of the day of Sennacherib, that the fruit should be more than ordinarily fruitful; (ch. xxxvii. 30.) Ye shall eat this year such as grows of itself; food for man shall be (as food for beasts) the spontaneous product of the soil; then Lebanon became a fruitful field, so fruitful, that that which used to be reckoned a fruitful field, in comparison with it, shall be looked upon but as a forest. When a great harvest of souls was gathered in to Christ from among the Gentiles, then the wilderness was turned into a fruitful field, and the Jewish church, that had long been a fruitful field, became a desolate and deserted forest, ch. liv. 1.

In particular, 1. Those that were ignorant shall become intelligent, v. 18. Those that understand not this prophecy, (but it was to them as a sealed book, v. 14.) though they had been educated in the ways of God, shall understand it, and shall acknowledge, not only the hand of God in the event, but the voice of God in the prediction of it. The deaf shall then hear the words of the book: the fulfilling of prophecy is the best exposition of it. The poor Gentiles shall then have divine revelation brought among them; and those that sat in darkness shall see a great light, and those that were blind shall see out of obscurity: for the gospel was sent to them to open their eyes, Acts xxvi. 18. Observe, In order to the making of men fruitful in good affections and actions, the course God's grace takes with them is, to open their under standings, and make them hear the words of God's book.

2. Those that were erroneous shall become orthodox; (v. 24.) That they erred in spirit, that were under mistakes and misapprehensions concerning the words of the book, and the meaning of them, and the use of those declarations, which shall be understood in this prophecy; the Spirit of truth shall rectify their mistakes, and lead them into all truth. This should encourage us to pray for those that have erred, and are deceived, that God can, and often does, bring such to understanding. They that murmured at the truths of God as hard sayings, and leved to pick quarrels with them, shall learn the true meaning of the pictures, and find that they will be better reconciled to them. They that erred concerning the providence of God, as to public affairs, and murmured at the dispensations of it, when they shall see the issue of things, shall better understand them, and be aware of what God was designing in all, Hosea xiv. 9.

3. Those that were melancholy shall become cheerful and prosperous; (v. 19.) The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord. Those who are poor in the world, and poor in spirit, who, being in affliction, accommodate themselves to their affliction— are purely passive, and not passionate, when they see God appearing for them, they shall add, or repeat, joy in the Lord. This intimates, that even in their distress they kept up their joy in the Lord, but now they increased it. Note, They who are poor in the world, and poor in spirit, who are meek in heart, shall soon have cause given them greatly to rejoice in him. When joy in the world is decreasing and fading, joy in God is increasing and getting ground. This shining light shall shine more and more; for that which is aimed at, is that joy may be full. Even the poor among men may rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, and their poverty needs not deprive them of that joy, Heb. ii. 17, 18. And the meek, the humble, the patient, and disposed, shall grow in this joy. Note, the grace of meekness will contribute very much to the increase of our holy joy.

4. The enemies that were formidable shall become despicable. Sennacherib, that terrible one, and his great army, that put the country into such a state of consternation, (as they informed) that they would be quite disabled to do any further mischief. The power of Satan, that terrible one indeed, shall be broken by the prevalence of Christ's gospel; and they that were subject to bondage, through fear of him that had the power of death, shall be delivered, Heb. ii. 14, 15.

5. The persecutors that were vexatious shall be quieted; also those they were troublesome to shall be quiet from the fear of them. To complete the repose of God's people, not only the terrible one from abroad shall be brought to nought, but the scorers at home too shall be consumed and cut off by Hezekiah's reformation. Those are a happy people, and likely to be so, who, when God gives them victory and success against their terrible enemies abroad, take care to suppress vice and profligacy, and the spirit of persecution, those more dangerous enemies at home. Or, They shall be consumed and cut off by the judgments of God, shall be singled out to be made examples of. Or, They shall insensibly waste away, being put to confusion by the fulfilling of those predictions which they had made a jest of.

Observe, That had been the wickedness of these scorers, for which they should be cut off: they had been persecutors of God's people and prophets, probably of the prophet Isaiah particularly, and therefore he complains thus feelingly of them, and of
their subtle malice. Some, as informers and persecutors, others, as judges, did all they could to take away his life; or, at least, his liberty. And this is very applicable to the chief priests and Pharisees, who persecuted Christ and his apostles, and for that sin they and their nation of scorners were cut off and consumed. (1.) They ridiculed the prophets and the serious professors of religion; they despised them, and did their utmost to bring them into contempt and to reduce them to the least seat of the scornful. (2.) They lay in wait for an occasion against them; by their spies they watch iniquity, to see if they can lay hold on any thing that is said or done, that may be called an iniquity. Or, They themselves watch for an opportunity to do mischief, as Judas did to betray our Lord Jesus. (3.) They took advantage against them; they espied the least slip of the tongue; and if a thing were ever so little said amiss, it served them to ground an indictment upon. They made a man, though he were ever so wise and good a man, though he were a man of God, an offender for a word, a word mischance or misplaced, when they could not but know that it was well-meaned. They cavilled at every word that the person spake, though they knew that it was never otherwise spoken, and without any design to affect them. They put the worst construction upon what was said, and made it criminal by strained innuendoes. Those who consider how apt we are to speak unadvisedly, and to mistake what we hear, will think it very unjust and unfair to make a man an offender for a word. (4.) They did all things they could to make their witnesses and their confessions to the advantage of those who were faithfithly with them, and told them of their faults. Those that reproved in the gates, reprovers by office, that were bound by the duty of their place, as prophets, as judges, and magistrates, to shew people their transgressions, they hated these, and laid snares for them, as the Pharisees' emissaries, who were sent to watch our Saviour, that they might entangle him in his talk, (Matt. xxiii. 15.) that they might have something to lay to his charge, which might render him odious to the people, or obnoxious to the government; so persecuted they the prophets; and it is next to impossible for the most cautious to place their words so warily, as to escape such snares. See how base wicked people are, who bear ill-will to those who, out of good-will to them, seek to do them and the world good. 7. Jacob, who thought his family would be extinct, and the covenant of religion quite cut off, shall have the satisfaction of seeing a numerous progeny devoted to God for a generation, v. 23. (1.) He shall see his children; multitudes of believers and praying people, the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham and promising Jacob. Having his power full of these arrows, he shall not be ashamed, (v. 22.) but shall speak with his enemy in the gate, Ps. cx. 17. 5. Christ shall not be ashamed, (ch. 1. 7.) for he shall see his seed; (ch. lii. 10.) he sees some, and foresees more, in the midst of him, flocking to the church, and residing there. (2.) His children are the work of God's hands; being formed by him, they are free for him, his workmanship, created unto good works. (3.) It seems strange to think that their children are God's creatures, the work of the hands of his providence. But it will be much more a comfort to them, to see their children his new creatures, the work of the hands of his grace. (3.) He and his children shall sanctify the name of God as their God, as the Holy One of Israel, and shall bear and worship the God of Israel. This is equal to his being the apple of his eye; for when he is delivered from his contempt and dangers, he shall not magnify himself, but sanctify the Holy One of Jacob. If God make our condition easy, we must endeavour to make his name glorious. Parents and children are then ornaments and comforts indeed to each other, when they join in sanctifying the name of God. When parents give up their children, and children give up themselves, to God to be to him a name and a praise, then the forest will soon become a fruitful field.

CHAP. XXX.

The prophecy of this chapter seems to relate (as that in the chapter before it) to the approaching danger of Jerusalem, of Judah, and of the Jews; and to the period of their destruction. Here is, 1. A just reproof to those who, in that distress, trusted to the Egyptians for help, and were all in a hurry to fetch succours from Egypt, v. 1.-7. II. A terrible threatening against those who slighted the good advice which God by his prophets gave them for the re- pose of their minds in that distress, assuring them that whatever became of others, the judgment would certainly overtake them, v. 8.-17. III. A gracious promise to those who trusted in God, that they should not only escape through the trouble, but should see happy days after it, times of joy and reformation, plenty of the means of grace, and therewith plenty of outward good things and increasing joys and triumphs; (v. 18.-56.) many of these promises are very applicable to gospel grace. IV. A prophecy of the total rout and ruin of the Assyrian army, who should be an instrument of great joy, and an introduction to those happy times, v. 27.-32.

1. WO to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: 2. That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt: 3. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in
ISAIAH, XXXX.

the shadow of Egypt your confusion. 4. For his princes were at Zaan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. 5. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. 6. The burden of the beasts of the south: Into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent. They will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the burdens of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. 7. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this. Their strength is to sit still.

It was often the fault and folly of the people of the Jews, that, when they were insulted by their neighbours on one side, they sought for succour from their neighbours on the other side, instead of looking up to God, and putting their confidence in him. Against the Israelites they sought to the Syrians, 2 Chron. xvi. 2, 3. Against the Syrians they sought to the Assyrians, 2 Kings vii. 7. Against the Assyrians they sought to the Egyptians, and Rabshekech upbraided them with it, 2 Kings xviii. 21. Now observe here, 1. How the sin of theirs is described, and what the end of it was that was prevoxing to God. When they saw themselves in danger and distress, (1.) They would not consult with God. They would do things of their own heads, and not advise with God, though they had a ready and certain way of doing it by Urrim and prophets. They were so confident of the prudence of their own measures, that they thought it needless to consult the oracle; nay, they were not willing to put it to that issue: "They take counsel among themselves, and one from another; but they do not ask counsel, much less will they take counsel of me. They cover with a covering," (they think to secure themselves with one shelter or other, which may serve to cover them from the violence of the storm,) "but not of my Spirit;" (not such as God's by his Spirit, in the mouth of his prophets, which should recommend it to them;) "and therefore it will proceed too short a covering, and a refuge of lies." (2.) They could not confide in God. They did not think it enough to have God on their side, nor were they at all solicitous to make him their Friend, but they strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh; they thought him a powerful ally, and doubted not but to be able to cope with the Assyrians, while they had him for their protection. The shadow of Egypt was set before them instead of the covering in which they wrapped themselves.

2. What was the evil of this sin; (1.) It bespoke them rebellious, children; and a wo is here denounced against them under that character, v. 1. They were, in profession, God's children; but, not trusting in him, they were justly stigmatized as rebellious, for they distrust God's providence, which do in effect, withdraw ourselves from our allegiance. (2.) They added sin to sin. It was sin that brought them into distress; and then, instead of repenting, they trespassed yet against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. And that they abused God's mercies to them, in making them the fuel of their lusts, abused their afflictions too, in making them an excuse for their distrust of God: and so they made it bad worse, and add sin to sin; and they that do so, as they make their own chain heavy, so it is just with God to make their plagues wonderful. Now that which aggravated it was, [1.] That they took so much pains to secure the Egyptians for them; they walk, or go down to Egypt, travel up and down to find an advantageous road thither; but they have not asked at my mouth, never considered whether God would allow and approve of it or no. [2.] That they were at such a vast expense to do it, v. 6. They load the beasts of the south (horses of Egypt, which God had provided for them from Judges) with their riches, fancying, as it is commonly with a people in a fright, that they were safer any where than where they were. Or, they sent their riches thither, as bribes to Pharaoh's courtiers, to engage them in their interests, or as pay for their army. God would have helped them gratis; but if they would have it from the Egyptians, they must pay dearly for it, and their weaklings in other respects, that are so spent will turn to a bad account. They carried their effects to Egypt through a land (so it may be read) of trouble and anguish; that vast bowing wilderness which lay between Cannan and Egypt, whence came the lion and fiery serpent, Deut. viii. 13. They would venture through that dangerous wilderness, to bring what they had to Egypt, which may be meant of Egypt itself, or the march which had been to Ismael, and possibly therefore a land of trouble and anguish, and which abounded in ravenous and venemous creatures. See what dangers men run into, that forsake God; and what dangers they will run into, in pursuance of their carnal confidences, and their expectations from the creature.

What should be the consequence of it; (1.) The Egyptians would receive their ambassadors, would speak kindly to them, and be willing to treat with them; (v. 6.) His princes were at Zaan, at Pharaoh's court there, and had their audience of the king, who encouraged them to depend upon his friendship, and the succours he would send them. But, (2.) They would not answer their expectation, they could not profit them, v. 5. For God says, They shall not profit them; (v. 6.) and every creature is that to us, (and no more,) which he makes it to be. Either, the forces they were to furnish them with, could not be raised in time; or, when they were raised, they were not fit for service, and they would not venture any of their veteran troops in the expedition; or, the march was so long, that they could not come up when they had nothing to do with their own people, and were unacquainted with them, and not in a state to be cordial to Israel, but would secretly incline to the Assyrians, upon some account or other: The Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose, v. 7. They shall hinder and hurt, instead of helping. And therefore, (3.) These people, that were now so fond of the Egyptians, would at length be ashamed of them, and of all their expectations from them, and confidence in them, v. 7. The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings, (ch. xviii. 1.) that was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of contempt from them, and confidence in them, v. 5. "The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings, (ch. xviii. 1.) that was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of contempt from them, and confidence in them, v. 5." "The strength of Pharaoh, which was your pride, shall be your shame; all your neighbours will upbraid you, and you will upbraid yourselves, with your folly in trusting to it. And the shadow of Egypt, that land shadowing with wings, (ch. xviii. 1.) that was your confidence, shall be your confusion; it will not only disappoint you, and be the matter of contempt from them, and confidence in them, v. 5."

God afterward threatens the ruin of Egypt for this very thing, because they had dealt treacherously with Israel, and been a staff of a reed to them, Ezek. xxix. 6, 7. The princes and ambassadors of Israel, that were so forward to court an alliance with them, when they came among them, shall see so much of their weakness and treachery, the necessity, that they shall all be ashamed of a people that could not be a help or profit to them, but a shame and reproach, v. 5. Those that trust in God, and
his power, providence, and promise, are never made ashamed of their hope: but they that put confidence in any creature, will, sooner or later, find it a reproach to them. God is true, and may be trusted; but every man a liar, and must be suspected. The Creator is a Rock of ages, the creature a broken reed; we cannot expect too little from man, or too much from God.

4. The use and application of all this; (v. 7.) according to these terms of the previous matter, this project of theirs, I have published it, that all might take notice of it. I have pressed it as one in earnest. Their strength is to sit still, in an humble dependence upon God, and his goodness, and a quiet submission to his will; and not to vary about, and agitate themselves about obtaining help from this and the other creature. If we sit still in a day of distress, hoping and quietly waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and using only lawful, regular methods for our own preservation, this will be the strength of our souls, both for services and sufferings, and it will engage divine strength for us. We weaken ourselves, and provoke God to withdraw from us, when we make flesh our arm, for then our heart departs from the Lord. When we leave ourselves by seeking for help from creatures, we shall find it the best way of recruiting ourselves, to repose in the Creator; Here I am, let him do with me as he pleases.

3. Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever; 9 That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: 10. Which say to the seers, See not: and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things: speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits: 11. Get ye out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us. 12. Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon: 13. Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. 14. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit. 15. For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. 16. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. 17. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee; till ye be left as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on a hill.

Here, 1. The preeace is very awful; the prophet must not only preach this, but he must write it, (v. 8.) write it in a table, to be hung up, and exposed to public view; he must carefully note it, not in loose papers which might be lost or torn, but in a book, to be preserved for posterity in perpetuum rei memoriam—for a standing testimony against this wicked generation; let it remain not only to the next, but succeed for ages, even though the whole world stands; and so it shall, for the book of the scriptures, no doubt, shall continue, and be read, to the end of time. Let it be written, 1. To shame the men of the present age, who would not hear and heed it when it was spoken; let it be written, that it may not be lost; their children may profit by it, though they will not. 2. To justify God in the judgments he was about to bring upon them; people will be tempted to think he was too hard upon them, and over severe, unless they know how very bad they were, how very provoking, and what fair means God tried with them before he brought it to this extremity. 3. For warning to others not to do as they did, lest they fare as they fared; it is designed for admonition to those of remote places and ages, even though the end of the world be not come, yet the ends of the world are come, 1 Cor. x. 11. It may be of use for God's ministers not only to preach, but to write; for that which is written remains.

II. The character given of the profane and wicked Jews is very sad; he must, if he will draw them in their own colours, write this concerning them, (and we are sure he does not bear false witness against them,) for the judgment of God is according to truth,) That this is a rebellious people, v. 9. The Jews were, for aught we know, the only professing people God had then in the world, and yet many of them were a rebellious people. 1. They rebelled against their own convictions and covenants; for they are lying children, that will not stand to what they say, that promise fair, but perform nothing; when he took them into covenant with him, he said of them, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie; (ch. lxiii. 8,) but they proved otherwise. 2. They rebelled against the divine authority; they are children that will not hear the law of the Lord, nor heed it, but will do as they have a mind, let God himself say what he will to them contrary.

III. The charge drawn up against them is very high, and the sentence passed upon them very dreadful.

Two things they here stand charged with, and their doom is read for both, a fearful doom.

1. They forbade the prophets to speak to them in God's name, and to deal faithfully with them. This their sin is described, v. 10, 11. They acted themselves as devilish agents, and the prophets hinder them from preaching, or, at least, from dealing plainly with them in their preaching, did so banter them and browbeat them, that they did, in effect, say to the seers, See not. They had the light, but they loved darkness rather. It was their privilege, that they had seers among them, but they did what they could to put out their eyes; that they had prophets among them, but they did what they could to stop their mouths; for they tormented them in their wicked ways, Rev. xi. 10. These that silence good ministers, and discomfit good preaching, are justly counted, and called, rebels against God. See what it was in the prophets' preaching, with which they found themselves aggrieved. (1.) The prophets told them of their faults, and warned them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and they could not bear that. They must speak to them smooth things; must flatter them in their
sins, and say that they did well, and there was no harm, no peril, in the course of life they lived. Let a thing be ever so right and true, if it be not smooth, they will not hear it. But if it be agreeable to the good opinion they have of themselves, and will confirm them in that, though it be ever so false, and ever so great a cheat upon them, they will have it prophesied to them. Those deserve to be deceived, that desire to be so. (2.) The prophets dropped to them, as the angel did to Jacob, like the angel in Balaam's road, with the sword of God's wrath drawn in their hand; so that they could not proceed without terror. And this they took amiss; when they went on fraudulently in the way of their hearts, they said to the prophet, "Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path. What do you do in our way? Cannot you let us alone?" Those see their hearts fully set in to do evil, that bid their faithful monitors to stand out of their way. Forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten? 2 Chron. xxv. 16. (3.) The prophets were continually telling them of the Holy One of Israel, what an Enemy he is to sin, and how severely he will reckon with sinners; and this they could not endure to hear. But the thing itself, and the expression of the prophet, were too serious for them; and therefore if the prophets will speak to them, they will make it their bargain that they shall not call God the Holy One of Israel; for God's holiness is that attribute which wicked people most dread. Let us no more be troubled with that state-precipice (as Mr. White calls it) to your impertinent harangues. Those have reason to fear persisting in their sins, that cannot hear to be frightened out of them.

Now what is the doom passed upon them for? We have it v. 12, 13. Observe, [1.] Who it is that gives judgment upon them; Thus saith the Holy One of Israel. That title of God which they particularly except against, the prophet makes use of. Faithful ministers will not be driven from using such expressions as are proper to awaken sinners, though they be displeasing. We must tell men that God is the Holy One of Israel, and so they shall find him, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. [2.] What the ground of the judgment is; because they despise this word; either in general, every word that the prophets said to them; or, this word in particular, which speaks God the Holy One of Israel; they despise the word of God, and therefore do not fear nor make them to be aware of it, nor make it their hope, to put any confidence in it; but, rather than they will be behelden to the Holy One of Israel; will trust in oppression and perverseness, in the wealth they have got, and the interests they have made, by fraud and violence, or in the sinful methods they have taken for their own security, in contradiction to God and his will. On these they say, and therefore they lay it to us, which, if any weight be laid upon it, comes down, nay, which often sinks with its own weight." The ruin they would hereby bring upon themselves, should be, First, A surprising ruin; the breaking shall come suddenly, at an instant, when they do not expect it; which will make it the more frightful; and when they are not prepared or provided for it, which will make it the more fatal. Secondly, An utter ruin, universal and irreparable; "You and all your confidences shall be not only weak as the potter's clay, (ch. xxxix. 16.) but broken to pieces as the potter's vessel. He that has the rod of iron shall break it, (Ps. ii. 9.) and he shall not spare, nor have any regard to it, nor be in care to preserve or keep whole any part of it. But when once it is broken, so as to be unfit for use, let it be dashed, let it be crushed, all to pieces, so that there may not remain one shard big enough to take up a little water—two things we have daily, broken to pieces, and which were once polished, and shapen like a piece of a broken pitcher. They shall not only be as a bowing wall, (Ps. lix. 3.) but as a broken mug or glass, which are good for nothing, nor can ever be made whole again.

2. They slighted the gracious directions God gave them, not only how to secure themselves, and make themselves safe, but how to compose themselves, save themselves easy; they would take their own way, v. 15.—17. Observe here,

(1.) The method God put them into for salvation and strength. The God that knew them, and knew what was proper for them, and desired their welfare, gave them this prescription; and it is recommended to us all. [1.] Would we be saved from the evil of every calamity, guarded against the temptations of every hour, and prevented from the crimes which are the only evil things in it? It must be in returning, and rest; in returning to God, and repeting in him as our Rest. Let us return from our evil ways, into which we have gone aside, and rest and settle in the way of God and duty, and that is the way to be saved; *Return from this project of going down to Egypt, and rest satisfied in the will of God, and to him and his service, as the vineyard of his honour.* In returning, in the thorough reformation of your hearts and lives; and in rest, in an entire submission of your souls to God, and a complacency in him, you shall be saved. [2.] Would we be strengthened to do what is required of us, and to bear what is laid upon us? It must be in quietness, and in confidence; we must keep our spirits calm and sedate by a continual dependence upon God, and his power and goodness; we must retire into ourselves with a holy quietness, suppressing all turbulent and tumultuous passions, and keeping the peace in our own minds. And we must rely upon God with a holy confidence that he can do what he will, and will do what is best for his people. And this will be our strength; it will inspire us with such holy fortitude that we will carry us with ease and courage through all the difficulties of life. [3.] The contempt they put upon this prescription; they would not take God's counsel, though it was so much for their own good. And justly will they die of their disease, that will not take God for their Physician. We are certainly enemies to ourselves, if we will not be subjected to him. They would not so much as obey the method prescribed; *But ye said, Nothing, we will go our own ways,* we will fly upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurr'ry lither and thither to fetch in foreign aids." They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he does. When Semach-bir took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children, could not be persuaded to sit still, and to come even, and to expect God's hand; nor will not compose themselves, for we will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurr'ry lither and thither to fetch in foreign aids." They think themselves wiser than God, and that they know what is good for themselves better than he does. When Semach-bir took all the fenced cities of Judah, those rebellious children, could not be persuaded to sit still, and to come even, and to expect God's hand; nor will not compose themselves, for we will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift; we will hurr'ry lither and thither to fetch in foreign aids. (2.) The sentence passed upon them for this.

(1.) Their sin shall be their punishment; *You will flee,* and therefore you shall flee; you will be upon the full speed, and therefore you shall not escape. *You will trust in the horse.* The dogs are most apt to run, but there is a tail after him that rides fast. The conquerors protected those that sat still, but pursued those that made
18. And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are they that wait for him. 19. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. 20. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: 21. And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. 22. Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence. 23. Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. 24. The oxen likewise, and the young asses that ear the ground, shall eat clean provender which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. 25. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. 26. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breas of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

The closing words of the foregoing paragraph, (Ye shall be left as a beacon upon a mountain,) some understand as a promise, that a remnant of them should be reserved as monuments of mercy. Here the prophet tells them what good times should succeed these calamities; or, the first words in this paragraph may be read by way of antithesis, Notwithstanding this, yet will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious. The prophet, having showed that those who made Egypt their confidence would be ashamed of it, here shows that they who sat still and made God alone their Confidence, would have the comfort of it. It is matter of comfort to the people of God, when the times are very bad, that all will be well yet, well with them that fear God, when we say to the wicked, It shall be ill with them. 1. God will be gracious to them, and will have mercy on them: that is the foundation of all good. 2. Then we find favour with God, and he have mercy upon us, we shall have comfort, and we may be happy in the time that we have been afflicted. 2. He will stir up himself to deliver you, will be exalted, will be raised up out of his holy habitation, (Zech. ii. 13,) that he may appear for you in more than ordinary instances of power and goodness; and thus he will be exalted; he will glorify his own name, that is it he aims at in having mercy upon you. 3. He will be very gracious; (v. 19,) and this, in answer to prayer, which makes his kindness doubly kind: He will be gracious to thee, at the voice of thy cry, the cry of thy necessity, when that is most urgent; the cry of thy prayer, when that is most fervent. When he shall hear it, there needs no more, at the first word he will answer thee, and say, Here I am." Herein he is very gracious indeed.

In particular, (1.) Those who were disturbed in the possession of their estates, shall again enjoy them quietly. When the danger is over, the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem, as they used to do; they shall dwell safely, free from the fear of evil. (2.) Those who were all in tears shall have cause to rejoice, and shall weep no more; and those who did not weep in Zion, the holy city, will find cause there to wipe away tears from their eyes. Now this is grounded upon two great truths; (1.) That the Lord is a God of judgment; he is both wise and just in all the dispositions of his providence, true to his word, and tender of his people. If he correct his children, it is with judgment; (Jer. x. 24,) with moderation and discretion. (2.) That therefore all those are blessed, who wait for him; who not only wait on him with their prayers, but wait for him with their hopes; who will not take any indirect course to extricate themselves out of their straits, or anticipate their deliverance, but patiently expect God's appearances for them in his own way and time. Because God is infinitely wise, these are truly happy who refer themselves to him.

II. They shall not again know the want of the means of grace, v. 20, 21. Here, 1. It is supposed that they might be brought into straits and troubles, after this deliverance, which was wrought for them, was promised (v. 19,) that they should weep no more, and that God would be gracious to them; and yet here it is taken for granted that God may give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, prisoners' fare, (1 Kings xxii. 27,) coarse and sorry food, such as the poor use. When one trouble is over, we know not how soon another may succeed; and we may have an interest in the favour of God, and such consolations as are sufficient to prohbit weeping, and yet may have bread of adversity given us to eat, and water of affliction to drink. Let us therefore not judge of love or hatred by what is before us. 2. It is promised that their eyes should see their teachers, that they should have faithful
ISAIAH, XXX.

[Excerpts from the text are not transcribed due to the presence of complex and standardized religious language, requiring special knowledge to accurately interpret.

of God, ch. xxxvn. 30. God would thus repair the
asses they sustained by that devastation. 3. Not
only the tillage, but the pasture ground, is made
remarkably fruitful; *The cattle shall feed in large
pastures; those that are at grass, shall have room
eugh, and the oxen and asses that are kept up for
use, to ear the ground, which must be the better fed
for their being worked, they shall eat clean proven-
der: the corn shall not be given them in the chaff as
usual, to make it go further, but good clean corn
fit for man's using; the most was bestowed on the field:
the burdens shall share in the abundance; it is
fit they should, for they gazed under the burlten
of the curse: which man's sin has brought upon the
earth. 4. Even the tops of the mountains, that used
to be barren, shall be so well watered with the rain
of heaven, that there shall be rivers and streams
there, and running down thence to the valleys, (v. 25.)
and this in the day of the great slaughter that
should be made by the angel in the camp of the As-
syrians; when the towers and batteries they had
erected for the carrying on of the siege of Jeru-
alem, the army being slain, should fall of course. It
is probable that this was fulfilled in the letter of it,
and that about the same time that that army was cut
off, there were extraordinary rains, in mercy to the
people.

V. The effect of all this should be extraordinary
comfort and joy to the people of God. (v. 26.)
Light, that is, knowledge, shall increase; when the
prophecies are accomplished, they shall be fully
understood; or, rather, triumph shall the light of
the joy that is sown for the righteous, shall now come
up with a great increase: the light of the sun shall
become as bright, and as strong as that of the sun,
and that of the sun shall increase proportionably,
and be as the light of seven days; every one shall be
much more cheerful, and appear much more plea-
sant, than usual. There shall be a high spring-tide
of joy in Judah and Jerusalem, upon occasion of the
ruin of the Assyrian army, when the Lord binds up
the breach of his people; not only saves them from
being further wounded, but heals the wounds that
have been given them by this invasion, and makes
up all their losses. The great distress they were
reduced to, their despair of relief, and the sudden-
ness of their deliverance, would much augment
their joy. This is not unprofitably applied by many to
the light which the gospel brought into the world to
them that were in darkness, which as far exceeded
the Old Testament light, as that of the sun does
that of the moon, and which proclaims healing to
the broken-hearted, and the binding up of their
wounds.

27. Behold, the name of the Lord cometh
from far, burning with his anger, and the
burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of
indignation, and his tongue as a devouring
fire: 28. And his breath, as an overflowing
stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck,
to silt the nations with the sieve of vanity:
and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the
people, causing them to err. 29. Ye shall
have a song, as in the night when a holy
solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as
when one goeth with a pipe to come into the
mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One
of Israel. 30. And the Lord shall cause
his glorious voice to be heard, and shall
show the lighting down of his arm, with the
indignation of his anger, and with the flame
of a devouing fire, with scattering, and tem-
pest, and hailstones. 31. For through the
voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be
beaten down, which smote with a rod. 32
And in every place where the grounded
staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay
upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps:
and in battles of shaking will he fight with
it. 33. For Tophet is ordained of old; yet,
for the king it is prepared: he hath made
it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and
much wood: the breath of the Lord, like
a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

This terrible prediction of the ruin of the Assy-
rian army, though it is a threatening to them, is part
of the promise to the Israel of God: that God would
not only punish the Assyrians for the mischief they
had done to the Israel of God, but would disable
and deter them from doing the like again; and this
prediction, which would now shortly be accom-
plished, would ratify and confirm the foregoing
promises, which should be accomplished in the latter
days.

Here is,
I. God Almighty angry, and coming forth in anger
against the Assyrians; he is here introduced in all
the power and all the terror of his wrath, v. 27.
The name of Jehovah, which the Assyrians dis-
dain, and set at a distance from them, as if they
were out of reach, and it could do them no harm,
leads, it comes from far; as a messenger in the
name of the Lord comes from as far off as heaven
itself; he is a messenger of wrath, burning with his anger.
God's lips are full of indignation at the blasphemy
of Rabshekar, who compared the God of Israel
with the gods of the heathen; his tongue is as a de-
vouring fire, for he can speak his proud enemies to
ruin; his very breath comes with as much force
as an overflowing stream, and with it he shall slay
the wicked, ch. xi. 4. He does not stifle or smother
his resentments, as men do theirs, when they are
either causeless or importent; but he shall cause his
glorious voice to be heard, when he proclaims war
with an enemy that sets him at defiance, v. 30. He
shall display the indignation of his anger, anger in
the highest degree; it shall be as the flame of a de-
vouring fire, which carries and consumes all before
it; with lightning or dissipation, and with tempest
and hailstones, all which are the formidable phe-
nomena of nature, and therefore expressive of the
terror of the Almighty God of nature.

II. The execution done by this anger of the Lord.
Men are often angry, when they can only threaten,
and talk big; but when God causes his glorious
voice to be heard, that shall not be all, he will show
the lighting down of his arm too, v. 36. The op-
erations of his providence shall accomplish the me-
ances of his word; they that would not see the lift-
ing up of his arm, (ch. xxvi. 11.) shall feel the
lighting down of it, and find, to their cost, that the
burden thereof is heavy, (v. 27.) so heavy, that
they cannot bear it. but his arm shall be unavoidably
sink and be crushed under it. Who knows the
power of his anger, or imagines what an
offended God can do?

Five things are here prepared for the execution:
1. Here is an overflowing stream, that shall reach
to the midst of the neck, shall quite overwhelm
the whole body of the army; and Semachethrib, only,
the head be head, shall keep above water and escape
this stroke, while yet he is reserved for another in
the house of Nisroch his god. The Assyrian arrow
had been to Judah as an overflowing stream, reaching
even to the neck, (ch. viii. 7, 8,) and now the breath of God’s wrath will be so to it.

2. Here is a siege of vanity, with which God will sift the nations of which the Assyrian army was composed, ch. xlii. 28. The great God can sift nations, for they are all before him as the small dust of the balance; he will sift them, not to gather out of them any that should be preserved, but so as to shake them one against another, put them into contention, and shake them all away at last; for it is a sieve of vanity (which retains nothing) that they are all before him. So when the Assyrians were put into contention, they were destroyed, and was sung when a holy solemnity was kept in a grave and religious manner. Our joy in the fall of the church’s enemies must be a holy joy, gladness of heart, as when one goes, with a pipe, (such as the sons of the prophets used when they prophesied, 1 Sam. x. 4.) to the mountain of the Lord, there to celebrate the praises of the Mighty One of Israel. Nay, in every place where the divine vengeance shall pursue the Assyrians, they shall not only fall unanned, but all their neighbours shall attend their fall with tabrets and harps, pleased to see how God, in battles of shaking, such as shake them out of the world, fights with them; (v. 32.) for when the worked perish, there is shouting; and it is with a particular satisfaction that wise and good men see the ruin of those who, like the Assyrians, have insolently bid defiance to God, and trampled upon all mankind.

CHAP. XXXXI.

This chapter is an abridgment of the foregoing chapter; the heads of it are much the same. Here is, 1. Two to those who, when the Assyrian army invaded them, trusted to the Egyptians, and not to God for succour, v. 1. 3. Assurance given of the care God would take of Jerusalem in that time of danger and distress, v. 4. 5. 3. A call to repentance and reformation, v. 7. 8. A prediction of the fall of the Assyrian army, and the fright which the Assyrian king should thereby be put into, v. 5. 9.

1. WO to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD! 2. Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. 3. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fall together. 4. For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abuse himself for the noise of them: so shall the LORD of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. 5. As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it, and passing over he will preserve it.

This is the last of four chapters together, that begin with wo; and they are all woes to the sinners.
EGYPT, Jerusalem's presence better love to
and the church will not secure them from divine woes, if they live in
contempt of divine laws. Observe,
I. What the sin was, that is here reproved, v. 1.
1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to
them, as if happy were the people that had the
Egyptians for their friends and allies, they
down to. 2. For here, we trust that they go down to
Egypt for help; for men's relation to the church
will not secure them from divine woes, as they live in
contempt of divine laws. Observe,
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1. Idolizing the Egyptians, and making court to
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will not secure them from divine woes, as they live in
contempt of divine laws. Observe,
As an eagle stirs up her young when they are in danger, takes them and bears them on her wings, so the Lord led Israel out of Egypt. (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12.) and shall make him a tender concern for them that he had then, so that they need not flee into Egypt again for shelter. Defending, he will deliver it; he will so defend it as to secure the continuance of its safety; not defend it for awhile, and abandon it at last, but defend it so that it shall not fall into the enemy's hand: I will defend this city, saith the Lord, exod. xxvii. 23, he will preserve it; the word for passing over is used in that sense only here and Exod. xii. 12, 23, 27, concerning the destroying angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites, when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians, to which story this refers here; the Assyrian army was to be routed by a destroying angel, who should pass over Jerusalem, though that deserved to be destroyed, and draw his sword against the besiegers. They shall be slain by the pestilence, but none of the besieged shall take the infection. Thus he will again pass over the houses of his people, and secure them.

6. Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. 7. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin. 3. Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a man, shall devour him; but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited. 9. And he shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

This explains the foregoing promise of the deliverance of Jerusalem; she shall be fitted for deliverance, and then it shall be wrought for her; for in that method God delivers.

1. Jerusalem shall be reformed, and so she shall be delivered from her enemies within her walls, v. 6, 7. Here is, (1.) A gracious call to repentance. This was the Lord's voice crying in the city, the voice of the man, the voice of the sword, and the voice of the prophets interpreting the audience; "Turn ye, O turn ye now, from your evil ways, unto God, return to your allegiance to him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted, from whom you, O children of Israel, have revolted." He reminds them of their birth and parentage, that they were children of Israel, and therefore under the highest obligations imaginable to the God of Israel to return to him; and he gives them the laws and as an encouragement to them to return to him. They have been backsliding children, yet children; therefore let them return, and their backslidings shall be healed; they have deeply revolted, with great address, as they supposed, the revolters are profound; (Hos. v. 2) but it will prove that they have revolted dangerously; the stain of their sins is gone deep into their nature, not to be easily got out, like the blackness of the Ethiopian; They have deeply corrupted themselves, (Hos. ix. 9,) they have sunk deep into misery, and cannot easily recover themselves; therefore you have need to hasten your return to God. (2.) A gracious promise of the good success of this call; (v. 7.) In that day every man shall cast away his idols, in obedience to Hezekiah's orders, which, till they were alarmed by the Assyrian invasion, many refused to do. That is a happy

fright which frightens us from our sins. It shall be a general reformation; every man shall cast away his own idols; shall begin with them, before he undertakes to demolish other people's idol, which there will be no need of, when every man reforms himself. It shall be a thorough reformation; for they shall part with their idolatry, their beloved sin, with their idols of silver and gold, their idols that they are most fond of. Many make an idol of their silver and gold, and by the love of that are down to revolt from God; but those that turn to God cast away their idols, they are not to be ready to part with it when God calls. It shall be a reformation upon a right principle, a principle of piety, not of politics, they shall cast away their idols, because they have been unto them for a sin, an occasion of sin; therefore they will have nothing to do with them, though they had been the work of their own hands, and upon that account they had a particular fondness for them. Sin is the work of our own hands, but in working it we have been working our own ruin, and therefore we must cast it away; and those are strangely wedded to it, who will not be prevailed with to cast it away, when they see that otherwise they themselves will be cast-aways. Some make this to be only a prediction that those who trust in idols, when they find they stand no more in them, will cast away their idol. But it agrees so exactly with ch. xxx. 22, that I rather take it as a promise of a sincere reformation.

2. Jerusalem's besiegers shall be routed, and so she shall be delivered from the enemies about her walls; the former makes way for this. If a people return to God, they may leave it to him to plead their cause against their enemies. Then, when they have cast away their idols, then shall the Assyrian fall, v. 8, 9. (1.) The army of the Assyrians shall be laid dead upon the spot by the sword, not of a mighty man, nor of a mean man, nor of any man at all, either Israelite or Egyptian, not forcibly by the sword of a mighty man, nor surreptitiously by the sword of a mean man, but by the sword of an angel, who strikes more strongly than a mighty man, and yet more secretly than a mean man; by the sword of the Lord, and his power and wrath in the hand of the angel: thus the young men of the army shall melt, and he discomfited, and become tributaries to death. When God has work to do against the enemies of his church, we expect it must be done by mighty men and mean men, officers and soldiers; whereas God can, if he pleases, do it without either. He needs not armies of men, who has legions of angels at command, Matth. xxvi. 53. (2.) The king of Assyria shall flee for the same, shall flee from that invisible sword, hoping to get out of the reach of it; and he shall make the best of his way to his own dominions, shall pass over to some strong hold of his own, for fear lest the Jews and the inhabitants of Jerusalem should put an end to his life. Sennacherib had been very confident that he should make himself master of Jerusalem, and in the most insolent manner had set both God and Hezekiah at defiance; yet now he is made to tremble for fear of both. God can strike a terror into the bravest of men, and make the stoutest heart to tremble. See Job xviii. 11, 12. His army shall be afraid of the ensign, shall be in a continual fright at the remembrance of the ensign in the air, which perhaps the destroying angel displayed before he gave the fatal blow. Or, they shall be afraid of every ensign they see, suspecting it is a party of the Jews pursuing them. The banner that God displays for the encouragement of his people, (Ps. lx. 4) will be a terror to his and their enemies. Thus he cuts off the spirit of princes, and is terrible to the kings of the earth. But who will
do this? It is the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem; [1.] Whose residence is there, and who there keeps house, as a man does where his fire and his oven are; it is the city of the great King, and let not the Assyrians think to turn him out of his possession of his own house. [2.] Who is there a consuming Fire to all his enemies, and will make them as a fiery oven in the day of his wrath, Ps. xxi. 9. He is himself a Wall of fire round about Jerusalem, so that whoever assaults her, does it at his peril, Zech. ii. 5. Rev. vi. 5. [3.] Who has his altar there, on which the holy fire is continually kept burning, and sacrifices daily offered to his honour, and with which he is well pleased; and therefore he will defend this city, especially having an eye to the great Sacrifice which was there also to be offered, of which all the sacrifices were types. If we keep up the fire of holy love and devotion in our hearts and houses, we may depend upon God to be a Protection to us and them. 

CHAP. XXXII.

This chapter seems to be such a prophecy of the reign of Hezekiah, as amounts to an abridgment of the history of it, and this with an eye to the kingdom of the Messiah, whose government was typified by the thrones of David, which remained, as it were, the Son of David. Here is, I. A prophecy of that good work of reformation with which he should begin his reign, and the happy influence it should have upon the people, who had been wickedly corrupted and defiled in the reign of his predecessor, v. 1-8. II. A prophecy of the great disturbance that would be given to the kingdom in the middle of his reign by the Assyrian invasion, v. 9-14. III. A promise of better times afterward, toward the latter end of his reign, in respect both of piety and peace, (v. 15-20,) which promise may be supposed to look as far forward as the days of the Messiah. 

1. BEHOLD, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. 2. And a man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 3. And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim; and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. 4. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly. 5. The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. 6. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry; and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. 7. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. 8. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand. 

We have here the description of a flourishing kingdom; "Blessed art thou, O land, when it is thus with thee, when kings, princes, and people, are, in their places, such as they should be." It may be taken as a directory both to magistrates and subjects, what both ought to do; or as a panegyric to Hezekiah, who ruled well, and saw something of the happy effects of his good government: and it was designed to make the people sensible how happy they were under his administration, and how careful they should be to improve the advantages of it, and withal to direct them to look for the kingdom of Christ, and the times of reformation which that kingdom should introduce. It is here promised, and prescribed, for the comfort of the church: 1. That magistrates should do their duty in their places, and the powers answer the great ends for which they were ordained of God, v. 1, 2. 1. There shall be a king and princes that shall reign and defend Jerusalem; for it cannot go well when there is no king in Israel. The princes must have a king, a monarch over them as supreme, in whom they may unite; and the king must have princes under him as officers, by whom he may act, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. They both shall know their place, and fill it up; the king shall reign, and yet, without any diminution to his just prerogative, the princes shall rule in a lower sphere, and all for the public good. 2. They shall use their power according to law, and not against it; they shall reign in righteousness and in judgment, with wisdom and equity, protecting the good, and punishing the bad: and those kings and princes Christ owns as reigning by him, who decrees justice; (Prov. viii. 13.) such a King, such a Prince Christ himself is. He reigns by rule, and in righteousness will reign, as we are taught, Isa. i. 27. They shall be great blessings to the people, v. 2. A man, that man, that king that reigns in righteousness, shall be as a hiding-place. When princes are as they should be, people are as they would be. (1.) They are sheltered and protected from many mischief; this good magistrate is a covert to the subject from the tempest of injury and violence; he guards the poor and feeble people, that they be not made a prey of the mighty. Whither should oppressed innocence flee, when blasted by reproach, or borne down by violence, but to the magistrate as its hiding-place? To him it appeals, and by him it is righted. (2.) They are refreshed and comforted with many blessings; this good magistrate gives such countenance to those that are poor, and in distress, and sorely persecuted, as it is praiseworthy, that he is as rivers of water in a dry place, cooling and cherishing the earth, and making it fruitful; and as the shadow of a great rock, under which a poor traveller may shelter himself from the scorching heat of the sun in a weary land. It is a great reviving to a good man, who makes conscience of doing his duty, in the midst of contempt and contradiction, at length to be backed, and favoured, and smiled upon, in it by a good magistrate. All this, and much more, the Man Christ Jesus is to all the willing, faithful, subjects of his kingdom. When the greatest evils befal us, not only the wind, but the tempest, when storms of guilt and wrath beset us, and beat upon us, they drive us to Christ, and in him we are not only safe, but satisfied, and our eyes shall see rivers of water for them that hunger and thirst after righteousness, all the refreshment and comfort that a needy soul can desire, and the shadow, not of a tree, which sun or rain may beat through, but of a rock, of a great rock, which reaches a great way for the shelter of the traveller. Some observe here, that as the covert, and the hiding-place, and the rock, do those who receive the bettering of the wind and storm, to save those from them that take shelter in them, so Christ bore the storm himself, to keep it off from us. 11. That subjects shall do their duty in their places. 1. They shall be willing to be taught, and to understand things aright; they shall lay aside their
prejudices against their rulers and teachers, and submit to the light and power of truth, v. 3. When this blessed work of reformation is set on foot, and men do their parts towards it, God will not be without any of them that see of the prophets, the seers, shall not be dim; but God will bless them with visions, to be by them communicated to the people; and those that read the word written, shall no longer have a vail upon their hearts, but shall see things clearly; then the ears of them that hear the word preached, shall bearken diligently, and readily receive what they hear; and not by will generation, as of the people, as it was to be done by the grace of God, especially gospel-grace; for the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made, has new-made, even both of them. 2. There shall be a wonderful change wrought in them by that which is taught them, v. 4. (1.) They shall have a clear head, and be able to discern things that differ, and distinguish concerning them. The heart of those that were hasty and rash, and could not take time to digest and consider things, shall now be cured of their precipitation, and shall understand knowledge, for the Spirit of God will open their understanding; this blessed work Christ wrought in his disciples after his resurrection, (Luke xxiv. 43.) as a specimen of what he would do for all, in giving them an understanding, 1 John v. 17. The Spirit of God and the Father, and the world, are more likely to be effectual, when their subjects allow themselves liberty to consider, and to think, so freely as to take things right. (2.) They shall have a ready utterance; the tongue of the stammerers, that used to blunder whenever they spake the things of God, shall now be ready to speak plainly, as those that understand what they speak of, that believe, and therefore speak. There shall be a great increase of such be distinguished, and methodical knowledge in the things of God, that those from whom one would not have expected it, shall speak intelligently of those things, very much to the honour of God, and the edification of others. Their hearts being full of this good matter, their tongues shall be as the pen of a ready writer, Ps. xlv. 1. 3. The differences between good and evil, virtue and vice, shall be confounded by those who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; (v. 5.) The vifl shall no more be called liberal; (1.) Bad men shall no more be preferred by the prince. When a king reigns in justice, he will not put those in places of honour and power that are ill-natured, and of base and sordid souls, and care not what injury or mischief they do, so they may but compass their own ends. Such are vile persons; (as Antichus is called, Dan. xi. 21.) when they are advanced, they are called liberal and bountiful, they are called benefactors, (Luke xxii. 25.) but it shall not always be thus; when the world grows wiser, men shall be preferred according to their merit; and honour (which was never thought seemly for a fool, Prov. xxvi. 1.) shall no longer be thrown away upon such. (2.) Bad men shall be more under the observation of God; and their vice, disguised with the colours of virtue, shall no more be said to Nabal, Thou art Nabal; (so the words are;) such a covetous microworm as Nabal was, a fool but for his money, shall not be complimented with the title of a gentleman, or a prince; nor shall they call a churl, that minds none but himself, does no good with what he has, but is an uprooter of other men's goods, or even those, they shall not say of him, He is rich; for so the word signifies: those only are to be reckoned rich, that are rich in good works; not those that have abundance, but those that use it well. In short, it is well with a people, when men are generally valued by their virtue, and usefulness, and beneficence to mankind, and not by their wealth, or titles of honour. Whether this was fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, and how far it refers to the kingdom of Christ, (in which we are sure men are judged by what they are, not by what they have, and men's character mistaken,) we will not say; but it prescribes an excellent rule both to prince and people, to respect men according to their personal merit.

To enforce this rule, here is a description both of the vile person and of the liberal; and by it we shall see such a vast difference between them, that we must quite forget ourselves if we pay that respect to the vile person and the churl, which is due only to the liberal.

[1.] A vile person and a churl will do mischief, and the more if he be preferred, and have power in his hand; his honours will make him worse and not better, v. 6, 7. See the character of these base ill-conditioned men. First, They are always plotting some unjust thing or other, designing ill either to particular persons, or to the public, and contriv- ing how to bring it about; and so many silly pikes they have to gratify, and mean revenues, that there appears not in them the least spark of generosity; their hearts will be still working some injurious or other. Observe, There is the work of the heart, as well as the work of the hands; as thoughts are words to God, so designs are works in his account. So that what we may see in their plots by trick and dissimulation, when they are meditating mischief, they practise hypocrisy, feign themselves just men, Luke xx. 20. The most abominable mischiefs shall be disguised with the most plausible pretences of devotion to God, regard to man, and concern for some common good. These are the vilest of men, that intend the worst mis- chiefs when they speak fair. Thirdly, They speak ill of the dead. When they are in a passion, you will see what they will say of the dead to those about them, which no way becomes men of rank and honour; or, in giving verdict or judgment, they villanously put false colours upon things, to pervert justice. Fourthly, They afflict God, who is a righteous God, and loves righteousness: they utter error against the Lord, and therein they practise pro- faneness; for so the word signifies, which we translate hypocrisy. They give an unjust sentence, and then profanely make use of the name of God for the ratification of it; as if, because the judgment in God's, (Deut. i. 17.) therefore their false and unjust judg- ment was his; this is uttering error against the Lord, under pretence of uttering truth and justice for him: and nothing can be more impudently done against God, than to patronize wickedness with his name, and yet not offend him. They are peculiarly to be resented, and particularly whom they are bound to protect and relieve.

1. Instead of supplying the wants of the poor, they impoverish them, they make empty the souls of the hungry; either taking away the food they have, or, which is almost equivalent, denying the supply which they want, and which they have to give. And they cause the drink of the thirsty to fail; they cut off the relief they use to give, and render it as dry as ever. Those are vile persons indeed, that rob the spital. 2. Instead of righting the poor, when they appeal to their judgment, they contrive to destroy the poor, to ruin them in their courts of judicature with lying words in favour of the rich, to whom they are plainly partial; yet, though the needs speak right, though the evidence
be ever so full for them to make out the equity of their cause, it is the bridle that governs them, not the right. Lastly, These churls and vile persons have always had instruments about them, that are ready to serve their villainous purposes; all their servants are wicked; there is no design so palpably unjust, but there may be found those that would be employed as tools to put it in execution. The structure of the case, and one case cannot expect otherwise; but this is our comfort, that they can do no more mischief than God permits them.

[2.] That one is truly liberal, and deserves the honour of being called so, makes his business to do good to every body, according as his sphere is, v. 8. Observe, First, The care he takes, and the contrivance he has to do good. He considers all things; as much as the churl or niggard project how to save and lay up what he has for himself only, so much the good charitable man projects how to use and lay out what he has in the best manner for the good of others. Charity must be directed by wisdom, and liberal things done prudently and with device, that the good intention of them may be answered, that it may not be charity misplaced. The liberal man, when he has done all the liberal things that are in his power, devises liberal things for others to do according to their power, and puts them upon doing them. Secondly, The comfort he takes, and the advantage he has, in doing good; by liberal things he shall stand, or be established. The providence of God will reward him for his liberality both in this life and in another. The charity of God will give him abundance of satisfaction and confirmed peace in his own bosom; what disquiets others shall not disturb him; his heart is fixed. This is the recompense of charity, Ps. cxii. 5, 6. Some read it, The prince, or honourable man, will take honourable courses; and by such honourable or ingenuous courses he shall stand, or be established. It is well with a land, when the honourable of it are indeed men of honour, and scorn to do a base thing; when its king is the son of nobles.

9. Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. 10. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. 11. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip ye, and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. 12. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine. 13. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers, yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: 14. Because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; 15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. 16. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.

17. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. 18. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, 19. When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place. 20. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.

In these verses we have God rising up to judgment against vile persons, to punish them for their villany: but, at length, returns in charity to the liberal, to reward them for their liberality.

1. When there was so great a corruption of manners, and so much provocation given to the holy God, bad times might well be expected, and here is a warning given of such times coming. The alarm is sounded to the women that were at ease, (v. 9.) and the careless daughters, to feed whose pride, vanity, and luxury, their husbands and fathers were tempted to starve the poor. Let them hear what the prophet has to say to them in God's name; "Rise up, and hear with reverence and attention."

2. Let them know that God was about to bring wasting, desolating judgments upon the land in which they lived in pleasure, and were wanton. This seems to be the primary reason made by Sennacherib's army, when he seized all the fenced cities of Judah: but when these words, many days and years, must be rendered, as the margin reads them, days above a year, something above a year shall this havock be in making; so long it was from the first entrance of that army into the land of Judah, to the overthrow of it. But it is applicable to the wretched disappointments which they shall certainly meet with, first or last, that set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in it; Ye shall be troubled, ye careless women. It will not secure us from trouble to cast away care when we are at ease; nay, to those who affect to live carelessly, even little trouble will be great vexations, and press hard upon them. They were careless and at ease, because they had money enough and mirth enough. But the prophet here tells them, (1.) That the country whence they had their rents and dainties, should shortly be laid waste; the vintage should fail; "And then what will ye do for wine to make merry with? The gathering of fruit shall not come, for there shall none be gathered, and you will find the land desolate." 10. Ye shall lament for the teats, the good milk from the cows, the pleasant fields and their productions; the useful fields that are serviceable to human life, are the pleasant ones; you will want the fruitful vine, and the grapes it used to yield you. "The abuse of plenty is justly punished with scarcity; and they deserve to be deprived of the supports of life, who made them the food and fuel of lust, and prepared them for Baal. 12. That the cities too, the cities of Judah, whom they should at ease, spent their rents and made themselves merry with their dainties, should be laid waste too; (v. 13. 14.) Briers and thorns, the fruits of sin and the curse, shall come up; not only upon the land of my people, which shall lie uncultivated, but upon all the houses of joy, the play-houses, the gaming-houses, the taverns in the jaws of cities. When a foreign army was ravaging the country, the houses of joy, no doubt, became houses of mourning; then the palaces, or noblemen's houses, were forsaken by their owners, who perhaps fled to Egypt for refuge; the multitude of the city were left by their leaders to shift for themselves. Then the stately houses shall be for dens for ever, which had been as forts and towers for strength and magnificence; they shall be abandoned, the owners shall never return to them, every body shall look upon them to be like Jericho, an anathema; so that even when peace re-
turns, they shall not be rebuilt, but shall be thrown into the waste; a joy of wild asses, and a pasture of flocks. Thus is many a house brought to ruin by sin; Jam seres est ubi Troja fut—Corn grows on the site of Troy.

2. In the foresight of this, let them tremble, and be troubled, strip them, and gird sackcloth upon them; and let them be despised only the more when the calamity comes, they shall thus be made to tremble, and be forced to strip themselves, that then God's judgments would strip them, and make them bare; but, (1.) That the best prevention of the trouble would be to repent and humble themselves for their sin, and lie in the dust Before God in true remorse and godly sorrow, which would be the less cause for their trembling, if it were known to them, that it was only in connection with God in the way of his judgments, and saving a correction by correcting our own mistakes; those only shall break that will not bend. (2.) That the best preparation for the trouble would be to deny themselves, and live a life of mortification, and to sit loose to all the delights of sense. Those that have already by a holy contempt of this world stripped themselves, can easily bear to be stripped, when trouble and death come.

II. While there was still a remnant that kept their integrity, they had reason to hope for good times at length, and such times the prophet here gives them a pleasant prospect of. Such times they saw in the latter end of the reign of Hezekiah; but the prophecy may well be supposed to look further, to God by his grace giving men good hearts; and therefore God's giving his holy Spirit to them that ask him, is, in effect, his giving them all good things, as appears by comparing Luke xi. 13 with Math. vii. 11. This is the great thing that God's people comfort themselves with the hopes of, that the Spirit shall be poured out upon them, that there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace than ever, and according as the necessity of the church, in its desolate estate, calls for. This comes from on high, and therefore they look up to their Father in heaven for it. When God designs favours for his church, he pours out his Spirit, both to prepare his people to receive his favours, and to qualify those whom he designs to employ as instruments of his favour, and give them success; for their endeavours to repair the desolations of the church are all fruitless, until the Spirit be poured out upon them, and then the work is done suddenly. The kingdom of the Messiah was brought in, and set up, by the pouring out of the Spirit, (Acts ii.) and so it is still kept up, and will be to the end.

3. What a wonderfully happy change shall then be made. That which was a wilderness, dry and barren, shall become a fruitful field, and that which we now reckon a fruitful field, in comparison with what it shall be then, shall be counted for a forest; Then shall the earth yield her increase. It is promised, that in the days of the Messiah the fruit of the earth shall shake like Lebanon. Ps. lxxii. 16. Some apply this to the admission of the Gentiles into the gospel-church, which made the wilderness a fruitful field; and the rejection of the Jews out of it, for they were made that a forest, which had been a fruitful field. On the Gentiles was poured out a spirit of life, but on the Jews a spirit of slumber. See what is the evidence and effect of the pouring out of the Spirit upon any soul; it is thereby made fruitful, and has its fruit unto holiness. Three things go to make these times happy.

(1.) Judgment and righteousness, v. 16. When the Spirit is poured out upon a land, then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and turn it into a fruitful field; and righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field, and make it yet more fruitful. Ministers shall not want gifts of grace to pour it out: they shall be good judges; they shall be eloquent and instructive; they shall be very mild and patient in administering it; and both so judiciously and faithfully, that by both the bad shall be made good, and the good made better; among all sorts of people, the poor and low, and unlearned, that are neglected as the wilderness, and the rich and great, and learned, that are valued as the fruitful field, there shall be right thoughts of things, good principles commanding, good intentions, the desire of good, and the doing of it. Or, in all parts of the land, both champaign and enclosed, country and city, the ruder parts and those that are more cultivated and refined, justice shall be duly administered. The law of Christ introduces a judgment or rule by which we must be governed, and the gospel of Christ a righteousness by which we must be saved; and wherever the Spirit is poured out, both these dwell and remain as an everlasting righteousness.

(2.) Peace and quietness, v. 17, 18. This is of two kinds:--

[1.] Inward peace, v. 17. This follows upon the indwelling of righteousness, v. 16. Those in whom that work is wrought shall experience this blessed product of it. It is itself peace, and the effect of blessing; it abates and extinguishes the sense of trouble and sin, and the serenity and security of mind, by which the soul enjoys itself and its God, and it is in the power of this world to disturb it in these enjoyments. Note, Peace and quietness, and everlasting assurance may be expected, and shall be found, in the way and work of righteousness. True satisfaction is to be had only in true religion, and there it is to be had without fail. Those are the quiet and peaceful lives, that are spent in all godliness and honesty, 1 Tim. ii. 1. First, Even the work of righteousness shall be peace; in the doing of our duty we shall find abundance of true pleasure, a present great reward of obedience in obedience. Though the work of righteousness may be toilsome and costly, and expose us to contempt, yet it is peace, such peace as is sufficient to bear our charges. Secondly, The effect of righteousness shall be quietness and assurance, not only to the end of time, of our time, and in the end, but to the endless ages of eternity. Real holiness is real happiness, now, and shall be perfect happiness, that is, perfect holiness, for ever.

[2.] Outward peace, v. 18. It is a great mercy when those who by the grace of God have quiet and peaceable spirits, are by the providence of God made to dwell in quiet and peaceable habitations, not disturbed in their houses or solemn assemblies. When the terror of Semachert's invasion was over, the people, no doubt, were more sensible than ever of the mercy of a quiet habituation; not disturbed with the alarms of war. Let every family study to keep itself quiet from strifes and jars: the city shall be low in a low place: under God's protection to dwell safely, and to be quiet from the fear of evil without. Jerusalem shall be a peaceable habitation; compare ch. xxxiii. 20. Even when it shall fall, and there shall be a violent battering storm coming down on the forest that lies bleak, then shall Jerusalem be a quiet resting-place, for the city shall be low in a low place: under the wind, not exposed (as those cities are that stand high) to the fury of the storm, but sheltered by the mountains that are round about Jerusalem, Ps. cxxv. 2. The high forts and towers are brought down; (v. 14.) but the city that lies low shall be
quiet resting-place. Those are most safe, and may dwell most at ease, that are humble, and are willing to dwell low, v. 19. Those that would dwell in a peaceable habitation must be willing to dwell low, and in a low place. Some think here is an allusion to the preservation of the land of Goshen from the plague of hail, which made great destruction in the land of Egypt. 4. Plenty and abundance. There shall be such good crops gathered in every where, and every year, that the husbandmen shall be commended and thought happy, who sow beside all waters, (v. 20.) who sow all the grounds that are fit for seediness, who cast their bread, or broad-corn, upon the waters, Eccl. xi. 1. God will give the increase, but then the husbandman must be industrious, mind his business, and sow beside all waters; which if he do, the corn shall come up so thick and rank, that he shall turn in his cattl, even the ox and the ass, to eat the tops of it, and keep it under. This is applicable, [1.] To the preaching of the word. Some think it points at the ministry of the apostles, who, as husbandmen, went forth to sow their seed; (Matt. xiii. 3.) and they sowed beside all waters, they preached abroad, wherever they came. Waters signify people, and they preached to multitudes. Wherever they found men's hearts softened, and moistened, and disposed to receive the word, they cast in the good seed. And whereas, by the law of Moses, the Jews were forbidden to plough with an ox and an ass, (Deut. xxvii. 10.) which intimates that Jews and Gentiles should not intermix now that distinction shall be taken away, and both the ox and the ass, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be employed in, and enjoy the benefit of, the gospel-haus, judah. [2.] To works of charity; when God sends these happy times, blessed are they that improve them in doing good with what they have, that sow beside all waters, that embrace all opportunities of sowing the necessitous; for in due season they shall reap.

CHAP. XXXIII.

This chapter relates to the same events with that foregoing: the distress of Judah and Jerusalem by Sennacherris's invasion, and their deliverance out of that distress by the destruction of his army. The account is given in the prophesy, in the way of a paradigm. Observe, I. The great distress that Judah and Jerusalem shall then be brought into, v. 7-11. II. The particular frights which the simplicity of Israel shall then suffer, in v. 13, 14, 15. III. The prayers of good people to God in this distress, v. 2. IV. The holy security which they should enjoy in the midst of this trouble, v. 15, 16. V. The destruction of the army of the Assyrians, (v. 1-3.) in which God would be greatly glorified, v. 5, 10, 11, 12. VI. The enriching of the Jews with the spoil of the Assyrian camp, v. 4, 22, 23, 24. VII. The happy settlement of Jerusalem, and the Jewish state, upon this. Religion shall be uppermost, (v. 6.) and their civil state shall flourish, v. 17-22. This was soon fulfilled, but is written for our learning.

1. WO to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealdest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee. 2. O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for thee; be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. 3. At the noise of the tumult the people fled; at the lifting up of thyself the actions were scattered. 4. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar; as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. 5. The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high; he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. 6. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is his treasure. 7. Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. 8. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man escapeth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despoiled the cities, he regardeth no man. 9. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down; Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits. 10. Now will I rise, saith the Lord; now will I be exalted; now will I lift up myself. 11. Ye shall conceive chaff; ye shall bring forth stubble: your breath as fire shall devour you. 12. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.

Here we have, I. The proud and false Assyrian justly reckoned with for all his fraud and violence, and hid under a wo, v. 1. Observe, 1. The sin which the enemy had been guilty of; he had spoilt the people of God, and made a prey of them, and herein had broken his treaty of peace with them, and dealt treacherously. Truth and mercy are two such sacred things, and have so much of God in them, that these cannot but be under the wrath of God, that make conscience of neither, but are perfectly lost to both, that care not what mischief they do, what spoil they make, what disquisitions they are guilty of, nor what solemn engagements they violate, to compass their own wicked designs. Bloody and deceitful men are the image of men, ch. vii. 1. And this is to show of the sin; he spoiled those that had never done him any injury, and that he had no pretence to quarrel with; and dealt treacherously with those that had always dealt faithfully with him. Note, The less provocation we have from men to do a wrong thing, the more provocation we give to God by it. 2. The punishment he should fall under, for this sin. He that spoiled the cities of Judah shall have his own army destroyed by an angel, and his camp plundered by those whom he had made a prey of. The Chaldeans shall deal treacherously with the Assyrians, and revolt from them. Two of Sennacherris's own sons shall deal treacherously with him, and basely murder him at his devotions. Note, The righteous God often pays sinners in their own coin. He that leads into captivity shall go into captivity, Rev. xiii. 10.—xvii. 6. 4. The time when he shall be thus dealt with; when he shall make an end to spoil, and to deal treacherously; not by repentance and reformations, that might prevent his ruin, (Dan. iv. 27.) but when he shall have done his worst, when he shall have gone as far as God would permit him to go, to the utmost of his tether, then the cup of trembling shall be put into his hand. When he shall have arrived at his full stature in impiety, shall have filled up the measure of his iniquity, then all shall be called over again; when he has done, God will begin, for his day is coming.
II. The prayers of people of God. \(\text{v. 2.}\) "O Lord, be merciful to us: men are cruel, be thou gracious; we have deserved thy wrath, but we entreat thy favour; and if we may find thee propitious to us, we are happy; the trouble we are in cannot hurt us, shall not ruin us. It is in vain to expect relief from creatures, we have no confidence in the Egyptians; but we have waited for thee only, relying to submit to the hand of our God, the trouble be, and hoping that it shall be a comfortable issue." Those that by faith humbly wait for God, shall certainly find him gracious to them. They pray, "For those that were employed in military services for them; "Be thou their arm every morning. Hezekiah, and his princes, and all the men of war, need continual supplies of strength and courage from thee; supply their need, and make it sufficient. Every morning, when they go forth upon the business of the day, and perhaps have new work to do, and new difficulties to encounter, let them be fresh animated and invigorated, and as the day, so let the strength be." In our spiritual warfare, our own hands are not sufficient for us, nor can we bring anything to pass unless God not only strengthens us, but doth also vouchsafe to give us a power above ours, as to our Arm; so entirely do we depend upon him as our Arm every morning, so constantly do we depend upon his power, as well as his compassions, which are new every morning, Lam. iii. 25. If God leaves us to ourselves any morning, we are undone; we must therefore every morning commit ourselves to him, and go forth in his strength to do the work of their day. 2. For the body of the passage: "Be thou our salvation also in the time of trouble; ours who sit still, and do not venture into the high places of the field." They depend upon God not only as their Saviour, to work deliverance for them, but as their Salvation itself; for whatever becomes of their secular interests, they will reckon themselves safe and saved, if they have him for their God. If he undertake to be their Saviour, he will be their Salvation; for as for God, his work is perfect. Some read it thus: "Thou who wast their Arm every morning, who wast the continual Strength and Help of our fathers before us; be thou our Salvation also in time of trouble; help as thou helpedst them; they looked unto thee, and were enlightened." Ps. xxxiv. 5. let us then not walk in darkness.

III. The Assyrian army invaded, and their camp made a rich but cheap and easy prey to Judah and Jerusalem. No sooner is the prayer made, (v. 2.) than it is answered, (v. 3.) say, it is outdone. They prayed that God would save them from their enemies; but he does more than that; he gives them victory over their enemies, and abundant cause to triumph; for, 1. The strength of the Assyrian camp is here asserted. Hezekiah says, "Many thousands of the Assyrians, as a host of caterpillars, or locusts, make a field, or a tree, bare. Thus the wealth of the sinners is laid up for the just, and Israel enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians. Some make the Assyrians to be the caterpillars and locusts, which, when they are killed, are gathered together in heaps, as the frogs of Egypt, and are run upon, and trodden to dirt.

IV. God and his Israel glorified and exalted hereby. When the spoil of the enemy is thus gathered, (v. 1.) 1. God is declared to have been "The Lord is exalted; it is his honour to abuse proud men, and hide them in the dust, together; thus he magnifies his own name, and his people give him the glory of it, as Israel when the Egyptians were drowned, Exod. xv. 1, 2, &c. He is exalted as one that dwells on high, out of the reach of their blasphemies, and that has an overruling power over them, and God, by his word, delights to those himself above them; that does what he will, and they cannot resist him. 2. His people will have the blessing of it. When God lifts up himself to scatter the nations that are in confederacy against Jerusalem, (v. 3.) then, as a preparation for that, or, as the fruit and product of it, he has filled Zion with judgment and righteousness; not only with a sense of justice, but with a government and administration, wherein righteousness is ministered. It shall again be called, The city of righteousness, ch. i. 26. In this the grace of God is exalted, as much as his providence was in the destruction of the Assyrian army. We may conclude God has mercy in store for a people, when he fills them with judgment and righteousness, when all sorts of people, and all their actions and ways, are governed by them, and they are so full of them, that no other consideration can crowd in to sway them against these. Hezekiah and his people are encouraged (v. 6.) with an assurance that God would stand by them in their distress. Here is, (1.) A gracious promise of God for them to stay themselves upon—Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation. Here is a desirable end proposed, and that is, the stability of our times; that things be not disturbed and unhinged at home, and the strength of salvation, deliverance from, and success against, enemies abroad. The salvation that God ordains for his people has strength in it; it is a horn of salvation. And here are the way and means for obtaining this end—wisdom and knowledge; not only pietous, but prudent. That is it, which, by the blessing of God, will be the stability of our times, and the strength of salvation. That wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, and which sacrifices private interests to a public good; such prudence as this will establish truth and peace, and fortify the bulwarks, in defence of them. (2.) A plious maxim of state for Hezekiah and his people to govern themselves by—The fear of the Lord is his treasure. That which God's treasure is, the fear thereof is his treasure; God gives his treasures, that he may receive his treasure; or, rather, it is the prince's treasure. A good prince accounts it so; that wisdom is better than gold; and he shall find it so. Note, True religion is the true treasure of any prince or people; it denominates them rich. These places that have plenty of Bibles and ministers, and serious good people, are really rich; and it contributes, not only to make a people rich in this world; it is therefore the interest of a people to support religion among them, and to take heed of every thing that threatens to hinder it.

V. The great distress that Jerusalem was brought into, described; that they who believed the prophet might know beforehand what troubles were coming, and might provide accordingly; and that when the foregoing promise of their deliverance should have its accomplishment, the remembrance of the ex-
remedy of their case might help to magnify God in it, and make them the more thankful, v. 7, 8. It is here foretold, 1. That the enemy would be very insolent and abusive, and there would be no dealing with him; either by treaties of peace, for he has broken the covenant, and never hesitated at it, as if it were below him to be a servant to his word; or, by the preparations of war, for he has despised the cities; he seems to take notice either of their appeals to justice, or of their petitions for mercy. 2. That God would not only give them hope, but would make himself sensible of them, (though they were called fenced cities,) and meet with so little resistance, that he despises them; and has no recompenses, when he puts all to the sword, for he regards no man; has no pity or concern, no not for those that are under particular obligations to him. Neither fears God, nor regards man; but is haughty and imperious to every one. There are those that take a pride in trampling upon all mankind, and have neither veneration for the honourable, nor compassion for the miserable. That therefore he would not be brought to any terms of reconciliation; The valiant ones of Jerusalem, being unable to make their parts good with him, must be contentedly run down with noise and insolence, which will make them cry without, because they cannot send a return for what they might have done, against a fair adversary. The ambassadors sent by Hezekiah to treat of peace, finding him so haughty and unmanageable, shall weep bitterly for vexation at the disappointment they had met with in their negotiations; they shall weep like children, as despairing to find out any expedient to pacify him. That the mare should be made quite desolate, for a time by his army. (1.) No man durst travel the roads; so that a stop was put to trade and commerce, and (which was worse) no man could safely go up to Jerusalem, to keep the solemn feasts; The highways lie waste. While the fields lie waste, trodden like the highways, the highways lie waste, unrodden like the fields, for the trade ceases. (2.) The earth used to rejoice in its own productions for the service of God's Israel, but now the enemies of Israel eat them up, or tread them down; it mourns and languishes; the country looks melancholy, and the country people have misery in their countenances, wanting necessary food for themselves and their families; the workmen of Lebanon, lamp-masons, so withering and uncertain are all worldly joys. The desolation is universal. That part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, was already laid waste; Lebanon famed for cedars, Sharon for roses, Bashan for cattle, Carmel for corn, all very fruitful, are now become like wildernesses, are ashamed to be called by their old names; they are so unlike what they were. They shake off their fruits, before their time, into the hand of the spoiler, which used to be gathered seasonably by the hand of the owner.

VI. God appearing, at length, in his glory against this proud invader, v. 10—12. When things are brought thus to the last extremity, 1. God will magnify himself. He will perform wonders, that shall be very apparent; Spectator, "But now will I arise, saith the Lord; now will I appear and act, and therein will I be not only evidenced, but excited." He will not only demonstrate that there is a God that judges in the earth, but that he is God over all, and higher than the highest. Now will I lift up myself; will prepare for action, will act vigorously, and will be glorified in it. God's time to appear for himself is, when their affairs are reduced to the lowest ebb; when their strength is gone, and there is none shut up or left, Deut. xxxvii. 36. When all other helpers fail, then is God's time to help. 2. He will bring down the Assyrian; "Ye, O Assyrians, are big with hopes that you shall have all the wealth of Jerusalem for your own, and are in pain till it be so; but all your horses shall come to nothing. You shall conceive chaff, and bring forth stubble, which are not only worthless and good for nothing, but combustible and proper fuel for the fire, which they cannot escape, when your own breath, as fire, shall devour you. The breath of God's wrath, provoked against you by your breach of covenant, your malicious breath, the threatenings and slaughter you breathe out against the people of God, this shall devour you, and your blasphemous breath against God and his name. God would make their own tongues to fall upon them, and their own breath to blow the fire that should consume them. And then no wonder that the people that are in the land of the two中间插入28个字符: middle sea, all on fire together; and as thorns cut up, which are dried and withered, and therefore easily take fire, and are soon burnt up. Such was the destruction of the Assyrian army; it was like the burning up of thorns which can well be spared, or the burning of lime, which makes it good for something. The burning of that army enlightened the world with the knowledge of God's power, and made his name shine bright.

13. Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. 14. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? 15. He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; 16. He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure. 17. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. 18. Thy heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver? where is he that counted the towers? 19. Thou shalt not see a fierce people; a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand. 20. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. 21. But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. 22. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us. 23. The takings are loosened; they could not well strengthen their mast, they could not spread the sail; then is the prey of a great spoil divided: the lame take the prey. 24. And the inhabit-
ants shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.  

Here is a preface that commands attention; and it is fit that all should attend, both near and far off, to what God says and does; (v. 13.) Hear, ye that are far off, whether in place or time. Let distant regions and future ages hear what God has done. They do so; they will do so from the scripture, with no less assurance as those that were near the neighbouring nations, and those that lived then. But whoever hears what God has done, whether near or afar off, let them acknowledge his might, that it is irresistible, and that he can do every thing. Those are very stupid who hear what God has done, and yet will not acknowledge his might.

Now what is it that God has done, which we must take notice of, and in which we must acknowledge his might?

I. He has struck a terror upon the sinners in Zion; (v. 14.) Fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. There are sinners in Zion, hypocrites, that enjoy Zion's privileges, and concur in Zion's services, but their hearts are not right in the sight of God; they keep up secret haunts of sin under the cloak of a visible profession, which conceals that of hypocrisy. Sinners in Zion will have a great deal to answer for, above other sinners; and their place in Zion will be so far from being their security, that it will aggravate both their sin and punishment. Now those sinners in Zion, though always subject to secret frights and terrors, were struck with a more than ordinary consternation, from the convictions of their own consciences. 1. When they saw the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, and ready to set fire to it, and lay it in ashes, and burn the wasps in the nest, finding they could not make their escape to Egypt, as some had done, and distrusting the promises God had made by his prophets, that he would deliver them, they were at their wits' end, and ran about like men distracted, crying, "Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Let us therefore abandon the city, and shift for ourselves elsewhere; one had as good live in everlasting burnings as live here." Who will stand up for us against this devouring fire? So some read it. See here how the sinners in Zion are affected when the judgments of God are abroad; while they were only threatened, they slighted them, and made nothing of them. But when the burning fire actually ran into the other extreme, then they magnify them, and make the worst of them; they call them devouring fire and everlasting burnings, and despair of relief and succour. Those that rebel against the commands of the word, cannot take the comforts of it in a time of need. Or, rather, 2. When they saw the Assyrian army destroyed; for the destruction of that is the fire spoken of immediately before, v. 11. 12. When the sinners in Zion saw what dreadful execution the wrath of God made, they were in a great fright, being conscious to themselves that they had provoked this God by their secret worshipping of other gods; and therefore they cry out, Who among us shall dwell with this devouring fire, before which so vast an army is as thorns? 3. When they saw the burning of the city, which are the everlasting burnings, which have made the Assyrians as the burnings of time? v. 12. Thus they said, or should have said. Note, God's judgments upon the enemies of Zion should strike a terror upon the sinners in Zion, nay, David himself trembles at them, Ps. cxix. 120. God himself is this devouring Fire, Heb. xii. 22. Who is able to stand before him? 1 Sam. v. 26. His wrath will burn those everlasting that have made themselves fuel for it: it is a fire that shall never be quenched, nor will ever go out of itself; for it is the wrath of an everlasting God preached in the mouth of the creature. Nor can the most daring sinners bear up against it, so as to bear either the execution of it, or the fearful expectation of it. Let this awaken us all to fly from the wrath to come, by flying to Christ as our Refuge.

II. He has graciously provided for the security of his people that trust in him; Hear this, and acknowledge his righteousness in the midst of his wrath, and speak uprightly, to dwell on high, v. 15. 16. We have here, 1. The good man's character, which he preserves even in times of common iniquity; in divers instances. (1.) He walks righteously; in the whole course of his conversation he acts by rules of equity, and makes conscience of rendering to all their due; to God his due, as well as to men theirs. His walk is righteousness itself; he would not for a world wilfully do an unjust thing. (2.) He speaks uprightly; uprightness, so the word is; he speaks what is true and right, and with an honest intention. He cannot think one thing, and speak another; nor look one way, and row another. His word is to him as sacred as his oath, and is not yea and nay. (3.) He is so far from coveting ill-gotten gain, that he deems it thinks, or looks on the corruption, and unbecoming a man of honour, to enrich himself by any hardness put upon his neighbour. He seems to do a wrong thing, nay, to do a severe thing, though he might get by it. He does not overvalue gain itself, and therefore easily abhers the gain that is not honestly come by. (4.) If he have a bribe at any time thrust into his hand, to pervert justice, he shuns his hand from holding it, with the utmost detestation, taking it as an affront to have it offered him. (5.) He steps his ears from hearing any thing that tends to cruelty or bloodshed, or any suggestions stirring him up to revenge, Heb. xxxvi. 51. He turns a deaf ear to those that delight in war, and entice him to cast in his lot among them, Prov. i. 14. 16. (6.) He shuts his eyes from seeing evil. He has such an abhorrence of sin, that he cannot bear to see others commit it, and does himself watch against all the occasions of it. Those that would preserve the purity of their souls, must keep a strict guard upon the senses of their bodies, must stop their ears to temptations, and turn away their eyes from beholding vanity.

2. The good man's comfort, which he may preserve even in times of common calamity, v. 16. (1.) He shall be safe; he shall escape the devouring fire and the everlasting burnings; he shall have access to, and communion with, that God who is a Devouring Fire, but shall be to him a Rejoicing Light. And as to present troubles, he shall dwell on high, out of the reach of them, nay, out of the hearing of the noise of them; he shall not be really disturbed by them, he shall have his place of defence shall be the mountains of rocks, strong and impregnable, fortified by nature as well as art. The divine power will keep him safe, and his faith in that power will keep him easy. God, the Rock of ages, will be his high Tower. (2.) He shall be supplied with that thing that is necessary for him; Bread shall be given him, even when the siege is straitest, and provisins are cut off; and his waters shall be sure, he shall be sure of the continuance of them, so that he shall not drink his water by measure, and with astonishment. They that fear the Lord shall not want any thing that is good for them.

III. He will protect Jerusalem, and deliver it out of the hands of the invaders. This storm, that
threatened them, should blow over, and they should enjoy a prosperous state again. Many instances are here given of this:

1. Hezekiah shall put off his sackcloth, and all the sadness of his countenance, and shall appear publicly in his beauty, in his royal robes, and with a pleasing aspect, (v. 17.) to the great joy of all his loving subjects. Those that walk uprightly shall not only have bread given them, and their waters be sure; they shall visit the utmost corners of the nation, and take a prospect of the adjacent countries, which will be the more pleasant after so long a confinement. Thus believers behold the heavenly Canaan, that land that is very far off, and comfort themselves with the prospect of it in evil times.

2. The remembrance of the fright they were in shall add to the pleasure of their deliverance; (v. 18.) Thine heart shall meditate terror, meditate it with pleasure when it is over. Thou shalt think thou still heardest the alarm in thine ears, when all the cry was, "Arm, arm, arm; every man to his post. Where is the scribe, or secretary of war? Let him appear, to draw up the master-roll. Where is the captain of the batallion? Let him see what he has in hand, to defray the charge of a defence. Where is he that counted the towers? Let him bring in the account of them, that care may be taken to put a competent number of men in each." Or, these words may be taken as Jerusalem's triumph over the vanquished army of the Assyrians, and the rather, because the apostle alludes to them in his triumph over the learning of this world, when it was baffled by the gospel of Christ, 1 Cor. i. 20. The virgin, the daughter of Zion, despises all their military preparations. Where is the scribe, or master-mater of the Assyrian army? Where is their weigher, (or treasurer,) and where their engineers that counted the towers? They are all either dead or fled. There is an end of them.

3. This shall be a memorial of their fear, or more naturally, of the sight of the Assyrians, who were a fierce people naturally, and were particularly fierce against the people of the Jews, and were of a strange language, that could understand neither their petitions nor their complaints, and therefore had a pretence for being dead to them, nor could themselves be understood; "They are of a deeper speech than thou couldst hearer, which will make them the more formidable, v. 19. Thine eyes shall no more see them thus fierce, but their countenances changed when they are all become dead corpses."

5. They shall no more be under apprehensions of the danger of Jerusalem, Zion, and the temple there; (v. 20.) "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities, the city where our solemn sacred feasts are kept, where we used to meet the more for religious assemblies." The good people among them, in the time of their distress, were most in pain for Zion, upon this account, that it was the city of their solemnities, that the conquerors would burn their temple, and they should not have that to keep their solemn feasts in any more. In times of public danger, that city should be their abode, and their water, and the cities of our solemnities should be dearer to us than either our strong cities or our store-cities. It is with an eye to this, that God will work deliverance for Jerusalem, because it is the city of religious solemnities: let those be conscien-

6. God himself will be their Protector and Saviour, v. 21, 22. This is the principal ground of their confidence; "He that is himself the glorious Lord, will display his glory, for us, and be a Glory to us; such as shall eclipse the rival glory of the enemy." God, in being a gracious Lord, is a glorious Lord; for his goodness is his glory. God will be the Saviour of Jerusalem, and her glorious Lord. (1.) As a Guard against their adversaries abroad. He will be a Place of broad rivers and streams. Jerusalem had no considerable river running by it, almost as it is said before. But now God will give them a broad river, the Euphrates, which is the brook Kidron, and so wanted one of the best natural fortifications, as well as one of the greatest advantages for trade and commerce, and upon this account their enemies despaired them, and doubted not but to make an easy prey of them; but the presence and power of God are sufficient at any time to make up to us the deficiencies of the creature, and to avert and destroy the designs of man. If God be with us, the river, it must needs be inaccessible to the enemy, they can neither find nor force their way by it. (2.) As a Guide to their affairs at home; "For the Lord is our Judge, to whom we are accountable, to whose judgment we refer ourselves, by whose judgment we abide, and who therefore, (we hope,) will judge us aright." He is our Lawgiver, his word is a law to us, and to him every thought within us is brought before his obedience; he is our King, to whom we pay homage and tribute, and an inviolable allegiance, and therefore he will save us. For as protection draws allegiance, so allegiance may expect protection, and
shall have it with God. By faith we take Christ for our Prince and Saviour, and, as such depend upon him, and devote ourselves to him. Observe, with what intent of trust, and with what an emphasis laid upon the glorious name of God, they comfort themselves with this; Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King, who, being self-existent, is self-sufficient, and all-sufficient to us.

7. The enemies shall be quite infants, and all their powers and projects broken, like a ship at sea in stress of weather, that cannot ride out the storm, but, having her tackle torn, her masts split, and nothing wherewithal to repair them, is given up for a wreck, v. 23. The tacking of the Assyrians are loosed; they are like a ship whose tacking are loosed, or forsaken by the ship's crew, when they give it over for lost, finding that they cannot strengthen the mast, but it will come down; they thought themselves sure of Jerusalem, but when they were just entering the port, as it were, and thought all was their own, they were quite becalmed, and could not spread their sail, but lay wind-bound till God poured the fury of his wrath upon them. The enemies of God's church are often disarmed and unrigged then when they think they have almost gained their point. A RECK of their camp shall be a rich booty for the Jews; Then is the fire of a great spoil divided. When the greater part were slain, the rest fled in confusion, and with such precipitation, that (like the Syrians) they left their tents as they were, so that all the treasure in them fell into the hands of the besieged, and even the lame take the fire, they that tarried at home did divide the spoil. It was so easy to come to, at that not only the strong man might make himself master of it, but even the lame man, whose hands were lame, that he could not fight, and his feet, that he could not pursue; as the victory shall cost them no peril, so the prey shall cost them no toil. And there was such abundance of it, that when those who were forward, and came first, had carried off as much as they would, even the lame, who came late, found sufficient. Thus God brought good out of evil, and not only delivered Jerusalem, but enriched it, and abundantly recompensed the losses they had sustained. Thus comfortably and well do the frights and distresses of the people of God often end.

9. Both sickness and sin shall be taken away; and the signs of sickness shall, when this is all the fruit of it, and the recovery from it, even the taking away of sin.

(1.) The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; as the lame shall take the fire, so shall the sick, notwithstanding their weakness, make a shift to get to the abandoned camp, and seize something for themselves; or, there shall be such a universal triumph, a display of joy upon this occasion, that even the sick shall, for the present, forget their sickness and the sorrows of it, and join with the public in its rejoicings; the deliverance of their city shall be their cure. Or, it intimates, that, whereas infectious diseases are commonly the effect of long sieges, it shall not be so with Jerusalem, but the inhabitants of it, with their victory and peace shall have health and safety; and we cannot judge of the account of sickness within their gates; or, those that are sick shall bear their sickness without complaining, as long as they see it goes well with Jerusalem. Our sense of private grievances should be drowned in our thanksgivings for public mercies.

(2.) The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven of all their sins, and the nation forgiven their national guilt in the removing of the national judgment, but particular persons that dwell therein shall repent, and reform, and have their sins pardoned. And this is promised as that which is at the bottom of all other favours; he will do so and so for them, for he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, Heb. viii. 12. Sin is the sickness of the soul; when God pardons the sin, he heals the disease; and when the diseases of sin are healed by pardoning mercy, the sting of bodily sickness is taken out, and the cause of it removed; so that either the inhabitants shall not be sick, or, at least, shall not die so as to be unburied. And away, we have little reason to complain of outward affliction. Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.

CHAP. XXXIV.

In this chapter, we have the fatal doom of all the nations that are enemies to God's church and people, though Edom only is mentioned, because for the old enemy of Esau to Jacob, which was typical, as much as that more ancient enmity of Cain to Abel, and flowed from the original enmity of the serpent to the seed of the woman. It is probable that this prophecy had its accomplishment in the great desolations made by the Assyrian army, first, or, rather, by Nebuchadnezzar's army some time after, among those nations that were neighbours to Israel, and had been some way or other injurious to them. That mighty conqueror took a rich spoil, and his work was to spoil, and laying countries waste, and therein, quite beyond his design, he was fulfilling what God here threatened against his and his people's enemies; but we have reason to think it is intended as a denunciation of the wrath of God against all those who fight against the interests of his kingdom among men, that it has its frequent accomplishment in the havoc made by the wars of the nations and other desolations that enumerate, and will have its full accomplishment in the final dissolution of all things at the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Here is I. A demand of universal attention, v. 1. II. A dreadful scene of blood and confusion presented, v. 2. III. The reason given for these judgments, v. 8. IV. The continuance of this desolation, the country being made like the lake of Sodom, (v. 9, 10.) and the cities abandoned to wild beasts and melancholy fowls, v. 11-15. The solemn ratification of all this, v. 16, 17. Let us hear, and fear.

1. COME near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. 2. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. 3. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. 4. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. 5. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Edumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. 6. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood: it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be
sought with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. 3. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Here we have a prophecy, as elsewhere we have a history, of the wars of the Lord, which are sure, are all both righteous and successful. This war is a war of vengeance, but it is in the interest of Satan, who is called the god of this world, he fights against it.

1. Here is the trumpet sounded, and the war proclaimed; (v. 1.) all nations must hear and hearken, not only because what God is about to do is well worthy their remark, (as ch. xxxiii. 13.) but because they are all concerned in it; it is to the world itself. Whence we may learn that God is coming forth in wrath. Let them all take notice that the great God is angry with them; his indignation is upon all nations, and therefore let all nations come near to hear. The trumpet is blown in the city, (Amos iii. 6.) and the watchmen on the walls cry. Hearken to the voice of the trumpet, Jer. vi. 17. as the earth hearken, and the fowls thereof, for it is the Lord's, (Ps. lxxvii. 2.) that righteously hath befallen to its Maker and Master. The world must hear, and all things that come forth of it, the children of men, that are of the earth, earthy, come out of it, and must return to it; or the inanimate products of the earth are called to, as more likely to hearken than sinners, whose hearts are hardened against the call. The Lord's doth judge, he contains, the war, as controversy, Mich. vi. 2. It is so just a controversy, that all the world may be safely appealed to concerning the equity of it.

2. Whom he makes war against; (v. 2.) The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations; they are all in conspiracy against God and religion, all in the interests of the devil, and therefore he is angry with them all, even with all the nations that forget him. He has long suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, (Acts xiv. 16.) but now he will no longer keep silence. As they have all had the benefit of his patience, so they must all expect now to feel his resentments. His fury is in a special manner upon all their armies. (1.) Because with them there have been mischief to the people of God; those are they that have made bloody work with them, and therefore they must be sure to have blood given them to drink. (2.) Because with them they hope to make their part good against the justice and power of God; they trust to them as their defence, and therefore on them, in the first place, God's fury will come. Armies before God's fury are but as dry stubble before a consuming fire, though ever so numerous and courageous.

3. Whom he makes war for, and what are the grounds and reasons of the war; (v. 8.) It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and he it is to whom vengeance belongs, and who is never unrighteous in taking vengeance, Rom. iii. 5. As there is a day of the Lord's patience, so there will be a day of his vengeance; for though he bear long, he will not bear always; it is the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Zion is the holy city, the city of our solemnities, a type and figure of the church of God in the world. Zion has a just quarrel with her neighbours for the wrongs they have done her, for all their treacherous and barbarous usage of her, profaning her holy things, laying waste her palaces, and slaying her sons; she has left it to God to plead her cause, and he will do it when the time, even the set time, to favour Zion comes; then will he recompense to her persecutors and oppressors all the mischiefs they have done her. The controversy will be decided, that Zion has been wronged, and there-
soaked with blood, as with the rain that comes often upon it, and in great abundance; and their dust, the great heaps and carcases, shall be made fat with the fatness of men slain in their full strength, as with manure. Nay, even the mountains, which are hard and rocky, shall be melted with their blood, v. 3. These expressions are hyperbolic, (as St. John's vision of blood to the horse-brides, Rev. xiv. 20.) and are made use of because they sound very dreadful to sense, (it is enough even to shiver to think of such a want of humanity, and are therefore proper to express the terror of God's wrath, which is dreadful beyond conception and expression. See what work sin and wrath make even in this world, and think how much more terrible the wrath to come is, which will bring down the unicorns themselves to the bars of the pit. 5. This great slaughter will be a great sacrifice to the justice of God; (v. 6.) The Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah; there it is that the great Redeemer has his garments dyed with blood, ch. lxi. 1. Sacrifices were intended for the honour of God, to make it appear that he hates sin, and demands satisfaction for it, and that nothing but blood will make atonement; for these ends, this slaughter is raised in it, but not that God will make war against heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, especially their ungodly, unrighteous enmity to his people, which was the sin that the Edomites were notoriously guilty of. In great sacrifices, abundance of beasts were killed, hecatombs offered, and their blood poured out before the altar; and so will it be in the day of the Lord's vengeance. And thus had the whole earth been soaked with the blood of sinners, if Jesus Christ, the great Propitiation, had not shed his blood for us; but those who reject him, and will not make a covenant with God by that Sacrifice, will themselves fall as victims to divine wrath. Damned sinners are everlasting sacrifices, Mark ix. 49. They that sacrifice as (which is the character of the ungodly, Eccl. ix. 2.) must be sacrificed.

6. These slain shall be detestable to mankind, and shall be as much their loathing as ever they were their terror; (v. 3.) They shall be cast out, and none shall pay them the respect of a decent burial; but their stink shall come out of their carcases, that all people by the odious smell, as well as by the ghastly sight, may be sensible of the indignation which shall be against, and a dread of the wrath of God. They are unburied, that they may remain monuments of divine justice.

7. The effect and consequence of this slaughter shall be universal confusion and desolation, as if the whole frame of nature were dissolved and melted down; (v. 4.) all the host of heaven shall pine and waste away, and the word by the sun shall be darkened, and the moon look black, or he turned into blood; the heavens themselves shall be rolled together as a scroll of parchment, when we have done with it, and lay it by, or as when it is shrivelled up by the heat of the fire. The stars shall fall as the leaves in autumn; all the beauty, joy, and comfort, of the vanquished nation shall be lost and done away, and all the sun shall be darkened, and all dominion and rule, but that of the sword of war, shall fall. Conquerors, in these times, affected to lay waste the countries they conquered; and such a complete desolation is here described by such figurative expressions, as will yet have a literal and full accomplishment in the dissolution of all things at the end of time; of which last day of judgment, the judgments which God does now sometimes remarkably execute on sinful nations, are figures, earnest, and forerunners; and by these we should be awakened to think of that, for which reason these expressions are used here, and Rev. vi. 12, 13. But they are used without a metaphor, 2 Pet. iii. 10, where we are told that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall be burnt up.

9. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. 10. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever: 11. The cursed and the bitter shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. 12. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. 13. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be a habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.

14. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. 15. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. 16. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. 17. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

This prophecy looks very black, but surely it looks no further than upon Edom and Bozrah: 1. It speaks the melancholy changes that are often made by the divine providence, in countries, cities, palaces, and families; places that have flourished, and been much frequented, strangely go to decay. 2. It speaks the destroying judgments which are the effects of God's wrath, and the just punishment to be inflicted on all sinners, who are enemies of God, that will inflect, when the year of the redeemed is come, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion. Those that aim to ruin the church, can never do that, but will infallibly ruin themselves. 3. It speaks the final desolation of this wicked world, which is reserved unto fire at the day of judgment; 2 Pet. iii. 7. The earth itself, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, will (for ought I know) be turned into a hell to all those that set their affections only on earthly things: however, it shows us what will be the lot of the generation of God's curse.
The country shall become like the lake of Sodom, vi. 9, 10. The streams thereof, that both watered the land, and pleased and refreshed the inhabitants, shall now be turned into pitch, shall be congealed, shall look black, and shall move slowly, or not at all. Their floods to lazy streams of pitch shall turn; so Sir R. Blackmore. The dust thereof shall be turned into brimstone; so combustible has sin been to God; and the first spark of God’s wrath struck upon it; and when it has taken fire, it shall become burning pitch; the fire shall be universal, not a house, or town, on fire, but a whole country; and it shall not be in the power of any to suppress or extinguish it; it shall burn continually, burn perpetually, and shall not be quenched night or day. The torment of those in hell, or that fire shall be with the torment of God: for there is no escape, is without interruption; the smoke of this fire goes up for ever. As long as there are provoking sinners on earth, from one generation to another, an increase of sinful men, to augment the fierce anger of the Lord, (Numb. xxxii. 14.) there will be a righteous God in heaven to punish them for it. And as long as a people keep up a succession of sinners, God will lay plague and destruction upon them, and will any that fall under the wrath of God, be ever able to recover themselves. It will be found, how light soever men make of it, that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. If the land be doomed to destruction, none shall pass through it, but travellers will choose rather to go a great way about than come within the smell of it.

1. God shall mark them for ruin and destruction; he shall stretch out upon them the line of confusion with the stones or plummets of emptiness, vi. 11. This intimates the equity of the sentence passed upon it; it is given according to the rules of justice, and the exact agreement of the execution with the sentence; the destruction is not wrought at random, but by line and level. The confusion and emptiness that shall overspread the face of the whole country, shall be like that of the whole earth when it was Toph and Bohe, the very words here used. The very stones that were in the paradise are not to be seen there, and will bury the beauty of the whole creation, Gen. i. 2. When there is confusion there will soon be emptiness; but both are appointed by the Governor of the world, and in exact proportions.

2. Their great men shall be all cut off, and none of them shall dare to appear; (v. 12.) They shall call all the kings of the nations to take care of the arrant affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand, and all her princes, having the sad tidings brought them, shall be nothing, shall be at their wits’ end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.

3. Even the houses of state, and those of strength, shall be no more by reason of the jealousy to take care of the arrant affairs which lie before them, but none shall be there to take this ruin under their hand, and all her princes, having the sad tidings brought them, shall be nothing, shall be at their wits’ end, and not be able to stand them in stead, to shelter them from destruction.

4. The country shall become the residence and rendezvous of fearful, frightful beasts and birds, which usually frequent such melancholy places, because there they may be undisturbed; and when they are frightened thither, they help to frighten men thence. This circumstance of the desolation, being apt to strike a horror upon the mind, is much enlarged upon here, vi. 11. The cormorant shall possess it, or the pelican, which affects to be solitary, (Ps. civ. 10.) and the black vulture shall sit upon it, while the owl, a melancholy bird, the raven, a bird of prey, invited by the dead carcases, shall dwell there, (with all the ill-boding monsters of the air, Sir R. B.) all the unclear birds, which were not for the service of man, v. 13. It shall be a habitation for dragons, which are poisons and hurtful in their bayous of state, Where raging serpent’s did wait, Dragons shall how, and hungry wolves shall how. In courts before by mighty lords possess’d, The serpent shall over his speckled crest, Or idles plague-spores wave. See R. Blackmore.

That which was court for princes, shall now be a court for owls or ostriches; (v. 14.) The wild beasts of the desert, the dry and sandy country, shall meet, as it were by appointment, with the wild beasts of the island, the wet marshy country, and shall regulate themselves with such a perfect desolation as they shall find there.

Leopards, and all the raving brotherhoods, That range the plains, or lurk in woods, Each swallows an ox to enrage, And make this wilder place their home. Fierce beasts of every frightful stage and size, Shall settle here their bloody courses. Sir R. Blackmore.

The satyr shall cry to his fellow to go with him to this desert place, or, being there, they shall please themselves that they have found such an agreeable habitation. There shall the screech-owl rest, a night-bird, and an ominous one; the great owl shall there make her nest, (v. 15.) and lay and hatch; the brood of them shall be kept up, to provide heirs for this desolate place; the vultures, which feast on carcases, shall be gathered there, every one with his mate. Now, observe, 1. How the places which men have deserted, and keep at a distance from, are proper receptacles for other animals, which the providence of God takes care of, and will not neglect. 2. Whom they resemble, that are morose, unsociable, and unconversable, and effect a melancholy retreat to these solitary creatures, that take delight in desolations. 3. What a dismal sin makes; it turns a fruitful land into barrenness, a frequented city into a wilderness.

V. Here is an assurance given of the full accomplishment of this prediction, even to the most minute circumstance of it; (v. 16, 17.) ‘Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read. When this destruction comes, come to the book, and read it out of the scriptures, which cannot be got by a superficial reading of them. When you have read the prediction out of the book of the Lord, then observe, 1. That according to what you have read, so you see; not one of these shall fail, either beast or fowl: and it being foretold that they shall possess it from generation to generation, in order to that, that the species should not be lost, none shall want her mate; these marks of desolation shall be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land. 2. That God’s mouth having commanded this direful mus-
ter, his Spirit shall gather them, as the creatures by instinct were gathered to Adam to be named, and to Noah to be housed. What God's word has appointed, his Spirit will effect, and bring about, for no word of God shall fail to the ground. The word of God's promise shall in like manner be accomplished by the operations of the Spirit. 3. That there is an exact order and proportion observed in the accomplishment of this threatening; he has cast the lot for these birds and beasts, so that each one shall know his place, as readily as if it were marked by God's own hand; and the stroke that shall break their ranks, neither shall one thrust another. The soothsayers among the heathen foretold events by the flight of birds, as if the fate of men depended on them. But here we find that the flight of birds is under the direction of the God of Israel; he has cast the lot for them. 4. That the desolation shall be perpetual; They shall possess it for ever. God's Jerusalem may be laid in ruin, but Jerusalem old recovered itself out of its ruins, till it gave place to the gospel-Jerusalem, which may be brought low, but shall be rebuilt, and shall continue till it give place to the heavenly Jerusalem. But the enemies of the church shall be for ever desolate, shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.

CHAP. XXXXV.

As after the predictions of God's judgements upon the world, (ch. xxiv.) follows a promise of great mercy to be had in store for his church, (ch. xxv.) so, here, after a black and dreadful scene of confusion in the foregoing chapter, we have, in this, a bright and pleasant one, which though it foretells the flourishing estate of Hezekiah's kingdom in the latter part of his reign, yet surely looks as far beyond that as the prophecy in the foregoing chapter looks beyond the destruction of the Edomites; both were typical, and it concerns us most to look at those things which they were typical of, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of heaven. When the world, which lies in wickedness, shall be laid in ruins, and the Jewish church, which persisted in infidelity, shall become a desolation, then the gospel-church shall be set up, and made to flourish. 1. The Gentiles shall be brought into it, v. 1, 2, 7. If the well-wishers to it, who were weak and timorous, shall be encouraged, v. 3. 4. III. Miracles shall be wrought both on the souls and on the bodies of men, v. 5, 6. IV. The gospel-church shall be conducted in the way of holiness, v. 8, 9, 10. It shall be brought at last to an end, as it is said, at the end of days, v. 6. Thus do we learn, that Christ, and heaven, in this chapter, than one would have expected in the Old Testament.

1. THE wilderness, and the solitary place, shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

2. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. 3. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. 4. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you.

In these verses, we have,

1. The desert land blooming. In the chapter before, we had a populous and fruitful country turned into a horrid wilderness; here we have, in lieu of that, a wilderness turned into a good land. When the land of Judah was freed from the Assyrian army, those parts of the country that had been made as a wilderness by the ravages and outrages they committed, began to recover themselves, and to look pleasantly again, and to blossom as the rose. When the Gentile nations, that had been long as a wilderness, bringing forth no fruit to God, received the gospel, joy came with it to them, Ps. Lxxvi. 3, 4, xcvii. 11, 12. When Christ was preached in Samaria, there was great joy in that city, (Acts viii. 8.) that they sat in darkness saw a great and joyful light. And then they that blossomed, gave hopes of abundance of fruit; for that was it which the preachers of the gospel aimed at, (John xv. 16.) to go, and bringing forth fruit, Rom. i. 15. Col. i. 16. Though blossoms are not to be expected of fruit, except nothing, yet they are in order to fruit. Coveting grace makes the soul that was a wilderness to rejoice with joy and singing, and to blossom abundantly. This flourishing desert shall have all the glory of Lebanon given to it, which consisted in the strength and statefulness of its cedars, together with the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, which consisted in corn and cattle. Whatever is valuable in any institution, is brought into the gospel. All the beauty of the Jewish church was admitted into the Christian church, and appeared in its perfection, as the apostle shows at large in his epistle to the Hebrews; whatever was excellent and desirable in the Mosaic economy, is translated into the evangelical institution.

2. The glory of God shining forth; They shall see the glory of the Lord; God will manifest himself more than ever in his grace and love to mankind, (for that is his glory and excellency,) and he shall give them eyes to see it, and hearts to be duly affected with it. This is that which will make the desert blossom. The more we see by faith of the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God, the more joyful and the more fruitful shall we be.

3. The feeble and faint-hearted encouraged, v. 3, 4. God's prophets and ministers are in a special manner charged, by virtue of their office, to strengthen the weak hands, to comfort those who could not yet recover the fright they had been put into by the Assyrian army, with an assurance that God would now return in mercy to them. This is the design of the gospel; (1.) To strengthen those that are weak, and to confirm them, the weak hands, which are unable either to work or fight, and can hardly be uplifted in prayer, and the feeble knees, which are unable either to stand or walk, and unfit for the race set before us. The gospel furnishes us with strengthening considerations, and shows us where strength is laid up for us. Among true Christians, there are many weak hands and feeble knees, that are yet but bane of Christ; but it is our duty to strengthen our brethren, (Luke xxii. 32.) not only to bear with the weak, but to do what we can to confirm them, Rom. xv. 1. 1 Thess. v. 14. It is our duty also to strengthen ourselves, to lift up the hands which hang down, (Heb. xii. 12.) improving the strength God has given us, and exercising it. (2.) To hearten those who are the feeble knees of the church. God promises, and so declares, that we are of a fearful heart, because of their own weakness, and the strength of their enemies, that are hasty, (so the word is,) that are for betaking themselves to flight, upon the first alarm, and giving up the cause, that say, in their haste, “We are cut off and undone;” (Ps. xxxii. 22.) there is enough in the gospel to silence these fears; it says to them, and to us, Be strong, fear not. Fear is weakening; the more we strive against it, the stronger we are both for doing and suffering; and, for our encouragement to strive, he that says to us, Be strong, has laid help for us upon One that is mighty.

4. Assurance given of the approach of a Saviour: "Your God will come with vengeance. God will appear for you against your enemies, he will recomp
in his own name, he proved that he was God, the same who at first made man's mouth, the hearing ear, and the seeing eye. When he would prove to John's disciples his divine mission, he did it by miracles of this kind, in which this scripture was fulfilled. 2. Wonders, greater wonders, shall be wrought on men's souls. By the word and Spirit of Christ, those that were spiritually blind were enlightened, Isa. xxxii. 15. Those that were deaf to the calls of God, were made to hear the voice of Christ, whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended, Acts xvi. 14. Those that were impotent to every thing that is good, by divine grace are made not only able for it, but active in it, and run the way of God's commandments. Those also that were dumb, and knew not how to speak of God, or to God, having their understandings opened to know him, shall thereby have their lips opened not only for his praise. The tongue of the dumb shall sing for joy, the joy of God's salvation. Praise shall be perfected out of the mouth of babes and sucklings.

5. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped: 6. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. 9. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there: but the redeemed shall walk there. 10. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

"Then when your God shall come, even Christ, to set up his kingdom in the world, to which all the prophets bare witness, especially toward the conclusion of their prophecies of the temporal deliverances of the church, and this evangelical prophet especially—then look for great things."— Fol. 33. 4.

Wonders shall be wrought in the kingdoms both of nature and grace, wonders of mercy wrought upon the children of men, sufficient to evince that it is no less than a God that comes to us.

1. Wonders shall be wrought on men's bodies; (v. 5, 6.) The eyes of the blind shall be opened; this was often done by our Lord Jesus, when he was here upon earth, with a word's speaking, and one he go sight that was born blind, Matth. ix. 27. —xii. 22. —xx. 30. John ix. 6. by his power the ears of the deaf also were unstopped: with one word, Ephphatha—Be opened, Mark vii. 34. Many that were lame had the use of their limbs restored so perfectly, that they could not only go, but leap, and with so much joy to them, that they could not forbear leaping for joy, as that impotent man, Acts iii. 8. The dumb also were enabled to speak, and then no marvel that they were disposed to sing for joy, Matth. ix. 32, 33. These miracles Christ wrought, to prove that he was sent of God, (John iii. 2.) nay, working them by his own power, and

Vol. iv.—X
The way of holiness is the way of God's commandments, it is (as highways are) the good old way, Jer. vi. 16.

2. It shall be an appropriated way; the way in which God will bring his own chosen to himself, but the uncarned shall not pass over it, either to defile it, or to disturb those that walk in it. It is a way by itself, distinguished from the way of the world, for it is a way of separation from, and nonconformity to, this world; it shall be for those whom the Lord has set apart for himself; (Ps. iv. 3.) shall be reserved for them, the redeemed shall walk there, and the satisfaction they take in the ways of holiness shall be out of the reach of molestation from an evil world. The uncarned shall not pass over it, for it shall be a fair way; those that walk in it are the undefiled in the way, who escape the pollution that is in the world.

3. It shall be a straight way; The wretched men, who choose to travel in it, though fools, of weak capacity in other things, shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God, in this way, that they shall not err therein; not that they shall be infallible in their own conduct, or that they shall in nothing mistake; but they shall not be guilty of any fatal misconduct, shall not so miss their way, but that they shall recover it again, and get well to their journey's end. They that are in the narrow way, though some may fall into false notions, or be equally right, but all meeting at last in the same end, shall yet never fall into the broad way again; The spirit of truth shall lead them into all truth that is necessary for them. Note, The way to heaven is a plain way, and easy to hit. God has chosen the foolish things of the world, and made them wise to salvation. Knowledge is easy to him that understands.

4. It shall be a safe way; No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast, (v. 9.) none to hurt and destroy; they that keep close to this way keep out of the reach of Satan, the roaring lion, that wicked one teaches them not. They that walk in the way of holiness may proceed with a holy security and serenity of mind, knowing that nothing can do them any real hurt; they shall be quiet from the fear of evil. It was the way (xvii. 25.) which Hezekiah kept, as well as the way of the ten tribes, that God, being displeased with the colonies settled there, sent lions among them, 2 Kings xviii. 25. But Judah keeps her integrity, and therefore no lion shall be there. Those that walk in the way of holiness must separate themselves from the uncarned and the ravenous, must save themselves from an unnecessary generation; hoping that they themselves are of the redeemed, let them walk with the redeemed, which shall walk there.

IV. The end of this way shall be everlasting joy, v. 10. This precious promise of peace now, will end shortly in endless joys and rest for the soul. Here is good news for the citizens of Zion, rest to the weary; The ransomed of the Lord, who therefore ought to follow him wheresoe'er he goes, (Rev. xiv. 1.) shall ask the way to Zion, (Jer. l. 5.) and shall find the way, ch. lii. 12. God will open them a door of escape out of their captivity, and it shall be an effectual door, though there be many adversaries. They shall join to the Lord, the city of the living God, Heb. xii. 22. They shall come with songs of joy and praise for their deliverance out of Babylon, where they wept upon every remembrance of Zion, Ps. cxxxvii. 1. They that by faith are made citizens of the gospel-Zion, may go on their way rejoicing; (Acts viii. 20.) they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and be still praising him; they rejoice in Christ Jesus, and the sorrows and sighs of their convictions are made to fly away by the power of divine consolation. That they mourn are blessed, for they shall be comforted. 2. To see and enjoy God in the church triumphant; they that walk in the way of holiness, under the conduct of their Redeemer, shall come to Zion at last, to the heavenly Zion, shall come in a body, shall all be presented together, faultless, at the coming of Christ's glory with exceeding joy; (Jude 24. Rev. vii. 17.) they shall come, with songs. When God's people returned out of Babylon, they rejoiced. (xxiv. 1.) but they shall come to heaven singing a new song, which no man can learn, Rev. xiv. 3. When they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, it shall be what the joys of this world never could be, everlasting joy, without mixture, intermission, or period; it shall not only fill their hearts, to their own perfect and perpetual satisfaction, but it shall be upon their heads, as a crown, as a diadem, as a diadem in glory, as a garnet worn in token of victory; their joy shall be visible, and no longer a secret thing, as it is here in this world; it shall be proclaimed, to the glory of God, and their mutual encouragement; they shall then obtain the joy and gladness which they could never expect on this side heaven; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever, as the shadow of evening. They that trust in the Lord shall be made glad, when they see his salvation. They that trust in the Lord shall see salvation. To these prophecies which relate to the Assyrian invasion, conclude, for the support of the people of God under that calamity, and to direct their joy, in their deliverance from it, to something higher. Our joyful hopes and prospects of eternal life should swell up both all the sorrows, and all the joys, of this present time.

CHAP. XXXVI.

The prophet Isaiah is, in this and the three following chapters, an historian; for the scripture-history, as well as the scripture-prophesy, is given by inspiration of God, and was dictated to holy men. Many of the prophecies of these long passages have their reference and application in Sennacherib's invading of Judah, and besieging of Jerusalem, and the miraculous defence he met with there; and therefore the story of this is here inserted, both for the grace and for the encouragement of the church in her distress. The key of prophecy is to be found in history; and here, that we might have the reader entrance, it is, as it were, hung at the door. The exact fulfilling of this prophecy might be the more memorable, by the immediate observations on other prophecies, the accomplishment of which was at a greater distance. Whether this story was taken from the book of the Kings, and added here, or whether it was first written by Isaiah here, and from hence taken to the book of Kings, it is not material. But the story is the same almost verbatim; and it was so memorable an event, that it was well worthy to be twice recorded, 2 Kings xviii. and xix. and x. and xii. and xvi. and xix. likewise, 2 Chron. xxxvi. We shall be but short in our observations upon this story here, having largely explained it there. In this chapter, we have, I. The defeat which the king of Assyria met upon Judah, and his success in his invasion upon the all the defended cities, v. 1. II. The conference he desired to have with Hezekiah, and the managers on both sides, 2, 3. III. Rabshakeh's railing blasphemous speech, with which he desired to tempt Hezekiah to submission, and persuade him to surrender at discretion, v. 4. 10 IV. His appeal to the people, and his attempt to persuade them to desert Hezekiah, and so force him to surrender, v. 11. 30. V. The report of this made to Hezekiah by his agents, v. 21, 22.

1. NOW it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. 2. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, unto
king Hezekiah, with a great army: and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field. 3. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiah's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder. 4. And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 5. I say, saiest thou, (but they are but vain words,) I have counsel and strength for war: now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me! 6. Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. 7. But if thou say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he whose high places and Whose altars have Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar! 8. Now, therefore, give pledges, I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 9. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the host of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 10. And am I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

We shall here only observe some practical lessons from hence:
1. That a people may be in the way of their duty, and yet meet with trouble and distress. Hezekiah was reformating, and his people in some measure reformed; and yet their country is at that time invaded, and a great part of it laid waste. Perhaps they began to grow remiss and cool in the work of reformation; were doing it by halves, and ready to sit down short of a thorough reformation: and then God visited them with this judgment, to put life into them, and that good cause. We must not wonder, if, when we are doing well, God sends afflictions to quicken us to do better, to do our best, and to press forward toward perfection.
2. That we must never be secure of the continuance of our peace in this world, nor think our moun tent on the earth cannot be encompassed. Hezekiah was not only a pious king, but prudent, both in his administration at home, and in his treaties abroad. His affairs were in a good posture, and he seemed particularly to be upon good terms with the king of Assyria, for he had lately made his peace with him by a rich present; (2 Kings xviii. 14,) and yet that perfidious prince pears an army into his country all on a sudden, and lays it waste. It is good for us, therefore, always to keep up an expectation of trouble, that, when it comes, it may be no surprise to us, and then it will be the less a terror.
3. That God sometimes permits the enemies of his people, even those that are most impious and treacherous, to prevail far against them. The king of Assyria took all, or most, of the defenced cities of Judah, and then the country would of course be an easy prey to him. Wickedness may prosper awhile, but cannot prosper always.
4. Proud men love to talk big, to boast of what they are and have, and have done, not and of what they will do, to insult over others, and set all mankind at defiance; though thereby they render themselves ridiculous to all wise men, and obnoxious to the wrath of that God who resists the proud. But thus they think to make themselves feared, though they make themselves hated, and to carry their point by great swelling words of vanity, June 16.
5. The enemies of God's people endeavour to conquer them by frightening them, especially by frightening them from their confidence in God. Thus Rabshakeh here, with noise and banter, runs down Hezekiah as utterly unable to cope with his master, or in the least to make head against him. It concerns us therefore, that we may keep our ground against the enemies of our souls, to keep up our spirits by keeping up our hope in God.
6. It is acknowledged on all hands, that those who forsake God's service, forfeit his protection. If that had been true, which Rabshakeh alleged, that Hezekiah had thrown down God's altars, he might justly infer, that he could not with any assurance trust in him for succour and relief, v. 7. But the king may say, I have put my trust in the Lord, and in his mercy: is not this the commandments they have lived in the contempt of, whose name they have dishonoured, and whose ordinances they have slighted? How then can they expect to find favour with him.
7. It is an easy thing, and very common, for those that persecute the church and people of God, to pretend a commission from him for so doing. Rabshakeh could say, Am I now come up without the Lord? when really he was come up against the Lord, ch. xxxvii. 28. They that kill the servants of the Lord think they do him service, and say, Let the Lord be glorified. But, sooner or later, they will be made to know their error to their cost, to their confusion.

11. Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 12. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung and drink their own piss with you? 13. Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria: 14. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you. 15. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us: this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 16. Hearken not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern;
17. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. 18. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 19. Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? 20. Who are they among all the gods of these lands that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? 21. But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 22. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

We may hence learn these lessons: 1. That, while princes and counsellors have public matters under debate, it is not fair to appeal to the people. It was a reasonable motion which Hezekiah's plenipotentiaries made, that this parley should be held in a language which the people did not understand, (v. 11) because reasons of state are secret things, and ought to be kept secret, the vulgar being incompetent judges of them. It is therefore an unfair practice, and not doing as men would be done by, to incense subjects against their rulers by base insinuations. 2. Proud and haughty scoffers, the fairer they are spoken to, commonly speak the fouler. Nothing could be said more mildly and respectfully than that which Hezekiah's agents said to Rabshakeh. Beside that the thing itself was just, which they desired, they called themselves his servants, they petitioned for it, Speak, we pray thee; but this made him the more spleenful and imperious. To give rough answers to those who give us soft answers, is one way of rendering evil for good; and those are wicked indeed, and it is to be feared, incurably, with whom that which usually turns away wrath does but make bad worse. 3. When Satan would tempt men from trusting in God, and cleaving to him, he does it by insinuating, that, in yielding to him, they may better their condition; but it is a false suggestion, and grossly absurd, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost abhorrence. When the world and the flesh say tous, "Make an agreement with us, and come out to us, submit to our dominion, and come into our interests, and you shall eat every one of his own vine" they do but deceive us, promising liberty then when they would lead us into the greatest captivity. One might as well take Rabshakeh's word as theirs, for kind usage and fair quarter; therefore, when they speak fair, believe them not. Let them say what they will, there is no land like the land of promise, the holy land.

4. Nothing can be more absurd in itself, nor a greater affront to the true and living God, than to compare him with the gods of heathen; as if he could do no more for the protection of his worshippers than they can for the protection of theirs; and as if the God of Israel could as easily be mastered as the gods of Hamath and Arpad. Wherefore as they are vain and a lie, they are nothing; he is the great I AM: they are the creatures of men's fancy, and the works of men's hands; he is the Creator of all things.

5. Presumptuous sinners are ready to think, that, because they have been too hard for their fellow-creatures, they are therefore a match for their Creator. And therefore they shall not be judged, and therefore the Lord himself shall not deliver Jerusalem out of their hand. But though the potsherd may strive with the potsherd of the earth, let them not strive with the Potter.

6. It is sometimes prudent not to answer a foul according to his folly. Hezekiah's command was, "Answer him not; it will but provoke him to rail and blaspheme yet more and more; let it end, and stop his mouth, for you cannot." They had reason enough on their side, but it would be hard to speak it to such an unreasonable adversary without a mixture of passion; and if they should fall a railing like him, Rabshakeh would be too hard for them at that weapon.

7. It becomes the people of God to lay to heart the dishonour done to God by the blasphemies of wicked men, though they do not think it prudent to reply to those blasphemies. Though they answered him not a word, yet they rent their clothes in a holy zeal for the glory of God's name, and a holy indignation at the contempt put upon it. They tore their garments, when they heard blasphemy, as taking no pleasure in their own ornaments, when God's honour suffered.

CHAP. XXXVII.

In this chapter we have a further repetition of the story which we had before in the book of Kings, concerning Shemariah in his speech to the king, rebuking and threatening to conquer. In this chapter, we have him falling, and, at last, fallen, in answer to prayer, and in performance of many of the prophecies which we have met with in the foregoing chapters. Here we have, I. Hezekiah's pious resentment of Rabshakeh's impious discourse, v. 1. II. The gracious message he sent to Isaiah to desire his prayers, v. 2-5. III. The encouraging answer which Isaiah sent him from God, assuring him that God would plead his cause against the king of Assyria, v. 6-7. IV. An abusive letter which the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah, to the same purpose of Rabshakeh's speech, v. 8-13. V. Hezekiah's humble prayer to God upon the receipt of this letter, v. 14-20. VI. The further full answer which God sent him by Isaiah, promising him that his affairs should be like a boat under shelter, which would blow over, and every thing should appear bright and serene, v. 21-38. VII. The immediate accomplishment of this prophecy in the ruin of his army, (v. 39,) and the murder of himself, v. 37, 38. All which was largely opened 2 Kings 19.
Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left. 5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him; and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land: and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

We may observe here,

1. That the best way to baffle the malicious designs of our enemies against us, is, to be driven by them to God and to our duty, and so to fetch meat out of the eater. Rabshakeh intended to frighten Hezekiah from the Lord, but it proves that he frightens him to the Lord. The wind, instead of forcing the traveller's coat from him, makes him wrap it the closer about him. The more Rabshakeh reproaches God, the more Hezekiah studieth his fear, and the more effectually does he disburden him, and attending in his sanctuary to know his mind.

2. That it well becomes great men to desire the prayers of good men and good ministers. Hezekiah sent messengers, and honourable ones, those of the first rank, to Isaiah, to desire his prayers, remembering how much his prophecies of late had plainly looked toward the events of the present day; in dependence upon which, it is probable, he doubted not but that the issue would be comfortable, yet he would have it to be so in answer to prayer: This is a day of trouble, therefore let it be a day of prayer.

3. When we are most at a plunge, we should be most earnest in prayer: Now that the children are brought to the birth, but there is not strength to bring forth, now let prayer come, and help at a dead lift; when pains are most strong, let prayers be most lively; and when we meet with the greatest difficulties, then is a time to stir up not ourselves only, but others also, to take hold on God. Prayer is the midwife of mercy, that helps to bring it forth.

4. It is an encouragement to prayer, though we have not the answer thereof: When the Lord may hear, who knows but he will return and repent? The it may be of the prospect of the haven of blessings, should quicken us with double diligence to ply the ear of prayer.

5. When there is a remnant left, and but a remnant, it concerns us to lift up a prayer for that remnant, v. 4. The prayer that reaches heaven must be lifted up by a strong faith, earnest desires, and a direct intention to the glory of God; all which should be quickened when we come to the last state.

6. Those that have made God their Enemy, we have no reason to be afraid of, for they are marked for ruin; and though they may His, they cannot hurt. Rabshakeh has blasphemed God, and therefore let not Hezekiah be afraid of him, v. 6. He has made God a Party to the cause by his inventions, and therefore judgment will certainly be given against him. God will certainly plead his own cause.

7. Sinners' fears are but prefaces to their falls; he shall hear the rumour of the slaughter of his army, which shall oblige him to retire to his own land, the sword shall be slain upon him, and the terror that pursue him shall bring him at last to the king of terrors, Job xviii. 11, 14. The curses that come upon sinners shall overtake them.

8. So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah; for he had heard that he was deput ed from Lachish. 9. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee: and when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, 10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? 13. Where is the king of Hanath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? 14. And Hezekiah receiveth the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. 15. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, 16. O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. 17. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries. 19. And have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone; therefore they have destroyed them. 20. Now, therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.

We may observe here,

1. That if God gives us inward satisfaction in the promise, this may confirm us in our silent bearing of reproaches. God answered Hezekiah, but it does not appear that he, after deliberation, sent any answer to Rabshakeh; but God having taken the work into his own hands, he quietly left the matter with him. So Rabshakeh returned to the king his master for fresh instructions.

2. Those that delight in war shall have enough of it. Sennacherib, without provocation given to him, or warning given by him, went forth against Judah; and now with as little ceremony the king of Ethiopia goes forth to war against him, v. 9. They that strike others will suffer in some measure, and be themselves sometimes derid and laughed at by their enemies, by giving it a powerful diversion.

3. It is bad to talk proudly and profanely, but it
is worse to write so, for that argues more deliberation and design, and what is written spreads further, lasts longer, and does the more mischief; atheism and irreligion, written, will certainly be reckoned for another day.

4. Great successes often burden sinners' hearts in their sinful ways, and make them the more daring. Because the kings of Assyria have destroyed all lands, (though, in fact, they were but a few that fell within their reach,) therefore they doubt not but to destroy God's land; because the gods of the nations were unable to help, they conclude the God of Israel is so; because the idolatrous kings of Hamath and Arpad became an easy prey to them, therefore the religious reformed king of Judah must needs be so too. Thus is the proud man ripened for ruin by the sunshine of prosperity.

5. Liberty of access to the throne of grace, and liberty of speech there, are the unspeakable privileges of the Lord's people at all times, especially in times of distress and danger. Hezekiah took Semachterib's letter, and spread it before the Lord; not designing to make any complaints against him, but those grounded upon his own hand-writing. Let the thing speak itself, here it is in black and white; Open thine eyes, O Lord, and see. God allows his praying people to be humbly free with him, to utter all their words, as Jephthah did, before him, to specify their case, whether of a friend or an enemy, before him, and leave the contents, the concern of it, with him.

6. The great fundamental principles of our religion, applied by faith, and improved in prayer, will be of sovereign use to us in our particular exigencies and distresses, whatever they are; to them therefore we must have recourse, and abide by them; so Hezekiah did here. He encouraged himself with this, that the God of Israel is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; of the hosts of Israel, to animate them; of the hosts of their enemies, to dispirit and restrain them; that he is God alone, and there is none that can stand in competition with him; that he is the God of all the kingdoms of the earth, and disposes of them all as he pleases, for he made heaven and earth: and therefore both can do any thing, and do every thing.

7. When we are afraid of men that are great destroyers, we may with humble boldness appeal to God as the great Saviour. They have indeed destroyed the nations, who had thrown themselves out of the protection of the true God by worshipping false gods; but the Lord, the God alone, is our God, our King, our Lawgiver, and he will save us, who is the Saviour of them that believe.

8. We have enough to take hold of, in our wrestling with God by prayer, if we can but plead that his glory is interested in our case; that his name will be profaned if we are run down, and glorified if we are relieved. Thence therefore will our most prevailing pleas be drawn; Do it for thy glory's sake.

21. Then Isaiah, the son of Amoz, sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Semachterib king of Assyria: 2. This is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. 23. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel. 24. By thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel. 25. I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places. 26. Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. 27. Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb; as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. 28. But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. 29. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and will turn thee back by the way which thou camest. 30. And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as growth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. 31. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward: 32. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. 33. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. 34. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. 35. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 36. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 37. So Semachterib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 38. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and
theyscaped into the land of Armenia: and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.

We may here observe, 1. That those who receive messages of terror from men with patience, and send messages of faith to God by prayer, may expect messages of peace and grace from God for their comfort, when they are most cast down. Isaiah sent a long answer to Hezekiah's prayer, in God's name, sent it in writing, (for it was too long to be sent by word of mouth,) and sent it by way of return to his prayer, relation being thereunto: and he answered, (Isa. 37:10.)

2. Those who magnify themselves, especially who magnify themselves against God and his people, do really vilify themselves, and make themselves contemptible in the eyes of all wise men; The virgin, the daughter of Zion, has despised Sennacherib, and all his impotent malice and menaces; she knows that, while she preserves her integrity, she is sure of the divine protection, and that, though the enemy may bark, he cannot bite. All his threats and threats are vanity. Hezekiah might have referred him to the prophecies he had delivered, (particularly that, ch. 10.) and bid him pick out an answer from thence; but, that he might have abundant consolation, a message is sent him on purpose. The correspondence between earth and heaven is never let fall on God's side.

3. Those who abuse the people of God, affront God himself; and he takes what is said and done against them, as said and done against himself; "Whom hast thou reproached? Even the Holy One of Israel; whom thou hast therefore reproached, because he is a Holy One." And it aggravated the indignity done to God, that he not only reproached him himself, but sent him into their hands to do it; By thy servants, the agents, thou hast reproached God.

4. Those who boast of themselves and their own achievements, reflect upon God and his providence; Thou hast said, I have digged, and drunk water. I have done mighty feats, and will do more; and I will look back, and set my house in order, and the house of my father with me, and make them no more than of old he designed to make them: What I have formed of ancient times, in an eternal counsel, now have I brought to pass, for God does all according to the counsel of his will. Thou shalt not be to waste defended cities; it is therefore intolerable arrogance to make it thine own doing.

5. All the malice, and all the motions and projects, of the church's enemies, are under the cognizance and check of the church's God. Sennacherib was active and quick, here, and there, and everywhere, but God knew his going out and coming in, and had always an eye upon him, v. 28. And that was not all; he had a hand upon him too, a strict hand, a strong hand, look to his nose, and a brideg in his lips, with which, though he was very handsome and unruly, he could and would turn him back by the way he came, v. 29. Hitherto he shall come, and no further. God had signed Sennacherib's commission against Judah, (ch. x. 6.) here he superseded it; he has frightened them but he must not hurt them, and therefore is discharged from going any farther; now, his commission is hanged up, and by him is clapped up, to answer for what he had done beyond his commission.

6. God is his people's bountiful Benefactor, as well as their powerful Protector; both a Sun and a Shield to those who trust in him. Jerusalem shall be defended, (v. 33.) the besiegers shall not come into it, no, nor come before it, with any regular attack, but they shall be routed before they begin the siege, v. 33. But this is not all; God will return in mercy to his people, and will do them good. Their land shall be more than ordinarily fruitful, so that their losses shall be abundantly repaired; they shall not feel any of the ill effects either of the enemy's wasting the country, or of their own being taken off from husbandry. But the earth, as at first, shall bring forth of itself, and they shall live, and live plentifully, upon its spontaneous productions. The blessing of the Lord can, when he pleases, make rich without the hand of the diligent. And let them not think that the desolations of their country would excuse them from observing the sabbatical year, or from any other day of rest, as it was now, v. 29. For this reason, the Lord was pleased to bid them make them the day of rest, so far as their circumstances would admit. And this the sabbath was made a type of, that as a mountain which was superior to the mountains of God, (v. 4.) and that he, even he, is to be feared, v. 7. Angels are employed, more than we are aware of, as ministers of God's justice, to punish the pride, and break the power, of wicked men. (2.) The greatest men cannot stand before them. The great king, the king of Assyria, looks very little, when he is forced to return, not with an army to accomplish what he had projected with so much assurance, but with terror and fear, lest the angel that had destroyed his army should destroy him; yet he is made to look less, when his own sons, who should have guarded him, sacrificed him to his idol, whose protection he sought, v. 57, 38. God can quickly destroy them, and their breath, who breathe out threatenings and slanders upon God; he will bring them to naught, when they have filled up the measure of their iniquity; and the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes, known to be a God that resists the proud. Many prophecies were fulfilled in this providence; which should encourage us, as far as they look further, and are designed as common and general assurances of the safety of the church and all that trust in God, to depend upon God for the accomplishment of them. He that has delivered, doth and will. Lord, forgive our enemies; but, so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

This chapter proceeds in the history of Hezekiah. Here is, 1. His sickness, and the sentence of death he received within himself, v. 1. II. His prayer in his sickness, v. 2-11. III. The answer of God to his prayer, v. 12. IV. The deliverance of Jerusalem, the comings and goings of the Assyrian king, v. 13-20. This prayer, assuming that he should recover, that he should live 15 years yet, that Jerusalem should be delivered from the king of Assyria, and that, for a sign to confirm his recovery, the sun should stand still, and the moon, v. 12-20.

1. In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the
son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. 2. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, 3. And said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore. 4. Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, 5. Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. 6. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. 7. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; 8. Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sundial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.

We may hence observe, among others, these good lessons:

1. That neither men's greatness nor their goodness will exempt them from the arrests of sickness and death. Hezekiah, a mighty potentate on earth, and a mighty favourite of Heaven, is struck with a disease, which, without a miracle, will certainly be mortal; and this, in the midst of his days, his comforts, and usefulness. Lord, behold, he whom thou lovdest is sick. It should seem, this sickness seized him when he was in the midst of his triumphs over the ruined army of the Assyrians, to teach us always to rejoice with trembling.

2. It concerns us to prepare, when we see death approaching. Conscience, affection, and thy heart especially, put both these affections and thine affections into the best posture thou canst, that, when thy Lord comes, then mayest be found of him in peace with God, with thy own conscience, and with all men, and mayest have nothing else to do but to die.” Our being ready for death will make it come never the sooner, but much the more easily: and those that are fit to die are most fit to live.

3. How afflicted with sickness? Let him pray, James v. 13. Prayer is a salve for every sore, personal or public: when Hezekiah was distressed by his enemies, he prayed; now that he was sick, he prayed. Whither should the child go, when any thing ails him, but to his Father? Afflictions are sent to bring us to our Bibles and to our knees. When Hezekiah was in health, he “went up to the house of the Lord, to pray, for that was then the house of prayer. When he was sick in bed, he turned his face toward the wall; probably, toward the temple, which was a type of Christ, to whom we must look by faith in every prayer.

4. The testimony of our consciences for us, that by the grace of God we have lived a good life, and have walked closely and humbly with God, will be a great support and comfort to us when we come to look death in the face. And though we may not depend upon it as our righteousness, by which to be justified before God, yet we may humbly plead it as an evidence of our interest in the righteousness of the Mediator. Hezekiah does not demand a reward from God for his good services, but modestly begs that God would remember, not how he had reformed the kingdom, taken away the high-places, cleansed the temple, and revived neglected ordinances; but, which was better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices, how he had approved himself to God with his face down, and not only in these eminent performances, but in an even regular course of holy living: I have walked before thee in truth and sincerity, and with a perfect, that is, an upright, heart; for uprightness is our gospel-perfection.

5. God has a gracious ear open to the prayers of his afflicted people. The same prophet that was sent to Hezekiah was sent to Ahaz, who also was threatened with the same calamity: he is sent to him with a promise that he shall not only recover, or be restored to a confirmed state of health, but live fifteen years yet. As Jerusalem was distressed, so Hezekiah was diseased, that God might have the glory of the deliverance of both, and that prayer too might have the honour of being instrumental in the deliverance. When we pray in our sickness, though God send not to us such an answer as he here sent to Hezekiah, yet, if by his Spirit he bids us be of good cheer, assures us that our sins are forgiven us, that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that, whether we live or die, we shall be his, we have no reason to say that we pray in vain. God answers us, if he strengthen us with strength in our souls, though not with bodily strength, Ps. cxviii. 3. A good conscience cannot take much comfort in his own health and prosperity, unless withal he see the welfare and prosperity of the church of God. Therefore God, knowing what lay near Hezekiah’s heart, promised him not only that he should live, but that he should see the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life, (Ps. cxviii. 5.) otherwise he cannot live comfortably. Jerusalem, which is now delivered, shall still be defended from the Assyrians, who perhaps threatened to rally again, and renew the attack. Thus does God graciously provide to make Hezekiah upon all accounts easy.

6. God is willing to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, that they may have an unshaken faith in it, and therewith a strong consolation. God has given Hezekiah repeated assurances of his favour; and yet, as if all were thought too little, that he might expect from him uncommon favours, a sign is given him, an uncommon sign—none that we know of having had an absolute promise of living a certain number of years to come, as Hezekiah had. God thought fit to confirm this unprecedented favour with a miracle. The sign was the going back of the shadow upon the sun-dial; the sun is a faithful measure of time, and rejoices as a strong man to run a race; but he that set that clock agoing can set it back, when he pleases, and make it to return; for the Father of all lights is the Direction of them.

7. The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: 10. I said, in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years. 11. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. 12. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd’s tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pining sickness; from day even to night wilt thou make an
end of me. 13. I reckoned till morning, 

hal, as a lion, so will he break all my
bones: from day even to night wilt thou
make an end of me. 14. Like a crane, or
a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as
dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward:
O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for
me. 15. What shall I say? he hath both
spoken unto me, and himself hath done it:
I shall go softly all my years in the bitter-
ness of my soul. 16. O Lord, by these
things men live, and in all these things is
the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me,
and make me to live. 17. Behold, for peace
I had great bitterness; but thou hast in love
to my soul delivered it from the pit of cor-
rupution: for thou hast cast all my sins be-
thind thy back. 18. For the grave cannot
praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee:
they that go down into the pit cannot hope
for thy truth. 19. The living, the living, he
shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father
to the children shall make known thy truth.
20. The Lord was ready to save me; therefore
we will sing my songs to the stringed
instruments, all the days of our life, in the
house of the Lord. 21. For Isaiah had
said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay
it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. 22. Hezekiah also had said, What
is the sign that I shall go up to the house of
the Lord?

We have here Hezekiah's thanksgiving-song,
which he penned, by divine direction, after his re-
covery. He might have taken some of the psalms
of his father David, and made use of them for
his purpose; he might have fearfully made a very
pertinent application. He wrote the Levites to warn
Lord with the words of David, 2 Chron. xxix. 30.
But the occasion here was extraordinary, and, his
heart being full of devout affections, he would not
confine himself to the compositions he had, though
of divine inspiration, but would offer up his affec-
tions in his own words, which is most natural and
genuine. He put this thanksgiving in writing, that
he might review it himself afterward, for the re-
viewing of the good impressions made upon him by
this providence, and that it might be recommended
to others also for their use upon the like occasion.
Note, There are writings which it is proper for us
to draw up after we have been sick and are re-
covered. It is good to write a memorial of the affil-
itrants, of the frame of our hearts under it; to
keep a record of the thoughts we had of things when
we were sick, the affections that were then working
in us; to write a memorial of the mercies of a sick
bed, and of our release from it, that they may never
be forgotten; to write a thanksgiving to God, write
a sure covenant with him, and seal it: give it under
our oaths, that we will never return again to folly.
It is an excellent writing which Hezekiah here left
upon his recovery; and yet we find (2 Chron. xxxii.
23.) that he rendered not again according to the
benefit done to him. The impressions, one would
have thought, should never have worn off, and yet,
it seems, they did. Thanksgiving is good, but thanksgiving is better.

Now, in this writing, he preserves upon record,
1. The deplorable condition he was in when his
disease prevailed, and his despair of recovery, v.
10—13. He tells us what his thoughts were of him-
self, when he was at the worst; and these he keeps
in remembrance; 1. As blaming himself for his
idleness, and that he gave up himself for gone;
whereas, while there is life, there is hope, and room
for our pious endeavors; 2. As considering God's
 strokes, and that he had to consider sickness as a
simmons to the grave, so as thereby to be quickened
in our preparation for another world, yet we ought not
to make the worst of our case, nor to think that every sick
man must needs be quickly a dead man. He that brings low,
can raise up. Or, 2. As reminding himself of the
abominable things he had of death approaching; that
he was always knowing and dreading death, and of
mortality, and that, though he had a reprieve for
fifteen years, it was but a reprieve, and the fatal
stroke he had now such a dread of would certainly
come at last. Or, 3. As magnifying the power of
God in recovering him when his case was desperate,
and his goodness in being so much better to him
than his own fears. Thus David sometimes, when
he was delivered out of trouble, reflected upon the
black and melancholy conclusions he had made upon
his own case when he was in trouble, and what he
had then said in his haste, as Ps. xxxi. 22—xxvii.
7—9.

Let us see what Hezekiah's thoughts of himself
were: 1) He reckoned that the number of his months
was cut off in the midst: he was now about thirty-
nine or forty years of age, and when he had a fair
prospect of many years and happy ones, very happy,
very many, before him. This discomfited that sud-
denly seized him, he concluded would be the cut-
ing off his days; that he should now be deprived
of the residue of his years, which, in a course of
nature, he might have lived: not which he could call
a demand as a debt due to him, but which he had rea-
sion to expect, considering the strength of his con-
stitution; and with them he should be deprived not
only of the comforts of life, but of all the oppor-
tunities he had of serving God and his generation.
To the same purport, (v. 12.) "Mine age is de-
parted and gone, and is removed from me as a shep-
herd's tent, as the day is taken up out of the pulling
of it down in an instant." Our present residence is
but like that of a shepherd in his tent, a poor,
mean, and cold lodging, where we are upon
duty, and with a trust committed to our charge, as
the shepherd has, of which we must give an ac-
count, and which will easily be taken down by the
threshing of one pin or two. But observe, It is not
the final period of our age, but only the removal
of it to another world, where the tents of Kedar that
are taken down, coarse, black, and weather-beaten,
shall be set up again in the New Jerusalem, comely
as the curtains of Solomon. He adds another simili-
tude; I have cut off, like a weaver, my life. Not
that he did by any act of his own cut off the thread
of his life; his being ill, and his confinement illy,
was forced to cut off all his designs and projects,
his purposes were broken off, even the thoughts of
his heart, as Job's were, ch. xvii. 11. Our days are
compared to the weaver's shuttle, (Job vii. 6.)
passing and repassing very swiftly, every throw leav-
ing a thread behind it; and when they are finished,
the thread is cut off, and the piece taken out of the
loom, and showed to our Master, to be judged of,
whether it be well woven or no, that we may re-
cive according to the things done in the body. But,
as the weaver, when he has cut off his threads, has
done his work, and the loom is over, so a good man,
when his life is cut off, his cares and fatigues are
cut off with it, and he rests from his labours. But
I said, I have cut off my life? No, my times are not in mine own hand, they are in God's hand, and it is he that will cut me off from the throrn; so the margin reads it; he has appointed what shall be the length of the piece, and, when it comes to that length, he will cut it off.

(2.) He reckoned that he should go to the gates of the grave; to the gates of sin, and the gates of which was, as he supposes, the grave, and death; the grave is here put not only for the sepulchres of his fathers, in which his body would be deposited with a great deal of pomp and magnificence, (for he was buried in the chief of the sepulchres of the kings, and all Judah did him honour at his death, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 33,) which yet he himself took no care of, nor good; and he supposed that he should die in the midst of those, for the state of the dead, that is, the sheol, the hades, the invisible world, to which he saw his soul going.

(3.) He reckoned that he was deprived of all the opportunities he might have had of worshipping God, and doing good, in the world; (v. 11.) "I said," [1.] "I shall not see the Lord, as he manifests himself in his temple, in his oracles and ordinances, even the Lord here in the land of the living." He looks at this as a reproach to see, that he had no prospect of seeing him any more on this side death, as he had seen him in the sanctuary, Ps. lxxvii. 2. He shall no more see, (serve) the Lord in the land of the living, the land of conflict between his kingdom and the kingdom of Satan, this seat of war. He dwells much upon this; I shall no more see the Lord, even the Lord; for a good man wishes not to live forever, and to make an end of his life, that he may depart and have communion with him. [2.] I shall see man no more. He shall see his subjects no more, whom he may protect, and administer justice to; shall see no more objects of charity, whom he may relieve; shall see his friends no more, who were often sharpened by his countenance, as iron is by iron. Death puts an end to conversation, and removes our acquaintance into darkness, Ps. lxxviii. 18.

(4.) He reckoned that the agonies of death would be very sharp and severe; "He will cut me off with pining sickness, which will waste me, and wear me off, quickly." The distemper increased so fast, without intermission or remission, either day or night, morning or evening, that he concluded it would soon come to a crisis, and make an end of him—that God, whose servants all diseases are, would by them, as a lion, break all his bones with grinding pain, v. 13. He thought that next morning was the utmost he could expect to live in such pain and misery; when he had outlived the first day's illness, the second day he repented his fears, and concluded that this must needs be his last night; from day even to night will thou make an end of me. When we are sick, we are very apt to be thus calculating our time, and, after all, we are still at uncertainty. It should be more our care how we shall get safe to another world, than how long we are likely to live in this world.

11. The complaints he made in this condition; (v. 14.) "Like a crane, or swallow, so did I chatter; I made a noise as those birds do when they are frivolous. "Seest thou a crane sickness nothing is a little time; he that, but the other day, spake with so much freedom and majesty, now, through the extremity of pain, or deficiency of spirits, chatters like a crane, or swallow. Some think he refers to his praying in his affliction; it was so broken and interrupted with groanings which could not be uttered, as the crane, or swallow, than what it used to be. Such were his thoughts he had of his own prayers, which were yet acceptable to God, and successful. He mourned like a dove, sadly, but silently and patiently. He had found God so ready to answer his prayers at other times, that he could not but look upward, in expectation of some relief now; but in vain, his eyes failed, and he saw no hopeful symptom, nor felt any abatement of his distemper; and therefore he prays, "I am oppressed, quite overpowered, and ready to sink; Lord, undertake for me, that I may live out of the land of the living, and not be delivered for thy servant for good, Ps. cxix. 122. Come between me and the gates of the grave, to which I am ready to be hurried." When we recover from sickness, the divine pity does, as it were, begin a day for us, and undertakes we shall be forthcoming another time, and answer the debt in full. And when we receive the sentence of death within ourselves, we are undone, if the sin of it which we have done, and our sins be brought home to us, to carry us through the valley of the shadow of death, and to preserve us blameless to the heavenly kingdom on the other side of it— if Christ do not undertake for us, to bring us off in the judgment, and present us to his Father, and to do all that for us, which we need, and cannot do for ourselves, I am oppressed, ease me; some read it; for when we are agitated by a sense of guilt, and the fear of death, much will make us easy but Christ's undertaking for us.

III. The grateful acknowledgment he makes of God's goodness to him in his recovery. He begins this part of writing as one at a stand how to express himself; (v. 15.) "What shall I say? Why should I say so much by way of complaint, when this is enough to silence all my complaints—He has spoken to me, and has sent his prophet to tell me that I shall recover, and live fifteen years yet; and himself has done it, it is as sure to be done as if it were done already; what God has spoken he will himself do, for no word of his shall fall to the ground." God having spoken it, he is sure of it; (v. 16.) "Thou wilt recover me, and make me to live: not only recover me from this illness, but make me to live through the years assigned me." And having this hope,

1. He promises himself always to retain the impressions of his affliction; (v. 15.) "I will go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul; as one in sorrow for my sinful distrusts and murmuring under my affliction; as one in care to make suitable returns for God's favour to me, and to make it appear that I have not for a moment felt that it has been under me. I will go softly, gravely, and considerably, and with thought and deliberation, not as many, who, when they are recovered, live as carelessly, and as much at large, as ever." Or, "I will go pleasantly; (so some understand it:) when God has delivered me, I will walk cheerfully with him in all holy conversation, as having tasted that he is gracious. Or, "I will go softly, that is, "mournfully, in the bitterness of my soul for my sins." Or, "I will go softly, even after the bitterness of my soul;" (so it may be read:) "when the trouble is over, I will endeavour to retrain the impression of it, and to have the same thoughts of things that I had then."

2. He will encourage himself, and others, with the expectation he had had of the goodness of God; (v. 16.) "By these things which thou hast done for me, they live, the kingdom lives!" (for the life of such a king was the life of the kingdom;) "all that hear of it shall live and be comforted: by the same power and goodness that have recovered me, all men have their souls held in life, and they ought to acknowledge it. In all these things is the life of the spirit, my spiritual life, that is supported and maintained by what God has done for the preservation of my natural life." The more we taste of the loving-kindness of God in every providence, the more will our hearts be enlarged to love him,
and live to him, and that will be the life of our spirit. Thus our souls live, and they shall praise him.

3. He magnifies the mercy of his recovery, on several accounts.

(1.) That he was raised up from great extremity; (v. 1.) Beloved, for peace I had great bitterness. When upon the defeat of Sennacherib, he expected nothing but an uninterrupted peace to himself and his government, he was suddenly seized with sickness, which imbibed all his comforts to himself, and went to that height, that it seemed to be the bitterness of death itself, bitterness, bitterness, nothing but gall and wormwood. This was his condition, when Hezekiah was suddenly taken with a seasonable suddenness.

(2.) That it came from the love of God, from love to his soul. Some are spared, and reprieved, in wrath, that they may be reserved for some greater judgment when they have filled up the measure of their iniquities; but temporal mercies are then sweet indeed to us, when we can taste the love of God in them; he delivered me because he delighted in me; Ps. lxxviii. 19.) and the word here signifies a very affectionate love; Thou hast loved my soul from the pit of corruption; so it runs in the original. God's love is sufficient to bring a soul from the pit of corruption. This is applicable to our redemption by Christ; it was in love to our souls, our poor pertaining souls, that he delivered them from the bottomless pit, snatched them as broad as a man. In his own sight, and in his pity he redeemed us; and the preservation of our bodies, and the provision made for them, are then doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

(3.) That it was the effect of the pardon of sin; For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back, and therefore thou hast erred from the wicked way, and in his pity he redeemed us; and the preservation of our bodies, and the provision made for them, are then doubly comfortable, when it is in love to our souls; when God repairs the house because he has a kindness for the inhabitant.

(4.) That it was the lengthening out of his opportunity to glorify God in this world; which he made the business and pleasure and end of life. Hezekiah, in the depth of his sickness, had put a period to that course of service for the glory of God, and the good of the church, which he now was pursuing, v. 18. Heaven indeed praises God, and the souls of the faithful, when at death they remove thither, do that work of heaven as angels, and with the angels, there; but what is this world the better for that? What does this contribute to the support and advancement of God's kingdom among men in this state of struggle? The grave cannot praise God, nor the dead bodies that lie there; death cannot celebrate him, cannot proclaim his perfections and favours, to invite others into his service. They who go down to the pit, being no longer in a state of probation, nor living by faith in his promises, cannot give him honour by hoping for his truth. They that lie rotting in the grave, as they are not capable of receiving any further mercy from God, so neither are they capable of offering any more praises to him, till they shall be raised at the last day, and then they shall both receive and give glory.

[2.] Being recovered from it, he receives not only to proceed, but to abound, in praising and serving God; (v. 19.) The living, the living, he shall praise thee. They may do it, they have an opportunity of praising God: and that is the main thing that makes life valuable and desirable to a good man. Hezekiah was therefore glad to live, not that he might continue to enjoy his royal dignity, and the ease and pleasure of his present situation, but that he might continue to praise God. The living must praise God; they live in vain, if they do not. They that have been dying, and yet are living, whose life is from the dead, are in a special manner obliged to praise God, as being most sensibly affected with his goodness. Hezekiah for his part, being recovered from this sickness, will make it his business to praise God; "I do it this day for the Lord, as one that doth in like manner." They that give good exhortations should set great examples, and do themselves what they expect from others; "For my part," says Hezekiah, "the Lord was ready to save me; he not only did save me, but he was ready to do it, just then when I was in the greatest extremity; he helped me from his right hand, and in his might he redeemed me; and at hand to do it, saved me at the first word; and therefore," First, "I will publish and proclaim his praise. I and my family, I and my friends, I and my people, will have a concert of praise to his glory; we will sing my song to the stringed instruments, that my reward may be according to my right, when I have rendered to the Lord my vows, when they are in the most devout and serious frame in the house of the Lord." It is for the honour of God, and the edification of his church, that special mercies should be acknowledged in public prayers, especially mercies to public persons, Ps. cxvi. 18, 19.

Secondly, "I will proceed and persevere in his praises." We should do it all the days of our life, because every day of our life is itself a fresh mercy, and brings many fresh mercies along with it; and as renewed mercies call for renewed praises, so former eminent mercies call for repeated praises. It is by the mercy of God that we live, and therefore as long as we live, we must continue to praise him, while we have breath, Nay while we have being. And thirdly, "I will propagate and perpetuate his praises." We should not only do it all the days of our life, but the father to the children should make known his truth, that the ages to come may give God the glory of his truth by trusting to it. It is the duty of parents to possess their children with a confidence in the truth of God, which will go far toward keeping them close to the ways of God. Hezekiah, doth, and did, therefore shall here only observe two lessons from them.

1. That God's promises are intended not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, the use of means; Hezekiah is sure to recover, and yet he must take a lump of figs, and lay it on the boil, v. 21. We do not trust God, but tempt him, if, when
we pray to him for help, we do not second our prayers with our endeavours. We must not put physicians, or physic, in the place of God, but make use of them in subordination to God and to his providence; help thyself, and God will help thee.

2. That the chief end we should aim at, in desiring life and health, is, that we may glorify God, and prove ourselves in knowledge, and grace, and meekness for heaven. Hezekiah, when he meant, What is the sign that I shall recover? asked, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord, there to honour God, to keep up acquaintance and communion with him, and to encourage others to serve him, v. 22. It is taken for granted that if God would restore him to health, he would immediately ascend the temple with his thank-offerings; there Christ found the impotent man whom he had healed, John v. 14. The exercises of religion are so much the business and delight of a good man, that to be restrained from them is the greatest grievance of his afflictions, and to be restored to them is the greatest comfort of his deliverances. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee.

CHAP. XXXIX.

The story of this chapter likewise we had before, 2 Kings xx. 12, &c. It is here repeated, not only as a very mercy to the prophet's passage, but because it concludes with a prophecy of the captivity in Babylon; and as the former part of the prophecy of this book frequently referred to Sennacherib's invasion and the defeat of that, to which therefore the history of that was very fully subjoined, so the latter part of this book speaks much of the Jews' captivity in Babylon and their deliverance out of that, to which therefore the first predictions and the imperfect things of the occasion are very fully prefixed. We have here, I. The pride and folly of Hezekiah, in showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors that were sent to congratulate him on his recovery, v. 1, 2. II. Isaiah's examining of him, concerning it, in God's name, and his confession of it, v. 3, 4. III. The sentence passed upon him for it, that all his treasures should, in process of time, be carried to Babylon, v. 5., 7. IV. Hezekiah's penitent and patient submission to this sentence, v. 8.

1. At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. 2. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and showed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not. 3. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. 4. Then said he, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in my house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not showed them. Hence we may learn these lessons,

1. That humanity and common civility teach us to rejoice with our friends and neighbours when they rejoice, and to congratulate them on their deliverances, and particularly their recoveries from sickness. The king of Babylon, having heard that Hezekiah had been sick, and was recovered, sent to compliment him upon the occasion. If Christians be unneighborly, heathens will shame them.

2. It becomes us to give honour to those whom our God puts honour upon. The sun was the Babylonians' god; and when they understood that it was with a respect to Hezekiah that the sun, to their great surprise, went back ten degrees, on such a day, they thought themselves obliged to do Hezekiah all the honour they could. Will all people thus walk in the name of their God, and shall not we?

3. Those that do not value good men for their goodness, may yet be brought to pay them great respect by other inducements, and for the sake of their secular interests. The king of Babylon made his court to Hezekiah here, not because he was pious, but because he was prosperous; as the Philistines coveted an alliance with Isaac, because they saw the Lord was with him, Gen. xxvi. 29. The King of Babylon was an enemy to the king of Assyria, and therefore was fond of Hezekiah, because the Assyrians were so much weakened by the power of his God.

4. It is a hard matter to keep the spirit low in the midst of great advancements. Hezekiah is an instance of it: he was a wise and good man; but when once he was exalted, after all his honour, he was questioned for his own advantage; and he found it hard to keep his heart from being lifted up, nay a little thing then drew them into the snare of pride. Blessed Paul himself needed a thorn in the flesh, to keep him from being lifted up with the abundance of revelations.

5. We have need to watch over our own spirits, when we are showing our friends our possessions, what we have done, and what we have got, that we be not proud of them, as if our might or our merit had purchased and procured us this wealth. When we look upon our enjoyments, and have occasion to speak of them, it must be with humble acknowledgments of our own unworthiness, and thankful acknowledgments of God's goodness, with a just value for the achievements of others, and with an expectation of losses and changes; not dreaming that our present stands so strong but that it may soon be moved.

6. It is a great weakness for good men to value themselves much upon the civil respects that are paid them (yea, though there be something particular and uncommon in them,) by the children of this world, and to be fond of their acquaintance. What a poor thing was it for Hezekiah, whom God had so dearly purchased, to be thus over-proud of the respect paid him by a heathen prince, as if those added any thing to him! We ought to return the courtesy of such with interest, but not to be proud of them.

7. We must expect to be called to an account for the workings of our pride, though they are secret, and in such instances as we thought there was no harm in; and therefore we ought prudently to set to an account for them; and when we have had company with us, that have paid us respect, and been pleased with their entertainment, and commended every thing, we ought to be jealous over ourselves, with a godly jealousy, lest our hearts have been lifted up. As far as we see cause to expect that this sly and subtle sin of pride has insinuated itself into our breasts, and mingleth itself with every conversation, let us be ashamed of it, and as Hezekiah here, ingenuously confess it, and take shame to ourselves for it.
5. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts; 6. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. 7. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. 8. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

Hence let us observe,

1. That if God love us, he will humble us, and will find some way or other to pull down our spirits when they are lifted up above measure. A mortifying message is sent to Hezekiah, that he might be humbled for the proudnes of his heart, and be convinced of the folly of it; for though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, as he did Hezekiah here, to prove him, that he might know all that was in his heart, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it.

2. It is just with God to take that from us, which we make the matter of our pride, and on which we build a carnal confidence. When David was proud of the numbers of his people, God took a course to make them fewer; and when Hezekiah boasts of his treasures, and looks upon them with too great a complacency, he is told that he acts like the foolish traveller, who shows his money and gold to one that proves a thief, and is thereby tempted to rob him.

3. If we could but see things that will be, we should be ashamed of our thoughts of things that are. If Hezekiah had known that the seed and successors of this king of Babylon would hereafter be the ruin of his family and kingdom, he would not have complimented his ambassadors as he did. And when the prophet told him that he would be so, we may well imagine how he was vexed at himself for what he had done. We cannot certainly foresee the future; but we are told, that pride will not be at an end, nor vanity, and therefore it is vanity for us to take complacency, and put confidence, in any thing that goes under that character.

4. Those that are fond of an acquaintance and alliance with irreligious men, first or last will have enough of it, and will have cause to repent it. Hezekiah thought himself happy in the friendship of Babylon, though it was the mother of herets and idolatries; but Babylon, who now courted Jerusalem, in process of time conquered her, and carried her captive. Leagues with sinners, and leagues with sin too, will end thus; it is therefore our wisdom to keep at a distance from them.

5. Those that truly repent of their sins will take it well to be reproved for them, and will be willing to be told of their faults. Hezekiah received the word of the Lord good, which discovered sin to him, and made him sensible that he had done amiss, which before he was not aware of. The language of true penitents is, Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and the law is therefore good, because, being spiritual, in it sin appears sin, and exposes sin.

6. True penitents will quietly submit, not only to the reproves of the word, but to the rebukes of Providence, for their sins. When Hezekiah was told of the punishment of his iniquity, he said, Good is the word of the Lord, not only the mitigation of the sentence, but the sentence itself; he has nothing to object against the equity of it, but says, Amen, to the threatening. Thus he sees the evil of sin, and what it deserves, will justify God in all that is brought upon them for it, and own that he punishes them less than their iniquities deserve.

7. Though we must not be regardless of those that come after us, yet we must reckon ourselves well done for, if there be peace and truth in our days, and better than we had reason to expect; if a storm be coming, we must not hesitate to get into the harbour before it comes, and he gathered to the grave in peace; yet we can never be secure of this, but must prepare for changes in our own time, that we may stand complete in all the will of God, and bid it welcome, whatever it is.

CHAP. XL.

At this chapter begins the latter part of the prophecy of this book, which is not only divided from the former by the historical chapters that come between, but seems to be distinguished from it in the scope and style of it. In the former part, the name of the prophet was frequently prefixed to the particular prophecy or discourse; it is now omitted, and the prophecy stands forth alone, and is designated by a single title; (as ch. ii. 1. ch. vii. 3. ch. xiii.) but this is all one continued discourse, and the prophet not so much as once named. That consisted of many burthenst, many weepings over many brevities; but this is the distress which the people of God were in by the Assyrian, and their deliverance out of that, were chiefly prophesied of; but that here spoken of as a thing past, (ch. ili. 4.) and the captivity of Babylon, and the return from that, which were much greater events, of more extensive and abiding concern, are here largely foretold. Before God sent his people into captivity, he furnished them with precious promises for their support and comfort in their trouble; and we may well imagine of what great use to them the glorious, gracious light of this prophecy was, in that cloudy and dark day, and how much it helped to cheer up their tearing heart, at the time of Babylon. But it looks further yet, and to greater things; much of Christ and gospel-grace we meet with in the foregoing part of this book, but in this latter part we shall find much more of the Spirit of grace, and if it were necessary, the summary of the New Testament, it begins with that which begins the gospels, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, (ch. xli. 3.) and concludes with that which concludes the book of the Revelation, The new heavens and the new earth, ch. lxvi. 22. Even Mr. White acknowledges, that as all the mercies of God to the Jewish nation bore some resemblance to those glorious things performed and promised for the Gentiles, so these prophecies are by the spirit of God expressed in such terms as show plainly, that while the prophet is speaking of the redemption of the Jews, he had in his thoughts a more glorious redemption of the Gentiles. And we need not look for any further accomplishment of these prophecies yet to come: for if Jesus be He, and his kingdom be it, that shall come, we are to look for no other, but the coming and completing of the same blessed work which was begun in the first preaching and planting of Christianity in the world.

In this chapter, we have, I. Orders given to preach and publish the glad tidings of redemption, 1. 2. 11. These glad tidings introduced by a voice in the wilderness, which gives assurance that all obstructions shall be removed; (v. 3. 5.) and that though all creatures fail and fade, and God should be magnified, and accomplished, v. 6. 8. III. A joyful prospect given to the people of God of the happiness which this redemption should bring along with it, v. 9. 11. IV. The sovereignty and power of that God magnified, who undertakes to work out this redemption, v. 12. 17. V. Idols therefore triumphed over, and idolaters upbraided with their folly, v. 18. 26. VI. A reproof given to the people of God of their faithless expectancies, and enough said, in a few words, to silence those false reports, v. 27. 31. And we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, may have hope.

1. COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. 2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her
iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

We have here the commission and instructions given not to this prophet only, but, with him, to all the Lord's prophets, and to all Christ's ministers, to proclaim comfort to God's people. 1. This did not only warrant, but enjoin this prophet, that he should comfort God's people, that they may be comforted. 2. And, inasmuch as this prophet, and, as it were, all God's people, lived in his own time, who could not but have very melancholy apprehensions of things, when they saw Judah and Jerusalem by their doting impieties ripening space for ruin, and God in his providence hastening ruin upon them. Let them be sure that, for all this, God had mercy in store for them. 2. It was especially a direction to the prophets that should live in the Babylonian exil, that they should not use it as a cause of despair and discouragement to their people, but that, on the contrary, they should comfort them, and encourage them in their faith in God, (Jer. xxvii. 17, 25.) and was ready to say that he had given them more than they deserved; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value, that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God spared not his own Son.

3. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: 5. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. 6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. 8. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God standeth for ever.

The time to form Zion, to the set time, being come, the people of God must be prepared, by repentance and faith, for the favours designed them; and, in order to call them to these, we have here the voice of one crying in the wilderness, which may be applied to those prophets who were with the captives in their wilderness-state, and who, when they saw the day of their deliverance dawn, called earnestly upon them to prepare for it, and assured them that all the difficulties which stood in the way of the deliverance would be removed by God. It is a good sign that mercy is preparing for us, if we find God's grace preparing us for it, Ps. v. 17. But it must be applied to John the Baptist; for though God was the Speaker, he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, and his business was, to prepare the way of the Lord, to dispose men's minds for the reception and entertainment of the people of God; Thy spirit and thy power, the words of his ministry, were preparatory to the coming of Christ. 1. By repentance for sin; that was it which John Baptist preached to all Judah and Jerusalem, (Matt. iii. 2, 5.) and thereby made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Luke i. 17. The alarm is given, let all take notice of it at their peril; God is coming in a way of mercy, and we must prepare for him, v. 3—5. If we apply it to their captivity, it may serve us to receive Christ and his gospel; "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; prepare yourselves for him, and let all that be suppressed which would be an obstruction to his entrance; make room for the grace of the divine compassion; His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel, (Judges x. 16.) and, like a tender father, since he spake against them, he earnestly remembered them, (Jer. xxxi. 20.) and was ready to say that he had given them more than they much correction. They, being very penitent, acknowledged that God had punished them less than their iniquities deserved; but he, being very pitiful, owned, in a manner, that he had punished them more than they deserved. True penitents have indeed, in Christ and his sufferings, received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins; for the satisfaction Christ made by his death was of such an infinite value, that it was more than double to the demerits of sin; for God spared not his own Son.
Christ; Make straight a highway for him." If he prepare the end for us, we ought surely to prepare the way for him. 1. Lift up your heads, 0 ye gates, Ps xxiv. 7, 8. Prepare for the salvation, the great salvation, and other lesser deliverances. Let us get to be fit for them, and then God will work them out. Let us not stand in our own light, nor put a bar in our own door, but find, or make, a highway for him, even in that which is his desert ground. This is that for which he has so long been waiting.

2. We must get our hearts levelled by divine grace. Those that were hindered from comfort in Christ by their dejections and despovv, are the valleys that must be exalted. Those that are hindered from comfort in Christ by a proud conceit of their own merit and worth, are the mountains and hills that must be made low. Those that have entertained prejudices against the word and ways of God, that are intractable, and disposed to thwart, and contradicet even that which is plain and easy, because it agrees not with their corrupt inclinations and secular interests, are the crooked that must be made straight, and the rough places that must be made plain. Let but the gospel of Christ have a fair ground and free way, and God will prepare the way of the Lord; and thus God will by his grace prepare his own way in all the vessels of mercy, whose heart he opens as he did Lydia's. And when this is done, the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, v. 3. (1.) When the captives are prepared for deliverance, Cyrus shall proclaim it, and they shall have the benefit of it, and they only, whose hearts are open and ready. When the door is opened, God will make a way and make peace. Cyrus shall proclaim it, and the captives shall come; they shall be comforted and encouraged, and resolution to break through the discouragements that lay in their way, and to make nothing of the hills, and valleys, and all the rough places. (2.) When John Baptist has for some time preached repentance, mortification, and reformation, and so made ready a people prepared for the Lord, (Luke i. 17.) then the Messiah himself shall be revealed in his glory, working miracles, which John did not; and by his grace, which is his glory, binding up and healing with consolations those whom John had wounded with convictions. And this revelation of divine glory shall be a light to lighten the Gentiles; All flesh shall see it together, and not the Jews only; they shall see and admire it, see it, and bid it welcome; as the return out of captivity was taken notice of with rejoicings, Ps lxxviii. 9. And when the Messiah shall be revealed, it shall be the accomplishment of the word of God, not one iota, or tittle of which shall fall to the ground; The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and therefore the hand of the Lord will effect it.

11. By confidence in the word of the Lord, and not in any creature: the mouth of the Lord having spoken it, the voice has thus upon the word of God, build our hopes on that, with an assurance that it will not make us ashamed; in a dependence upon this word, we must be brought to own that all flesh is grass, withering and fading. (1.) The power of man, when it does appear against the deliverance, is not to be feared; for it shall be as grass before the word of the Lord, it shall wither and be trodden down: the insulting Babylonians, who promises themselves that the desolations of Jerusalem shall be perpetual, are but as grass which the Spirit of the Lord blows upon, makes nothing of, but blasts all its glory; for the word of the Lord, which promises their deliverance, shall stand for ever, and it is not in the power of their enemies to hinder the execution of it. (2.) The power of man, when it does appear for the deliverance, is not to be trusted to; for it is but as grass in comparison with the word of the Lord, which is the only firm foundation for us to build our hope upon. When God is about to work salvation for his people, he will take them off from depending upon creatures, and looking for it from hills and mountains; they shall fall thin, and their expectations from them shall be frustrated: the Spirit of the Lord shall blow upon them; for God will have no creature to be a rival with him for the hope and confidence of his people; and as it is his word only that shall stand for ever, so in that word only our faith must stand. When we are brought to this, then, and not till then, we are fit for mercy.

2. The word of our God, that glory of the Lord, which is now to be revealed, the gospel, and that grace which is brought with it to us, and wrought by it in us, shall stand for ever; and this is the satisfaction of all believers, when they find all their creature-comforts withering and failing like grass. Thus the apostle applies it to the word which by the gospel is preached, and which shall stand for ever as the incorruptible seed by which we are born again, 1 Pet. i. 25—28. To prepare the way of the Lord we must be convinced, (1.) Of the vanity of the creature; that all flesh is grass, weak and withered; we ourselves are so, and therefore cannot save ourselves; all our friends are so, and therefore are unable to save us. All the beauty of the creature, which might render it amiable, is but the flower of grass, soon blasted, and therefore cannot recommend us to God and to his acceptance. We are dying creatures, all our comforts in this world are dying comforts, and therefore cannot be the felicity of our immortal souls; we must look further for a salvation, look further for a portion. (2.) Of the validity of the promise of God; we must be convinced that the word of the Lord can do that for us, which all flesh cannot; that so much as it stands for ever, it will furnish us with a happiness that will run parallel with the duration of our souls, which must live for ever; for the things which are not seen, but must be believed, are eternal.

9. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! 10. Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 11. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

It was promised, (v. 5.) that the glory of the Lord shall be revealed; that is it, with the hopes of which God's people must be comforted. Now here we are told,

1. How it shall be revealed, v. 9. 1. It shall be revealed to Zion and Jerusalem; notice shall be given of it to the remnant that are left in Zion and Jerusalem, the poor of the land, who were vine-dressers and husbandmen; it shall be told them that their brethren shall return to them; this shall be told also to the captives who belonged to Zion and Jerusalem, and retained their affection for them; Zion is said to dwell with the daughter of Babylon,
ISAIAH, XL.

12. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? 14. With whom took he counsel, and who informed him, and taught him knowledge and showed to him the way of understanding? 15. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. 16. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. 17. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity.

The scope of these verses is to show what a great and glorious being the Lord Jehovah is, who is Israel's God and Saviour. It comes in here, (1.) To encourage him to hope in him, and to depend upon him for deliverance, though they were ever so weak, and their oppressors ever so strong. (2.) To engage them to cleave to him, and not to turn aside after other gods; for there are none to be compared with him. (3.) To possess all those who receive the glad tidings of redemption by Christ, with a holy and divine influence of God. Though it was said, (v. 8.) He shall hold your God, and (v. 11.) that he shall feed his flock like a shepherd; yet these condescensions of his grace must not be thought of with any diminution.
177

Vol. IV.—Z

to the transcendencies of his glory. Let us see how great our God is, and, fear before him, for, 1. His power is unlimited, and what no creature can compare with, much less contend with, v. 12. (1.) He has a vast reach; view the celestial globe, and you are astonished at the extent of it; but the great God 
meets the heavens with a span; to him they are as nothing, so small and weak. View the terrestrial globe, and he has the command of that all; all the waters in the world he can measure in the hollow of his hand, where we can hold but a little water; and the dry land he easily manages, for he comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure; or with his three fingers; it is no more to him than a pinch, or that which we take up between two fingers. v. 12. He can extend his vast strength, and can as easily move mountains and hills as the tradesman heaves his goods into the scales and out of them again; he poises them with his hand as exactly as if he weighed them in a pair of balances. This may refer to the work of creation, when the heavens were stretched out as exactly as that which is spanned; and the earth and waters just measured in just proportion as if they had been measured; and the mountains made of such a weight as to serve for ballast to the globe, and no more. Or, it may refer to the work of providence, (which is a continued creation,) and the consistency of all the creatures with each other. 2. His wisdom is unsearchable, and what no creature can give either information or direction to, v. 13, 14. All that he has done, and does, so none can assist him in the doing of it, or suggest anything to him which he thought not of. When the Lord by his Spirit made the world, (Job xxvi. 13.) there was none that directed his Spirit, or gave him any advice, either what to do, or how to do it. Nor does he need any counsellor to direct him in the government of the world, nor to teach him with what he can do, what the wise kings do with them that know law and judgment, Esther i. 13. God needs not to be told what is done, for he knows it perfectly; nor needs he be advised concerning what is to be done, for he knows both the right end and the proper means. This is much insisted upon here, because the poor captives had no politicians among them to manage their concerns at court, or to work out the way of gaining their freedom. "No matter," says the prophet, "you have a God to act for you, who needs not the assistance of statesmen." In the great work of our redemption by Christ, matters were concerted before the world, when there were none to teach God in the path of judgment, 1 Cor. ii. 7. 3. The nations of the world are nothing in comparison of him, v. 15, 17. Take them all together, all the great and mighty nations of the earth, kings the most pompous, kingdoms the most populous, both the most wealthy; take the isles, the multitude of them, the isles of the Gentiles—before him, when they stand in competition with him, or in opposition to him, they are as a drop of the bucket compared with the vast ocean, or the smallest drop of the brine on the hand; a hand-ful of earth which does not serve to turn it, and therefore is not regarded, it is so small in comparison with all the dust of the earth. He takes them up, and throws them away from him, as a very little thing, not worth speaking of. They are all in his eye as nothing, as if they had no being at all; for they add nothing to his perfection and all-sufficiency. They are but a hand-ful of mankind, so large and hand to be counted by us, in comparison of him, less than nothing, and vanity; when he pleases, he can as easily bring them all into nothing as at first he brought them out of nothing. When God has work to do, he values not either the assistance or the resistance of any creature. They are all vanity; the word that is used for the chaos, (Gen. i. 2.) to which they will at last be reduced. Let this beget in us high thoughts of God, and low thoughts of this world, and engage us to make God, and not man, both our Fear and our Hope. This magnifies God's love to the world, that, though it is of such small account and value with him, yet, for the redemption of it, he gave his only-begotten Son, John iii. 16. 4. The services of the church can make no addition to him, nor do they bear any proportion to his infinite perfections; (v. 16.) Lebanon is not sufficient to burn; not the wood of it to be for the fuel of the altar, though it be so well stocked with cedars; nor the beasts of it to be for sacrifices, though it be so well stocked with cattle, v. 16. Whatever we honour God with, it falls infinitely short of the merit of his perfection; for he is exalted far above all blessing and praise all burnt-offerings and sacrifices. 18. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? 19. The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. 20. He that is so impoverished, that he hath no obligation, chooseth a tree that will not rot: he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. 21. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; 23. That bringeth the princes to nothing: he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. 24. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. 25. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. 26. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one fuleth.
ISAIAH, XL.

Will ye not know? Will ye not hear? For, those that are ignorant of this are willingly ignorant: the light shines in their faces, but they shut their eyes against it.

Now that which is here said of God, is

(1) That he has the command of all the creatures; the heaven and the earth themselves are under his management; he sits upon the circle, or globe of the earth, v. 22. He that has the special residence of his glory in the upper world, maintains a dominion over this lower world, gives law to it, and directs all the motions of it to his own glory; he sits undisturbed upon the earth, and establishes it. He is still stretching out the heavens, hewing out and providence keep them still stretched out, and will do so till the day comes that they shall be rolled together like a scroll. He spreads them out as easily as we draw a curtain to and fro, opening the curtains in the morning, and drawing them close again at night. And the heaven is to this earth as a tent to dwell in; it is a canopy drawn over our heads. Et quadregit omnia caelum—It enicitur all. Ovid. Ps. civ. 2.

(2) That the children of men, even the greatest and mightiest, are as nothing before him. The numerous inhabitants of this earth are, in his eye, as grasshoppers in ours, so little and Inconsiderable, of such small value, and of such little use, and so many creatures that are created but to be destroyed of themselves is but like the grasshopper’s leap, in an instant they must down to the earth again. If the spies thought themselves grasshoppers before the sons of Anak, (Num. xiii. 38.) what are we before the great God? Grasshoppers live but awhile, and live care less, not like the ant; so do the most of men.

(3) That those who appear and act against him, the formidable power they may be to their fellow creatures, will certainly be humbled and brought down by the mighty hand of God, v. 23. 24. Princes and judges, who have great authority, and abuse it to the support of oppression and injustice, make nothing of these about them; as for all their enemies, they buffet at them; (Ps. x. 5.—xiii. 5.) but when the great God takes them to task, he brings them to nothing; he humbles them, and tames them, and makes them as vanity; little regarded, neither feared nor loved. He makes them utterly unable to stand before his judgments; which shall either, [1] Prevent their settlement in their authority; They shall not be planted, they shall not be sown; and these are the two ways of propagating plants, either by seed or slips. Nay, if they should gain a little increase, and so be planted or sown, yet there shall not take root in the earth, they shall not continue long in power. Eliphaz saw the foolish taking root, but suddenly cursed their habitation. And then how soon is the fig-tree withered away! Or, [2] He will blast them when they think they are settled; he does but blow upon them, and then they shall wither, and come to nothing, and the whirlwind shall come up. For God’s wrath, though it seem, at first, to blow slightly upon them, will soon become a mighty whirlwind; when God judges, he will overcome. Those that will not bow before him cannot stand before him.

He appeals to what their eyes saw of him; (v. 26.) “Lift up your eyes on high; be not always poring on this earth,” (O curse in terris animae et corporis, Dei nomen honore pulchro! Sicut hodie, Dives, hic et nunc ad haec tendi, et nunc et in fine tendo toward so toward the earth, having nothing celestial in them!) “but sometimes look up,” (Os homini su biume dedit, celatumque tueri Jason! Heaven gave man an erect countenance, and bade him gaze on the stars,) “behold the glorious lights of heaven, consider who has created them. They neither made nor marshalled themselves, doubtless, therefore, there is a God that gave them their being, power
and motion." What we see of the creature should lead us to the Creator. The idolaters, when they lifted up their eyes, and beheld the hosts of heaven, being wholly immersed in sense, looked no further, but worshipped them. Dut. iv. 22. 28. Job xxxiii. 26. Therefore the prophet here directs us to make use of our reason as well as our senses, and to consider who created them, and to pay our homage to him. Give him the glory of his sovereignty over them; he brings out their host by number, as a general draws out the squadrons and battalions of his army; of the knowledge he has, by name, of their names, according as their place and influence are; (Ps. cxxxvii. 4.) and of the use he makes of them; when he calls them out to any service, so obsequious are they, that, by the greatness of his might, not one of them faileth, but as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisa, every one does that to which he is appointed. To make these creatures therefore rivals with (God), which are such ready servants to him, is an injury to them as well as an affront to him.

27. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 28. Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, faileth not, neither is weary! there is no searching of his understanding. 29. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31. But that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

Here.

1. The prophet reproves the people of God, who are now supposed to be captives in Babylon, for their unbelief and distrust of God, and the dejections and despondencies of their spirit under their affliction; (v. 27.) Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord? Why dost thou make hard and melancholy conclusions concerning thyself, and thy present case, as if theatter were desperate? 1. The titles he here gives them were enough to shame them out of their distrusts; O Jacob, O Israel! Let them remember whence they took these names—from one with had found God faithful to him, and known all his straits; and why they bore these names—as God's professing people, a people in covenant with him. 2. The way of reproving them is by reasoning with them; "Why? Consider whether thou hast any ground to say so." Many of our foolish frets, and foolish fears, would vanish before a strict inquiry into the causes of them. 3. That which they are reproved for is, an ill-natured, ill-favoured word they spake of God, as if he had cast them off. There seems to be an emphasis laid upon their saying it; Why sayest thou, and speakest thou? It is bad to have evil thoughts rise in our mind, but it is worse to put an imprecation to them, and turn them into evil words. David reflects with regret upon what he said in his haste, and with distress. 4. The ill word they said was a word of despair concerning their present calamitous condition. They were ready to conclude, (1.) That God would not heed them; "My way is hid from the Lord; He takes no notice of our straits, nor concerning himself any more in our concerns. There are such difficulties in our case, that even divine wisdom and power will be exasperated." A man whose way is hid, is one whom God has hedged in, (Job iii. 23.) (2.) That God could not help them; "My judgment is passed over from my God; my case is past relief, so far past it, that God himself cannot redress the grievances of it: our bones are dried, (Ezek. xxxvii. 11.) That is.

1. He is himself an almighty God. He must needs be so, for he is the everlasting God, even Jehovah. He was from eternity, he will be to eternity; and therefore with him there is no deficiency, no decay. He has his being of himself, and therefore is the same to all his generations. He is without beginning of days or end of life, and therefore with him there is no change. He is also the Creator of the ends of the earth, of the whole earth, and all that is in it from end to end. He therefore is the rightful Owner and Ruler of all, and must be concluded to have an absolute power over all, and an all-sufficiency, to help his people in their just straits. Doubtless, he is still as able to save his church as he was at first to make the world; (1.) He has wisdom to contrive the salvation, and that wisdom is never at a loss; (2.) There is no searching out of his understanding, so as to confute the counsel of it, and defeat its intentions; no, nor so as to determine what he will do, for he has ways by himself, ways in the sea. None can say, "Thus far God's wisdom can go, and no further; for, when we know not what to do, he knows." (2.) He has power to bring about the salvation, and that power is never exhausted; (Job xxvii. 26.) He faints not, nor is weary; he upholds the whole creation, and governs all the creatures, and is neither tired nor toiled; and therefore, no doubt, he has power to relieve his church, when it is brought over so low, without weakness or weariness.

2. He gives strength and power to his people, and helps them, by enabling them to help themselves. He that is the strong God, is the Strength of Israel. (1.) He can help the weak, v. 29. Many a time he gives power to the faint; to them that are ready to faint away, and to them that have no might, he gives not only an increasing strength, as there is more and more occasion for it, but a strength of body and soul, whereby weakness are wonderfully recovered, and made strong, by the providence of God: and many that are fickle in spirit, timorous and faint-hearted, unable for services and sufferings, are yet strengthened by the grace of God with all might in the inward man. To them who are sensible of their weakness, and know they have no might, God does in a special manner increase strength; for, when we are weak in ourselves, then are we strong in the Lord. (2.) He will help the willing; will help those who, in a humble dependence upon him, help themselves, and will do well for those who do their best, v. 30. Those who trust to their own sufficiency, and are so confident of that, that they neither expect themselves to the utmost, nor seek unto God for his grace, are the youths, and the young men, who are
not gone with his feet. 4. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last: I am he. 3. The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came. 6. They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage. 7. So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer, him that smote the anvil, saying, It is ready for the sodering: and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved. 3. But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. 9. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.

That particular instance of God's care for his people Israel, in raising up Cyrus to be their deliverer, is here insisted upon as a great proof both of his sovereignty above all idols, and of his power to protect his people. Here is,

1. A general maxim, that the worshippers and admirers of idols, make good their pretensions, in competition with God, and opposition to him, v. 1. It is renewed, (v. 21.) Produce your cause. The court is set, summmones are sent to the islands that lay most remote, but not out of God's jurisdiction, for he is the Creator and Possessor of the ends of the earth, to make their appearance and give the attendance. Silence (as usual) is proclaimed while the cause is in trying; "Keep silence before me, and judge nothing before the time": while the cause is in trying between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, it becomes all people silently to expect the issue; not to object against God's proceedings, but to be confident that he will carry the day. The defenders of idolatry are called to say what they can in defense of it. Let them renew their strength, in opposition to God, and see whether it be better or not that which they renew that wait upon him; (ch. xl. 31.) let them try their utmost efforts, whether by force of arms, or force of argument. Let them come near; they shall not complain that God's dread makes them afraid, (Job. xiii. 21.) so that they cannot say what they have to say, in vindication and honour of their idols; no, let them speak freely, let us come near together to judgment. Note, 1. The cause of God and his kingdom is not afraid of a fair trial; if the case be but fairly stated, it will be surely carried in favour of religion. 2. The enemies of God's church and his holy religion may safely be challenged to say and do their worst for the support of their unjust cause. He that sits in heaven, laughs at them, and the daughter of Zion despises them, for great is the Lord, and will have his way.

II. He particularly challenges the idols to do that for their worshippers, and against his, which he had done, and would do, for his worshippers, and against theirs. Different senses are given of v. 2, concerning the righteous man raised up from the east; and since we cannot determine which is the true, we will make use of each as good. That which is to be proved, is, 1. That the Lord is God alone, the first, and with the last, (v. 4.) that he is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; that he governed the world from the beginning, and will to the end of time. He has reigned of old, and will reign...
for ever; the counsels of his kingdom were from eternity, and the continuance of it will be to eternity. 2. That Israel is his servant, (v. 8.) whom he owns and protects, and employs, and in whom he is, and will be, glorified. As there is a God in heaven, so there is a church on earth, that is his peculiar care. Eliphaz prays, (1 Kings xxv. 36.) Let it be known that thart God, and that I am thy servant. Now, to prove this, he shows,

(1.) That it was he who called Abraham, the father of this despised nation, out of an idolatrous country, and by many instances of his favour made his name great, Gen. xii. 2. He is the righteous man whom God raised up from the beginning. Also, to put contempt upon idolatry, and particularly the Chaldean idolatry, it was proper to show how Abraham was called from serving other gods: (Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, &c.) so that an early testimony was borne against that idolatry which boasted so much of its antiquity. Also, to encourage the captives in Babylon to hope that God would find a way for their return to their own land, it was proper to make the righteousness of God through him, Rom. iv. 3, 11. Cor. v. 21. He was a great example of righteousness in his day, and taught his household to do judgment and justice, Gen. xviii. 19. 2. That God raised him up from the east, from Ur first, and afterward from Haran, which lay east from Canaan. God would not let him settle in either of those places, but did by him as the eagle by her young ones slipt first from her, raised him out of iniquity, and made him pious; out of obscurity, and made him famous. 3. He called him to his foot, to follow him with an implicit faith; for he went out, not knowing whither he went, but whom he followed, Heb. xi. 8. Those whom God effectually calls, he calls to his foot; to be subject to him, to attend him, and follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; and we must all either come to his foot, or be made his footstool. 4. He gave nations before him, the nations of Canaan, which he promised to make him master of; and thus far gave him an interest in, that the Hittites acknowledged him a mighty prince among them, Gen. xxviii. 6. He made him rule over those kings whom he conquered for the rescue of his brother Lot, Gen. xiv. 14. And Israel could show the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. 

Nor do I find this but the great delight of God. Can any see the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Nor do I find this but the great delight of God. Can any see the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Nor do I find this but the great delight of God. Can any see the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Nor do I find this but the great delight of God. Can any see the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Nor do I find this but the great delight of God. Can any see the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Nor do I find this but the great delight of God. Can any see the gods of them that did as driven stubble to his bow, that is, made them an easy prey to his captivated servants, he then pursued them, and passed safely, or in peace, under the divine protection, though it was in a way he was altogether unacquainted with; and so considerable was this victory, that Melchizedek himself appeared to celebrate it. Nor do I find this but the great delight of God.
sulted over. 1. They are God's servants, and he will not see them abused, especially for what they do in his service: Thou art my servant, (v. 8.) and I have said unto thee, Thou art my servant; and I will not go back from my word. 2. He has chosen them to be a peculiar people to himself; they were not forced upon him, but of his own good will he set them apart. 3. They were the seed of Abraham his friend; it was the honour of Abraham that he was called the friend of God, (James ii. 23.) and hence God conversed and conversed with as a friend, and the man of his counsel and this honour have all the saints, John xv. 15. And for the father's sake the people of Israel were beloved. God was pleased to look upon them as the posterity of an old friend of his, and therefore to be kind to them, for the covenant of friendship was made with Abraham and his seed. 4. He had sometimes, when they had been scattered among the heathen, fetched them from the ends of the earth, and taken them out of the hands of the chief ones thereof, and therefore he would not now abandon them. Abraham their father was fetched from a place at a great distance, and they in his loins; and those who had been thus far-fetched and dear-bought, he could not easily part with. 5. He had not yet cast them away, though they had often provoked him, and therefore he would not now abandon them. What God has done for his people, and what he has further engaged to do, should encourage them to trust in him at all times.

10. Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. 12. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught. 13. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. 14. Fear not, thou worm Jacob; ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. 15. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. 16. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. 17. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue failth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. 18. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. 19. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together; 20. That they may see and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.

The scope of these verses is to silence the fears, and encourage the faith of the sons and of God in their distresses; perhaps it is intended, in its first place, for the support of God's Israel, in captivity; but all that faithfully serve God, through patience and comfort of the scripture, may have hope. And it is addressed to Israel as a single person, that it might the more easily and readily be accommodated and applied by every Israelite indeed to himself. What is a word of caution, counsel, and comfort, which is so often repeated, Fear thou not; and again, (v. 13.) Fear not, and (v. 14.) "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not the threatenings of the enemy, doubt not the promises of thy God; fear not that thou shalt perish in thine affliction, or that the promise of thy deliverance shall fail." It is against the mind of God, that his people should be a timorous people.

For the suppressing of fear, he assures them, 1. That they may depend upon his presence with them as their God, and a God all-sufficient for them in the worst of times. Observe with what tenderness God speaks, and how willing he is to let the heirs of promise know the immutability of his counsel, and how desires to make them easy, By fear thou not, for I am with thee; not only within call, but present with thee; be not dismayed at the power of those that are against thee, for I am thy God, and engaged for thee. Art thou weak? I will strengthen thee. Art thou destitute of friends? I will help thee in the time of need. Art thou ready to sink, ready to fall? I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, that right hand which is full of righteousness, in dispensing rewards and punishments, Ps. lxxviii. 10. And again, (v. 13.) it is promised, 1. That God will strengthen their hands—will help them; "I will hold thy right hand, go hand in hand with thee;" so sene he will take us by the hand as our Guide, to lead us in our way, will help us up when we are fallen, or prevent our falls; when we are weak, he will hold us up, waiving, he will fix us, trembling, he will encourage and sustain us by the right hand, Ps. lxiii. 23. 2. That he will silence their fears, saying unto thee, Fear not. He has said it again and again in his word, and has there provided sovereign antidotes against fear; but he will go further, he will by his Spirit say it to their hearts, and make them to hear it, and so will help them.

11. That though their enemies be now very formidable, the day is coming when God will reckon with them, and they shall triumph over them. There are those that are incensed against God's people, that strive with them, (v. 11.) that war against them, (v. 12.) that hate them, that seek their ruin, and are continually picking quarrels with them. But let not God's people be incensed at them, nor strive with them, nor rend their clothes, for God will yet walk with and believe 1. That they shall be convinced of the folly, at least, if not of the sin, of striving with God's people; and, finding it to no purpose, they shall be ashamed and confounded, which might bring them to repentance, but will rather fill them with rage. 2. That they shall be quite ruined and undone; (v. 11.) They shall be as nothing before the justice and power of God. When God comes to deal with his proud enemies, he makes nothing of them; or,they shall be brought to nothing, shall be as if they had
never been. This is repeated; (r. 12.) they shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught; or, as that which is gone and has failed. They that were formidable shall become despisable; that fancied they could do any thing, shall be able to bring nothing to pass; that made a figure in the world, and a mighty noise, shall become mere ciphers, and be buried in silence; they shall perish, not only be nothing, but be miserable. Thou shalt seek them; shalt inquire what is become of them, that they do not appear as usual, but thou shalt not find them, as David, (Ps. xxxvii. 36.) I sought him, but he could not be found.

III. That they themselves should become a terror to those who were now a terror to them, and vis-a-vis, to their overthrow. This is repeated; (r. 13.) and it shall come to pass, after they are gone, that theirvaluable, being gone, shall be as the chaff which is scattered abroad in the earth for safety; and we must not wonder that Jacob is become a worm, when even Jacob's King calls himself a Worm, and no man, (Ps. xxxii. 6.) God's people are sometimes as worms in the humble thoughts of themselves, and their enemies' haughty thoughts of them; worms, but not vipers, as their enemies are—not of the serpent's seed. God regards Jacob's low estate, and says, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob; fear not that thou shalt be crushed, and we men of Israel," (ye few men, so some read it, ye dead men, so others,) "do not give up yourselves for gone notwithstanding.

Note. The grace of God will silence fears, even then when there seems to be the greatest cause for them; perplexed, but not in despair. 2. How Jacob and Israel are as men from this low estate, and made as formidable as ever they had been despisable. But by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small? We are here told more of the power of God, and the honour of God to help the weak. He will help them, for he is their Redeemer, who is wont to redeem them, who has undertaken to do it. Christ is the Redeemer, from him is our help found. He will help them, for he is the Holy One of Israel, worshipped among them in the beauty of holiness, and engaged by promise to them. The Lord will have them by his name, and save them by his strength, and make Jacob to become a threshing instrument. Observe, He is but an instrument, a tool in God's hand, that he is pleased to make use of; and he is an instrument of God's making, and is no more than God makes him. But if God make him a threshing instrument, he will make use of him, and therefore will make him fit for use, new and sharp, and having teeth, or sharp spikes; and then, by destruction and strength, thou shalt thresh the mountains, the highest and strongest and most stubborn of thine enemies; thou shalt not only beat them, but beat them small; they shall not as corn threshed out, which is valuable, and is carefully preserved, (such God's people are when they are under the stall, (ch. xxxi. 10.) O my threshing, yea the treading of the floor of thine enemies, but these are made as chaff, which is good for nothing, and which the husbandman is glad to get rid of. He pursues the metaphor, v. 16. Having threshed them, thou shalt winnow them, and the wind shall scatter them. This perhaps had its accomplishment, in part, in the victories of the Jews over their enemies in the times of the Maccabees; but it seems intended designed to read the final doom of all but impenetrable enemies of the church of God, and to have its accomplishment likewise in the triumphs of the cross of Christ, the gospel of Christ, and all the faithful followers of Christ, over the powers of darkness, which, first or last, shall all be dissipated, and in Christ all believers shall be more than conquerors, and he that overcomes shall have forever over the nations, Rev. ii. 26.

IV. That, hereupon, they shall have abundance of comfort in God, and shall have abundance of honour from them; Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, v. 16. When we are freed from that which hindered our joy, and are blessed with that which is better than it, we ought to remember that God is our exceeding great reward, and in the Lord. When we rejoice over our enemies, we must rejoice in the Lord, for to him alone we owe our liberties and victories. "Thou shalt also glory in the Holy One of Israel, in thine interest in him, and relation to him, and what he has done for thee." And thus we make God our Praise and Glory, we become to him a joy, and a song of glory to him.

V. That they shall have solvable and suitable supplies of every thing that is proper for them in the time of need; and if there be occasion, God will again do for them as he did for Israel in their march from Egypt to Canaan, v. 17.—19. When the captives, either in Babylon, or in their return thence, are in distress for want of water or shelter, God will take care of them, and one way or other, make their journey, even through a wilderness, comfortable to them. But, doubtless, this promise has more than such a private interpretation. Their return out of Babylon was typical of our redemption by Christ; and so the contents of these promises, 1. Were provided by the gospel of Christ. That glorious discovery of his love has given full assurance to all those whom it concerns, that God will provided insubstantial comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers; that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world. Now

(1.) It is here supposed, that the people of God, in their passage through this world, are often in straits; The poor and needy seek water, and there is none; the poor in spirit hunger and thirst after righteousness. The soul of man, finding itself empty and necessities, seeks for satisfaction somewhat, but soon despair of finding it in the world, that he may find nothing in it, and is troubled, as that God has provided inestimable comforts for them, sufficient for the supply of all their wants, the balancing of all their griefs, and the answering of all their prayers. 2. They are applied by the grace and Spirit of Christ to all believers; that they may have strong consolation in their way, and a complete happiness in their end. Our way to heaven lies through the wilderness of this world. Now

(2.) It is here promised, that, one way or other, all their grievances shall be redressed, and they shall be made easy.

[1.] God himself will be nigh unto them in all that which they call upon him for. Let all the praying people of God take notice of this, and take comfort of it; he has said, "I the Lord will hear them, will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them; I will be with them, as I have always been, in their distresses." While we are in the wilderness of this world, his promise is to us that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel, an assurance of God's gracious presence.

[2.] They shall have a constant supply of fresh water, as Israel had in the wilderness, even there, where one would least expect it; (v. 18.) I will open rivers in high places; rivers of grace, rivers of pleasure, rivers of living water, which he spoke of the Spirit (John vi. 38.) that Spirit which should be poured out upon the Gentiles, who had been as high places, dry and barren, and lifted up in their own conceit above the necessity of that gift. And there shall be fountains in the midst of the valleys, the valleys of Baca, (Ps. lxxxiv. 6.) that are sandy and weariome; or among the Jews who had been
as fruitful valleys in comparison with the Gentile mountains. The preaching of the gospel to the world turned that wilderness into a pool of water; yielding fruit to the Owner of it, and relief to the travellers through it.

[3.] They shall have a pleasant shade to screen them from the scorching heat of the sun, as Israel, when they pitched at Elim, where they had not only wells of water, but palm-trees; (Exod. xv. 27.) "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar;" (v. 19.) I will turn the wilderness into an orchard or garden, such as used to be planted with these pleasant trees, so that they shall pass through the wilderness with as much ease and delight as a man walks in his grove. These trees shall be to them then what the pillar of cloud was to Israel in the wilderness, a shelter from the heat." Christ and his grace are so to believers, as the shadow of a great rock, ch. xxxiii. 2. When God sets up his church in the Gentile wilderness, there shall be as great a change made by it in men's characters, as if thorns and briers were turned into cedars, and fig-trees, and myrtles; and by this a blessed change is described, ch. iv. 13.

[4.] They shall see and acknowledge the hand of God, his power and his favour in this, v. 20. God will do these strange and surprising things, on purpose to awaken them to a conviction and consideration of his hand in all; that they may see his wonderful change, and, knowing that it is above the ordinary course and power of nature, may consider that therefore it comes from a superior power; and, comparing notes upon it, may understand together, and concur in the acknowledgment of it, that the hand of the Lord, that mighty hand of his which is stretched out for his people, and stretched out to them, has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it, made it known, made it out of nothing, made it for the comfort of his people. Note, God does great things for his people, that he may be taken notice of.

21. Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things what they be that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together.

24. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: and abomination is he that chooseth you. 25. I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come: from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name; and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26. Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and before-time, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that showeth; yea, there is none that declareth; yea, there is none that heareth your words. 27. The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them: and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28. For I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. 29. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion.

The Lord, by the prophet, here repeats the challenge to idolaters, to make out the pretensions of their idols; "Produce your cause, (v. 21.) and make your best of it; bring forth the strongest reasons; let them show the former things, and raise them out of the oblivion in which they were buried;" (God inspired Moses to write such things as these, though the heathen could never have dictated to any of their enthusiasts;) or, "let the defenders of idols tell us what mighty achievements they can boast of, as performed by their gods in former times. What did they ever do that was worth taking notice of? Let them specify any thing, and it shall be considered, its due weight shall be given it, and it shall be compared with the latter end of the doing of the issue, prove to be as great as it pretended to be, they shall have the credit of it." (2.) "We challenge them to tell us what shall happen, to declare us things to come, (v. 22.) and again, (v. 23.) show the things that are to come hereafter. Give this evidence of your omniscience, that nothing can be hid from you, and of your sovereignty and dominion; make it to appear that you have the doing of the thing in hand. Let them do either good or evil, good to their friends or evil to their enemies; "Let them do, if they can, anything extraordinary, that people will admire and be affected with. Let them either bless or curse with power. Let us see them either inflict such plagues as God brought on Egypt, or bestow such blessings as God bestowed on Israel. Let them do some great thing, and we shall know whether we see it, and frightened into a veneration of them, as many have been into a veneration of the true God.

That which is charged upon these idols, and let them disprove it if they can, is, that they are of nothing, v. 24. Their claims have no foundation at all, nor is there any ground or reason, in the least, for men's pensioning them the respect they do; there is nothing in them worthy our regard. They are no more, less the images of God, worse than nothing," (so some read it.) "The work they do is of naught, and is the ado that is made about them; there is no pretence or colour for it; it is all a jest, it is all a sham put upon the world; and therefore he that chooses you, and so gives you your deity, and, (as some read it) "that delights in you, is an abomination to God.
and all wise and good men. He that chooses you, chooses his salvation," so says the in. A man is at liberty to choose his master, but a man is
not at liberty to choose his God. He that chooses any other than the true God, chooses an abomination; his choosing it makes it so.
11. God here produces proofs that he is the true God, and none besides. Let him produce his strong reasons.
2. He has an irresistible power. This he will shortly make to appear in the raising up of Cyrus, and making him a type of Christ; (v. 25.) He will raise him up from the north and from the raising of the son. Cyrus, by his father, was a Mede, by his mother, a Persian; and his army consisted of Medes, whose country lay north, and Persians, whose country lay east, from Babylon. God will raise him up to great power, and he shall come against Babylon, with ends of his own to serve. But, (1.) He shall proclaim God's name; so it may be read. He shall publish the honour of the God of Israel; so he did remarkably, when, in his proclamation for the release of the Jews out of their captivity, he acknowledged that the Lord God of Israel was the Lord God of heaven, and the God: and he might say to his name, O ye that dwell upon the earth, the building of his temple, and, 
very probably, did himself call upon him, and pray to him, Ezra i. 2, 3. (2.) All opposition shall fall before him; he shall come upon the princes of Babylon, and all others that stood in his way, as mortar, and trample upon them, as the potter treadeth clay, to serve his own purposes with it. Christ, as Man, was raised up from the north, for Nazar in the northern parts of Egypt, as Mas; as the Angel of the covenant, he ascends from the east. He maintained the honour of heaven; (he shall call upon my name;) and brake the powers of hell, came upon the prince of darkness as mortar, and trod him down.
2. He has an infallible foresight. He would not only do this, but he did now, by his prophet, foretell it. Note, the false gods not only could not do it, but they could not foresee it. (1.) He challenges them to produce any of their pretended deities, or their diviners, that had given notice of this, or could, v. 26. "Who has declared from the beginning any thing of this kind, or has told it before time? Tell us if there by any that we know of, for we know not any; if there be any, we will say, He is righteous: but is it not he that hath foretold it, and proved, and he is in the right, in demanding to be worshipped." This agrees with v. 22, 23. (1.) He challenges to himself the sole honour of doing it, and foretelling it; (v. 27.) I am the first (so it may be read) that will say to Zion, Behold, behold them; that will let the people of Israel know their deliverers are at hand; for there were those who understood by books, God's books, the approach of the time, Dan. i. 2. And I am he that will give to Jerusalem one that brings good tidings, these good tidings of their enlargement. This is applicable to the work of redemption, in which the Lord showed himself much more than in the release of the Jews out of Babylon; he it was that contrived our salvation, and he brought it about, and he has given us to know the glad tidings of reconciliation.

Lastly, Judgment is here given upon this trial:
1. None of all the idols had foretold, or could foresee, this work of wonder. Other nations beside the Jews were released out of captivity in Babylon by Cyrus or, at least, were greatly concerned in the revolution of the monarchy, and the transferring of it to the Persians; and yet none of them had told them this. Nor could any of the Jews, by any of their gods or prophets; "There is none that shows, (v. 26.) none that declares; none that gives the least intimation of it; there is none of the nations that hears your words, that can pretend to have heard from their gods such words as you, O prophets," Ps. cxlvii. 20. None of all the gods of the nations have showed their worshippers the way of salvation, which God will show by the Messiah.

The good tidings which the Lord will send in the gospel, is a mystery hid from ages and generations, Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

2. None of those who pleaded for them could produce any of their knowledge or power, that had in it any colour of proof that they were gods; all their advocates were struck dumb with this challenge, (v. 28.) "I beheld, and there was no man that could give evidence for them, even among them that were their most zealous admirers, and there was no counsellor, there were none that could offer any thing for the support of their case. Even among the idle—these had so much to say for himself; he has nothing to say for himself; he was speechless, Matt. xxii. 12.

3. Sentence is therefore given according to the charge exhibited against them; (v. 24.) "Behold, they are all vanity, (v. 29.) they are a lie and a cheat, they are not in themselves what they pretend to be, nor will their worshippers find that in them which they promise themselves. Their works are nothing, of no force, of no worth; their enclosures need no fear no hurt from them, their worshippers can hope for no good from them. Their molten images, and indeed all their images, are wind and confusion, vanity and vexation; those that worship them will be deceived in them, and will reflect upon their own folly with the greatest bitterness. Therefore, dearly beloved, flee from idolatry," 1 Cor. x. 14.

CHAP. XLII.

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, under the type of Cyrus, and into the grand and glorying of the Messiah by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it, and drops the return out of Babylon; for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to his believing people, than it is in their captivity, than the hope of that. And (as Mr. Gatsker well observes) in this, and similar prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some persons have supposed them to be a dispensation for others to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense, and the truth in another. Here is,
1. A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work; v. 1. 4. 4. 1. 2. His commission opened, which he received from the Father, v. 5., 9. III. The joy and rejoicing with which the glad tidings of this should be received v. 10., 12. IV. The way of a little one is laid bare; the throw of the devil's kingdom, v. 13., 17. V. The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief, v. 18., 25.

1. BEHOLD my servant, whom I up
hold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.
2. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
3. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. 4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have se
judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, Matt. xii. 17.—21. Behold with an eye of faith; behold, and observe; behold, and admire, my Servant whom I uphold. Let the Old Testament saints behold, and expect him; let the New Testament saints behold, and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him? In the Father's concern for him, and relation to him; the confidence he put, and the complacency he took, in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable, above any other circumstance, v. 1. (1.) God owns him as one employed for him; He is my Servant. Though he was a Son, yet, as a Mediator, he took upon him the form of a servant; learned obedience to the will of God, and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant. (2.) As one chosen by him; He is mine elect; he did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice, and then avouched it. (3.) As one he put a confidence in; He is my servant upon whom I lean; so some read. Though he was but a servant, a servant that would go through with his undertaking, and, in that confidence, brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be just negotia—equal to it, both able and faithful. (4.) As one he took care of; He is my servant whom I uphold; so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out, in his undertaking; both were included in his upholding of him, he stood by him, and strengthened him. (5.) As one whom he took an entire complacency in; Mine elect, in whom my soul delights. His delight was in him from eternity, when he was by him as one brought up with him, Prov. viii. 30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking; he declared himself well pleased in him, (Matt. iii. 17.) and therefore loved him, because he had done his father the honour. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then, for his sake, the Father will be well pleased with us.

2. The qualification of him for his office; I have put my Spirit upon him, to enable him to go through his undertaking, ch. lxi. 1. The Spirit did not only come, but rest, upon him, (ch. xi. 2.) not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. These whom God employs as his servants, as he will uphold them, and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

3. The work to which he is appointed; it is to bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a religious kingdom, under the power of which Gentiles should come, and the blessings of which they should enjoy. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hid from the Gentiles, (Ps. cxliii. 20.) he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was to be a Light to lighten them.

4. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, v. 2, 3. He shall carry away, and bear all, yea, and make his neck burdensome: he shall not strive, nor cry. It shall not be proclaimed, Lo, here is Christ; or, Lo, he is there; as when great princes ride in progress, or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with, he shall not strive against, but patiently endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; his kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor its appearance pompous; it comes not with observation, (2.) but quietly and invisibly, and therefore he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will give them space to repent, and not immediately break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax, (ch. lxxv. 5.) yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little blood, and without reason, with doubts and fears, as a bruised reed, that are as smoking flax, as the wick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work, or more suffering, than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed; he will not break the bruised reed, but will strengthen it, that it may become as a cedar in the courts of our God. He will not quench the smoking flax, but blow it up into a flame. Note, Jesus Christ is very tender toward those that have true grace, though they be but weak in it, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, and purging and passing by the fear of the Lord.

5. The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last; v. 4. He shall not fail, nor be discouraged; though he meets with hard service, and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, It is finished; and he enables his apostles and ministers to go on with theirs, and they shall show the fruit of their labour, though it may not be the world, they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplishes what he undertook; (1.) He brings forth judgment unto truth; by a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine, and the divine original and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish. (2.) He sets judgment in the earth; he erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men; reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixes such principles in the minds of men, as tend to make them wise and just. (3.) The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law, wait for his gospel; bid it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. What will thou have us to do?

5. Thus saith God the Lord, that created the heavens, and stretcheth them out: he that spreadeth forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; 6. I the Lord have created thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7. To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house. 8. I am the Lord; that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. 9. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they
spring forth I tell you of them. 10. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitats thereof. 11. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands.

Here is,

1. The covenant God made with, and the commission he gave to, the Messiah, v. 5.—7; which are an exposition of v. 1. Behold my Servant, whom I uphold.

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguishes himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory; (v. 5.) Thus saith God the Lord: and who art thou, Lord? He is the Fountain of all being, and therefore the Fountain of all power. He is the Fount of all knowledge. (1.) In the upper world; for he created the heavens, and stretched them out, (ch. xl. 22.) and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch. (2.) In the lower world; for he spread forth the earth, and made it a capacious habitation, and that which comes out of it is produced by his power. (3.) In the world of mankind; He gives breath to the people upon it, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself, and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives spirit, the powers and faculties of a rational soul, to them that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to show that he has authority to make such a covenant, and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out, but that the design of the work of redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to reduce man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking, speak much encouragement to him, v. 6. (1.) God owns that the Messiah did not like the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was content to be a Servant; that he had no Usurper, but was fairly brought to it; (Heb. v. 4.) I have called thee in righteousness. God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it, but did himself right in providing for his own honour, and performing the word which he had spoken. (2.) He promises to stand by him and strengthen him in it; to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it; to hold his hand, that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls, he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men: he was given for a Covenant of the people, for a Mediator, or Guarantee, of the covenant of grace, which is still summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, and with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings, Christ, in his gospel, brings with him to the Gentile world, light, and liberty. (1.) He is given for a Light to the Gentiles, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known, but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it; by his Spirit in the word he presents the object, by his Spirit in the heart he prepares the organ. When the gospel came, light came, a great light to them that sat in darkness, Matt. iv. 16. John iii. 19. And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, Acts xxvi. 18. Christ is the Light of the world. (2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did, to bring out the prisoners; not only to open the prison doors, and give them leave to go out, which was all a great light to them that sat in darkness, but to make them free, and induct them to take possession of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ does by his grace.

11. The ratification and confirmation of this grant that we may be assured of the validity of it, consider

1. The authority of him that makes the promise, (v. 8.) I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name, and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas, before, he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, Exod. vi. 3. If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name is Jehovah, in the midst of his enemies alone, we may be sure his name is Jehovah, and he will not give his glory to another, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to graven images. Therefore he will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God, because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his pre-emptive, and will not give his glory to graven images. Therefore he will perform his word, because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. Therefore he will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters, because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images, when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images.

2. The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word, and the kindness he bears to his people; (v. 9.) Behold, the former things are come to pass; hitherto the Lord has helped his people, and their Exod. xli. 13. and Num. xvi. 11. Jer. xxxi. 33. and his former, he is, and shall have compassion upon his parched land, and shall bring them again to the way, and guide them by the way in which they should go. And this, in performance of the promises made to the fathers; there has not failed one word, 1 Kings viii. 56. And now new things do I declare; now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old Testament blessings you have had abundantly, now I declare New Testament blessings; not a fruitful country, and dominion over your neighbours, but spiritual blessings in heavenly things. Before they spring forth in the preaching of the gospel, I tell you of them, under the type and figure of the former things. Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for further mercies; for God is ever prepared for his people, and his compassions are still new.

III. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon, to the glory of God; (v. 10.) Sing unto the Lord a new song, a New Testament song. The giving of Christ for a Light to the Gentiles, (v. 6.) was a new thing, and very surprising; the apostle speaks of it as a mystery, which, in other ages, was not made known, as it is now revealed, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, Eph. iii. 5, 6. Now this being the new thing which God de
the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this; that whereas, before, the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem, (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them, and in their own country only; for when they were in a strange land, they had the psalms of Moses, and the songs of Asaph, but could not sing the Lord's song, as we find, Ps. cxxxvii. 2.) now, the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the word over; the Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New Testament praises and acts of worship. 

There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations, and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often brought under this notion, as it appears, Rom. xiv. 9.-11.

It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness: 1. By those that live in the end of the earth, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem; From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs, ch. xxix. 16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was spread in all the world, to the uttermost part of the earth, and those that go down to the sea, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof, and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, Ps. xxiv. 1.—xxv. 5. The Jews traded little at sea; if therefore God's praises be sung by them that go down to the sea, it will be sung by the Gentiles, who are called upon to praise God, Ps. civ. 23. 3. By the islands and the inhabitants thereof, (v. 10.) and again, v. 12. Let them declare his praise in the islands, the isles of the Gentiles; probably referring to the islands of Greece. 4. By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel-songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness uncultivated, and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God. 5. By the inhabitants of the rock, and those that dwell on the tops of the mountains, not only the Gentile, but the poorest and meanest, and most despicable; they that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or, by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called Peræa—the rocky. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon, and some of them came and joined with them in their praises. But we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches further, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New Testament to be fulfilled in, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ: when they are brought into the church, they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a praise and a name, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them, and by them.

13. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall préar against his enemies. 14. I have long time held my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself; now will I cry like a 

travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once. 15. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs, and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. 16. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. 17. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

It comes all to one, whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world, or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical song. 1. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever; so he did in the preaching of his gospel, in the divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success it had in the fulness down of Satan's strong holds, v. 13, 14. He had long holden his peace, and been still, and refrained himself; while he winked at the lists of the Gentiles, Ch. vi. 2. (Acts xiv. 8.) and suffered all nations to walk on in their own ways; (Acts xiv. 16.) but now he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war, to attack the devil's kingdom, and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, Rev. vi. 2. Christ, in it, went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their warfare; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. He shall stir up jealousy, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name, and against idolatry. (1.) He shall cry, in the preaching of his word, cry like a travelling woman; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travelled in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, Gal. iv. 19. He shall cry, as he doth in the gospel-words, with more sublimity than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel-blessings to awaken a sleeping world. (2.) He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit; He shall prevail against his enemies, shall prevail to make them friends, Col. i. 21. Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of dark command. Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven, and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. As a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power, of their oppressors, and will at once destroy and devour the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian powers under the command of Cyrus, he will make waste mountains and hills, level the country, and dry up all their herbs; the army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it, and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the pools shall be no swamp. Thus, when the gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hindered the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

2. He will manifest his favour and grace toward those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him,
as Ezek. i. 5. Those who ask the way to Zion he will show the way, and lead in it, v. 16. Those who by nature are blind, and those who, being under convictions of sin and wrath, are quite at a loss, and know not what to do with themselves, God will lead by a way that they knew not, will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and are led by the way of that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus, in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will make darkness light before them, and knowledge shall be easy to them. These things are not only in the commandments of God seen practicable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will make crooked things straight, their way shall be plain, and their yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way, he will guide in it. As a type of this, he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or confound their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, "They are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles," he adds, These things will I do unto them, take my word for it I will, and I will not forsake a nation, he that doth give to show this great mercy will go on to do them good.

3. He will particularly put those to confusion who adhere to idols, notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols; (v. 17.) They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images. The Babylonians shall, when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images; and the Gentiles, when they see how idolatry fails before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat, they shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, Ye are our gods; for how can they help their worshippers, who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes unFashionable, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed, will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

18. Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. 19. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? 20. Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not. 21. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable. 22. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore. 23. Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? 24. Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned, for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. 25. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.

The prophet having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns himself to the enemies of God, and the tyrants among them, and sets before them the dangers, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those who were captivated in Babylon, there were some who were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither for their hurt, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb, Jer. xxiv. 9. In them there was a type of the Jews who rejected Christ, and were rejected by him, and they fell more than ten thousand times, when those who believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

I. The call that is given to this people: (v. 18.) "Hear, ye deaf, and attend to the joyful sound, and look, ye blind, that ye may see the joyful light." There is a word in this that is most to be considered. There is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for; for those have natural powers, which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral incapacity to that which is good. This call to the deaf and blind, the blind and the deaf, is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand, to stretch it forth; though he could not do this, because it was withered, yet, if he had not attempted to do it, he had not been healed, and his being healed thenceupon was owing, not to his act, but to the divine power.

II. The character that is given of them: (v. 19, 20.) "He is blind but my servant, or deaf, as my messenger? The people of the Jews were in profession, God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers; (Mal. ii. 7.) but they were deaf and blind. The verse before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls deaf and blind, because they worshipped gods that were so. "But," says he, "no wonder ye are deaf and blind, when my own people see as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry." He complains of their selfishness, They are blind; and of their stubbornness, They are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves. Corruptio optimi est pes simus.—What is best, becomes, when corrupted, the worst. Who is so wildly, so scandalously, blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger, as Jacob who is my servant, (ch. xxxvii.) and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers? Who is blind as he that, in profession and pretension, is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as they that will not see, when they have the light shining in their faces? Note, 1. It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that, in profession, are God's servants and messengers, to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things; ignorant, erroneous, and very careless. 2. Blindness and deafness in spiritual things
are worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

The prophet goes on (v. 20.) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time; (Matt. xiii. 14.) "Ye see many things, but those observe not. Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe; they rejected, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

III. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of no effect? God forbid, Rom. iii. 5. No, though they are blind and deaf, God will be no less in his glory.

(v. 21.) The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased; (ch. i. 24.) "Ah, I will take me of mine adversaries; and (Ezek. v. 13.) he will be comforted. The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off the Jews as a people, of Judah and the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased. He will magnify the law, divine revelation in all the parts of it, and will make it honourable. The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things; if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its justice; he will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty; James ii. 12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law, and making it honourable?

IV. The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, v. 22. They are the chief and chief of God's enemies, who are voluntary and unlearned, were assigned in Babylon, were sentenced to perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were spoiled of all their possessions, not only in their own land, but in the land of their enemies. They were some of them snared in holes, and others hidden in prison-houses; they cannot help themselves, for they are snared; their friends cannot help them, for they are hidden; and their enemies kill them in their presence. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivers either by force or ransom; nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, Restore. There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. It had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejection of Christ.

V. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not desperate. The generality of them are deaf, they would not hearken to the voice of God's word; he will therefore try his rod, and see who among them will give ear to that, v. 23. We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoning with in vain; some of them may, at length, give ear and hearken: if one method do not take effect, another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusab-

ble. Observe, 1. We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and we are called and invited to hear it. 2. It is worth while to inquire who they are, that perceive God speaking to them, and are willing to hear him. 3. Of the many that hear the voice of God, there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention, and application. We must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur betwixt us and the grave; we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye. The counsel is,

(1.) To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and, whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to the purpose for which it was done. "Who gave Jacob and Israel, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven, and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians and to the Romans? Did not the Lord? You know he did; consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments."

(2.) To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to round them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves. [1.] These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God; it is he against whom we have sinned; the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, as Dan ix. 7, 8. "We have sinned, we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully rejected God and his gospel, who had never been given up to the robbers, if they had not by their impiety sold themselves. Therefore is it, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he has not dropped, but poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle, all the desolations of war, which have within them and upon them all the curses and woes which he had winked with his judgments, as he does the righteous with his favours. See the power of God's anger; there is no resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that sin makes; it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles an universal conflagration, sets all on fire."

[2.] These judgments were continued upon them for their senseless and incorrigible under the rod of God. The wicked are not soul saved, and he knew it not, was not aware of it, took no notice of the judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, it burned him, and though he could not then but know it, and feel it, yet he laid it not to heart, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under, nor at all affected with them. Those who are not humbled by lesser judgments must expect greater; for when God judges, he will overcome.

CHAP. XLIII.

The contents of this chapter are much the same with those of the foregoing chapter, looking at the release of the Jews out of their captivity; and looking through that, and beyond that, to the great work of man's redemption by Jesus Christ, and the grace of the gospel, which, through him, believers partake of. Here are 1. Precious promises made to God's people in their affliction, of his presence with them, for their support under it, and their deliverance out of it, v. 1. - 7. II. A challenge to idle men to take heed to a world of consequence and omnipotence of God, v. 8. - 13. III. Encouragement given to the people of God to hope for their deliverance out of Babylon, from the consideration of what God did for their fathers, and the calamities they brought on Egypt, v. 14. - 21. IV. A method taken to prepare the people for their deliverance, by putting them in mind of their sins, by which they had provoked God to send them into captivity, and continue them there, that they might repent, and seek to God for pardoning mercy, v. 22. - 28.
I. 

But now, saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. 

For thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not; for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; 6. I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; 7. Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

This chapter has a plain connexion with the close of the foregoing chapter, but a very surprising one. It was there said that Jacob and Israel were not, nor were the Egyptians; but God would continue his love and care for his people, and the body of that nation should still be reserved for mercy. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, (Rom. v. 20.) and mercy rejoiced against judgment, as having prevailed and carried the day, (Isa. li. 13.) Now the sun, breaking out of a sudden from behind a thick and dark cloud, shines the brighter, and with a pleasing surprise. The expressions of God's favour and good will to his people here, are very high, and speak abundance of comfort to all the spiritual seed of upright Jacob and praying Israel; for to us is this gospel preached as well as unto them that were captives in Babylon, Heb. iv. 2. Here we have,

1. The sovereigns care and concern for his people, and the interests of his church and kingdom among men. Jacob and Israel, though in a sinful, miserable condition, shall be looked after; for, 1. They are God's workmanship, created by him unto good works, Eph. ii. 10. He has created them and formed them, not only given them a being, but this being, formed them into a people, constituted their government, and incorporated them by the charter of his covenant. The new creature, wherever it is, is of God's forming, and he will not forsake the work of his own hands. 2. They are the people of his purchase; he has redeemed them; out of the land of Egypt he first redeemed them, and out of many another bondage, in his love and in his pity, (ch. lix. 9.) much more will he take care of those who are redeemed with the blood of his Son. 3. They are his peculiar people, whom he has distinguished from others, and set apart for himself; he has called them by name, as those he has a particular intimacy with and concern for, and they are his, appropriated by him, and that he has a special interest in. 4. He is their God in covenant; (v. 3.) I am the Lord thy God, worshipped by thee, and engaged by promise to thee; the Holy One of Israel, the God of Israel: for the true God is a holy One, and holiness becomes his house. And upon all these accounts he might justly say, Fear not, v. 1. and again, v. 5. Fear not. Those that have God for a friend, need not fear who or what can be against them.

II. The former instances of this care. 1. God had purchased them dear: I gave Egypt for thy ransom; for Egypt was quite laid waste by one plague after another, all their first-born slain, and all their men of war drowned; and all this to force a way for Israel's deliverance from them. Egypt shall be sacrificed rather than Israel shall be continued in slavery, when the time is come for their release. The Ethiopians had invaded them in Asia's time; but they shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall be disturbed. And if this was reckoned so great a thing, to give Egypt for their ransom, what reason have we to admire God's love to us in giving his own Son to be a Ransom for us? John iv. 10. Was not the redemption of the Ethiopians and all their treasures, compared with the blood of Christ? 2. He had prized them accordingly, and they were very dear to him; (v. 4.) Since thou hast been precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable. Note, True believers are precious in God's sight, they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure, (Exod. xix. 5.) he loves them, his delight is in them, above all other people. God's particular love to his people makes God's people truly honourable, and their name great; for men are really what they are in God's eye. When the forces of Sennacherib, that they might be diverted from falling upon Israel, were directed by Providence to fall upon Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba, then God gave these countries for Israel, and showed how precious his people were in his sight.

III. The further instances God would yet give them of his care and kindness:

1. He would be present with them in their greatest difficulties and dangers; (v. 2.) "When thou passest through the waters and the rivers, through the fire and the flame, I will be with thee, and that shall be thy security; when dangers are very imminent and threatening, thou shalt be delivered out of them." Did they, in their journey, pass through deep waters? They should not perish in them: The rivers shall not overflow thee. Should they by their persecutors be cast into a fiery furnace, for their constant adherence to their God? Yet then the flame should not kindle upon them; which was fulfilled in the letter, in the wonderful preservation of Daniel and three chieftains of Babylon. Did they go through fire and water, which would be to them as the valley of the shadow of death; yet, while they had God with them, they need fear no evil, they should be borne up, and brought out into a wealthy place, Ps. lix. 12. 2. He would still, when there was occasion, make all the interests of his children of concern to give way to his interests of his own children; "I will give thee for thee, great men, mighty men, and men of war, and people, men by wholesale, for thy life. Nations shall be sacrificed to thy welfare." All shall be cut off rather than God's Israel shall, so precious are they in his sight. The affairs of the world shall all be ordered and directed so as to be most for the good of the church, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.
3. Those of them that were scattered and dispersed in other nations, should all be gathered in, and share in the blessings of the public, v. 5-7. Some of the seed of Israel were dispersed into all countries, east, west, north, and south, or into all the parts of the country of Babylon; but those whose spirits God stirred up to go to Jerusalem, should be fetched in from all parts. Divine grace should reach those that lay most remote, and at the greatest distance from each other; and when the time was come, nothing should prevent their coming together to return in a body; in answer to that prayer, (Ps. cvi. 47.) Gather us from among the heathen, and in performance of that promise, (Deut. xxx. 4.) If any of thine be driven to the utmost parts of heaven, there is none that calleth upon thee in the earth, who will plead on behalf of the children of the captivity, Neh. i. 9. But who are the seed of Israel, that shall be thus carefully gathered in? He tells us, (v. 7.) they are such as God has marked for mercy; for, (1.) They are called by his name; they make profession of religion, and are distinguished from the rest of the world by their covenant-relation to God, and denomination from him. (2.) They are assured of his favor. The spirit of Israelites is created in them, and they are formed according to the will of God, and these shall be gathered in. Note, Those only are fit to be called by the name of God, that are created by his grace for his glory; and those whom God has created and called shall be gathered in now to Christ as their Head, and hereafter to heaven as their home. He shall gather in his elect from the four winds. This promise points at the gathering in of the dispersed of the Gentiles, and the strangers scattered by the gospel of Christ, who died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad; for the promise was to all that were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call and create. God is with the church, and therefore let her not fear, none that belong to her shall be lost.

3. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. 9. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth. 10. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 11. I, even I am the Lord; and besides me there is no Saviour. 12. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. 13. Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

God here challenges the worshippers of idols to produce such proofs of the divinity of their false gods as even this very instance (to go no further) of the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon furnished the people of Israel with, to prove that their God is the true and the living God, and he only.

1. The patrons of idolatry are here called to appear, and say what they have to say in defence of their idols, v. 8, 9. Their gods have eyes, and see not, ears, and hear not, and they that make them, and trust in them, are like unto them; so David had said, (Ps. cxx. 8.) to which the prophet seems here to refer, when he calls idolaters blind profite that have eyes, and deaf people that have ears. They have the shape, capacities, and faculties, of men; but they are, in effect, destitute of the real power and capacity of worship gods of their own making: Let all the nations therefore be gathered together, let them help one another, and with a combined force plead the cause of their dunghill gods. And if they have nothing to say in their own justification, let them hear what the God of Israel has to say for their conviction and confutation. 11. God's witnesses are summoned, or summoned to appear, and give in evidence for him: (v. 10.) Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God. Note, These who do themselves acknowledge that the Lord is God, should be ready to testify what they know of him to others, that they also may be brought to the acknowledgment of it: I believed, therefore have I spoken. Particularly, "Since you cannot but know, and believe, and understand, you must be ready to bear record. [1.] That I am he, the only true God; that I am a Being, self-existent, and self-sufficient; I am he whom you are to fear, and worship, and love, and serve. [2.] That I am the first, and before the first day of time, before the creation of the light, and, consequently, from eternity, I am he." The idols were but of yesterday, new gods that came newly up, (Deut. xxxiii. 17.) but the God of Israel was from everlasting. [2.] That there was no God formed before me, nor shall be after me. The idols were gods formed, (Dh fortis—made gods, or rather, fashioned gods,) by nature they were none, (Ps. iv. 8, 9.) But God had a being from eternity, yea, and a religion in this world, before there were either idols or idolaters; truth is more ancient than error; and he will have a being to eternity, and will be worshipped and glorified when idols are vanished and abolished, and idolatry shall be no more. True religion will keep its ground, and survive all opposition and rebellion; that is the truth, and shall not be put out. [3.] That I, even I, am the Lord, the great Jehovah, who is, and was, and is to come; and beside me there is no Saviour, v. 11. See what it is that the great God glories in, not so much that he is the only Ruler, as that he is the only Saviour; for he delights to do good, he is the Saviour of all men, 1 Tim. iv. 10. [2.] Let us see what the proofs are, which are produced for the confirmation of this point. It appears.

1. That the Lord is God, by two proofs. First,
He has an infinite and infallible knowledge, as is evident from the predictions of his word; (v. 12.) 
"I have declared, and I have showed, that which has without fall come to pass; nay, I never declared or showed any thing, but it has been accomplished; I showed when there was no strange god among you, when you pretended not to consult any oracles but mine, or to have any prophets but mine," It is said, when they came out of Egypt, that the Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him. Secondly, He has an infinite and irresistible power, as is evident from the performances of his providence. He pleads not only, I have showed, but, I have saved, not only for what none but God could do, but what has been done in such a manner as to convince the world it was God alone; and this shows his power. For, (p. 13.) "None can deliver out of my hand those whom I will punish; not only no man can, but none of all the gods of the heathen can protect." It is therefore a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, because there is no getting out of them when. I will work what I have designed, both in mercy and judgment, and who shall either oppose or retard it?"

2. (c) That the gods of the heathen, who are rivals with him, are not only inferior to him, but no gods at all; which is proved (v. 9) by a challenge, Who among them can declare this that I now declare? Who can fortell things to come? Nay, which of them can show us former things? ch. xii. 23. They cannot so much as inspire an historian, much less a prophet. They are challenged to join issue upon this: Let them bring forth their witnesses, to prove their omniscience and omnipotence. And, First, If they do prove them, they shall be justified, the idols in demanding homage, and the idolaters in paying it. Secondly, If they do not prove them, let them say, It is true; let them own the true God, and rejoice in the faith concerning him, that he is God alone. The cause of God is not afraid to stand a fair trial; but it may reasonably be expected that these who cannot justify themselves in their religion, should submit to the power of the truth and true godliness.

14. Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. 15. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. 16. Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters: 17. Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow. 18. Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. 20. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. 21. This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise.

To so low an ebb were the faith and hope of God's people in Babylon brought, that there needed line upon line to assure them that they should be released out of their captivity; and therefore that they might have strong consolation, the assurances of it are often repeated, and here very expressively and encouragingly.

1. God here takes to himself such titles of his own as were very encouraging to them; he is the Lord their Redeemer; not only that will redeem them, but will take it upon him as his office, and make it his business. If he be their God, he will be all that to them which they need, and therefore, when they are in bondage, he will be their Redeemer; he is the Holy One of Israel; and again, (v. 13.) that holy One, and therefore will make good every word he has spoken. He is the Creator of Israel, that made them a people out of nothing, (for that is creation,) nay, worse than nothing; and he is their King, that owns them as his people, and presides among them.

He assures them he will find out a way to break the power of their oppressors that held them captive, and filled up the measure of their own iniquity by their resolution never to let them go; ch. xiv. 17. God will take care to send a victorious prince and army to Babylon, that shall bring down all their repeated, and by their honour in the dust, and all their people too, even the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships, (for seamen are apt to be noisy,) or whose cry is to the ships as their refuge when they are in distress. Babylon is the most mighty city is the land of Egypt; and God will bring it to the sight of its great river. Note, The destruction of Babylon must make way for the enlargement of God's people. And in the prediction of the fall of the New Testament Babylon, we meet with, the cries and lamentations of the sailors, Rev. xviii. 17. And observe, It is for Israel's sake that Babylon is ruined, to make way for their deliverance. He reveals the secrets of the heart, he did for his fathers when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; for so it may be read, (v. 16, 17.) "Thus saith the Lord, which did make a way in the sea, the Red sea, and did bring forth Pharaoh's chariot and horse, that they might lie down together in the bottom of the sea, and never rise, but he extint; He that did this, can, if he pleases, make a way for you to the sea, and when the sea is returned you may do it rather than leave you there." Note, For the encouragement of our faith and hope, it is good for us often to remember what God has done formerly for his people against his and their enemies. Think particularly what he did at the Red sea, how he made it, (1.) A road to his people, a straight way, a near way; nay, a refuge to them, into which they lied and were safe, the waters being a wall unto them. (2.) A grave to his enemies. The chariot and horse were drawn out by him who is Lord of all hosts, on purpose that they might fall together; howbeit, they meant not so, Mic. iv. 11, 12.

4. He promises to do yet greater things for them than he had done in the days of old; so that they should not have reason to ask, in a way of complaint, (v. 15.) Why, Lord? or why did not God remember the prayers that our fathers told us of? For they should see their repeated, nay, they should see them outdone; (v. 18.) "Remember not the former things, from them to take occasion, as some do, to undervalue the present things, as if the former days were better than these; no, you may, if you will, comparatively forget them, and yet know enough by the events of your own day to convince you that the Lord is God alone; for, behold, the Lord will do a new thing, a way so contrary, both for the wonder and the worth of the miracle, to the things of old." The best exposition of this is, Jer. xvi. 14, 15.—xxiii. 7, 8. It shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought us the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; that is an old thing, the remembrance of which will be in a man.
ISAIAH, XLIII.

22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.
23. Thou hast not brought me the small cottle of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearieced thee with incense.
24. Thou hast bought me no sweet cante with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.
25. I, even I, am he that will make an end of them that reproach thee. They shall be consigned to a dishonourable death, and shall fall by the sword. They shall be consumed with famine, and with thirst they shall perish; and I will cut off their memory from earthly things. But I will be a Father to the poor, and a Father to the widow; and in my Flame I will multiply the priests, and in my Flame I will multiply the Levites.

26. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.
27. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.
28. Therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

This charge (and a high charge it is, which is here exhibited against Jacob and Israel, God's professing people,) comes in here: 1. To clear God's justice in bringing them into captivity, and to vindicate his name. No, they were not hurtful to God; for God did not do it for Babylon, but for them, to bring them from Babylon, and let them go out of a rock to follow them; what God did for them, he did for the world, and by the grace of the gospel, especially as it is manifested to the Gentile world, by which a way is opened in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert; the world, which lay like a desert, in ignorance and unfruitfulness, was blessed with divine direction and divine comforts, and, in order to both, with a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The Spirit's work is, to bring in the fruitful field, running wild, fierce as the dragons, stupid as the owls or ostriches, shall be hrought to honour God for the extreem of his grace to his chosen among them.

6. He runs up all these promised blessings to their great original, the purposes and designs of his own glory; (v. 21.) This people have I formed for myself, and to me all the living members of it. The means, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. (2.) He forms it for himself; he that is the first Cause, is the highest Framer, and therefore do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise. Note, (1.) The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. (2.) He forms it for himself; he that is the first Cause, is the highest Framer, and therefore do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise. Note, (1.) The church is of God's forming, and so are all the living members of it. The new heavens, the new earth, the new man, are the work of God's hand, and are no more, no better, than he makes them; they are fashioned according to his will. (2.) He forms it for himself; he that is the first Cause, is the highest Framer, and therefore do all this for them, that they may show forth my praise.

21. This people have I formed for myself, and to me all the living members of it. This is therefore our duty to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves for the defence of his cause, he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself; especially, to be him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no other can be he for him, or serviceable to him, than as his grace is glorified in them, Jer. xiii. 11. Eph. i. 6. 12. 14. (3.) It is therefore our duty to show forth his praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves for the defence of his cause, he feeds us, and keeps us, and leads us, and all for himself; especially, to be him for a people, and for a name, and for a praise; and no other can be he for him, or serviceable to him, than as his grace is glorified in them, Jer. xiii. 11. Eph. i. 6. 12. 14. (3.)
had been in relation to God, employed in his service, and in communion with him; but they began to snuff at it, and to say, Behold, what a weariness is it! Note, Those who neglect to call upon God, do in effect tell him they are weary of him, and have a mind to change their Master. (3.) They grudged the expense of their devotion, and were negligently and penurious in it; they were for a cheap religion, and in those acts of devotion in which they were costly, they desired to be excused: they had not brought, nor sent their small cattle, the lambs and kids, which God required for burnt-offerings, (v. 23.) much less did they bring their greater cattle; pretending they could not spare them, they must have them for the maintenance of their families. So little sense had they of the greatness of God and their obligations to him, that they did not even show him their cattle with a lamb out of their flock for his honour, though he called for it and would graciously accept it. Sweet cune, or calamus, was used for the holy oil, incense, and perfume; but they were not willing to be at the charge of that; (v. 24.) what they had must serve; though it was old and good for nothing, they would not buy fresh. Perhaps it was usual for the dealings of our people with each other, not only as to their religion, but as well as other free-will offerings; but they were not so generous, nor did they fill the altar of God, nor moisten it abundantly, as they should have done, with the fat of their sacrifices; what sacrifices they did bring were of the lean and refuse of their cattle, that had no fat in them to regale the altar with. (4.) These sacrifices did not in honour God with them, and so they were, in effect, as no sacrifices; (v. 23.) Neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. Some of them offered their sacrifices to false gods; others, who offered them to the true God, were either careless in the manner of it, or hypocritical in their intentions; so that they might be truly said not to honour God with them, but rather to dishonour him. And that which aggravated their neglect of sacrificing, was, that, as God had appointed it, it was no burden some thing; it was not a service that they had any reason at all to complain of; I have not caused thee to serve with an offering; I have not made it a task and drudgery to you, whatever you, through the corruption of your natures, have made it. The sacrifices were a great blessing to them, but rather to dishonour him. None of God's commandments are grievous, no, not those concerning sacrifice and incense. They were not more costly than might be afforded by them that lived in such a plentiful country; nor did their attendance on them require any more time than they could well spare. But that which especially forbade them to call it a wearisome service, was, that they were required to be cheerful and pleasant, and to rejoice before God in all their approaches to him, Deut. xii. 12. They had many feasts and good days; but only one day in all the year in which they were to afflict their souls. The ordinances of the ceremonial law, though, in comparison with Christ's easy yoke, they are spoken of as heavy, (Actx xv. 10.) yet, in comparison with the service that idolaters did to their false gods, they were light, and not to be called services, or found fault with as wearisome. God did not require them to sacrifice their children, as Moloch did.

2. Commissions of the evil which God had forbidden; and ommissions commonly make way for commissions; Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins. When we make God's gifts the food and fuel of lusts, and his providence the patron of our wicked projects, especially when we encourage ourselves to continue in sin, because grace has abounded, then we make God to serve with our sins; or, it may denote what a grief and burthen sin is to God; it not only wearies men and makes the creation groan, but it warries my God also, (ch. vii. 15.) and makes the Creator complain that he is grieved, (Ps. xcv. 10.) that he is broken, (Ezek. vi. 9.) that he is pressed with sinners as a cart is pressed that is full of sheep, (Amos ii. 13.) and to cry out, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, ch. i. 24. The antithesis is observable; God has not made them to serve with their sacrifices, but they had made him to serve with their sins. The master had not tired the servants with his commands, but they had tired him with their disobedience. Those are wicked servants indeed, that carry it so ill to so good a Master. God is tender of our comfort, but we are careless of his honour. Let this engage us to keep close to our duty, that it is easy and reasonable, and no disparagement to us, nor too hard for us.

III. What the anger of God was against their sin, v. 27. 1. That they were children of disobedience; for their first father, their forefathers, had sinned; and they had not only sinned in their joints, but sinned like them. Ezra confesses this; Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great transgression, ch. ix. 7. But their forefathers are called their first father, to put us in mind of the apostacy and rebellion of our first parents; and we must not presume to pretend that because theeffect we must trace up the streams of all our transgressions.

2. That they were scholars of disobedience too, for their teachers had transgressed against God; were guilty of gross, scandalous sins, and the people, no doubt, would learn to do as they did. It is ill with a people when their leaders cause them to err, and their teachers, who should reform them, corrupt them.

III. What were the tokens of God's displeasure against them for their sins, v. 28. He brought ruin both upon church and state: 1. The honour of their church was laid in the dust and trampled on; I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, the priests and Levites who presided with great dignity and power in the temple-service; they profaned themselves, and made themselves vile, by their enormities; and then God profaned them, and made them vile, by their calamities and the contempt they fell into, Mal. ii. 9. 2. The honour of their state was ruined likewise; I have given Jacob to the curse, to be cursed, and hated, and abused, and cast down, to all their neighbours; and Israel to reproach, to be insulted, ridiculed, and triumphed over, by their enemies. They reproached them perhaps for that in them that was good, they mocked at their sabbaths; (Lam. i. 7.) but God gave them up to reproach, to correct them for what was amiss. Note, The dishonour which men at any time do us, should humble us for the dishonour we have done to God; and therefore we must bear it patiently, because we suffer it justly; and must acknowledge that to us be longs confusion.

IV. What were the riches of God's mercy towards them notwithstanding; (v. 25.) I, even I, am he who yet bloteth out thy transgressions. This gracious declaration of God's readiness to pardon sin comes in very strangely: the charge ran very high; Thou hast cast away mine offendsings. Now one would think it should follow, I, even I, am he that will destroy thee, and burthen myself no longer with care about thee. No, I, even I, am he that will forgive thee; as if the great God would teach us, that forgiving injuries is the best way to make ourselves easy, and to keep ourselves from being wearied with them. This comes in here, to encourage them to repent, because there is forgiveness with God, and to show the freeness of divine mercy; where sin has been exceeding sinful, grace appears exceeding gracious. Apply this, I. To the forgiving of the sins of Israel, as a people in their national capacity: when God stopped the course of
theflighting judgments, and saved them from utter
ruin, even then when he had them under severe re-
bukes, to that he would blot out their trans-
gressions; though he corrected them, he was re-
conciled to them again, and did not cut them off
from being a people. This he did many a time, till
they rejected Christ and his gospel, which was a
sin against the remedy, and then he would for-
give them no more as a nation, but utterly destroyed
them. 2. To the forgiving of the sin of very par-
sicular persons; he had blotted their sins; transgressions and sins,
infirmities though ever so numerous, backslidings
though ever so heinous. Observe here, (1.) How
the pardon is expressed: he will blot them out, as a
cloud is blotted out by the beams of the sun (ch.
xxii. 22.) as a debt is blotted out, not to appear
against the debtor; the book is crossed as if the debt
were paid, because it is pardoned, upon the pay-
ment which the surety has made; or as a blemish
is blotted out when it is reversed; as the curse was
blotted out with the waters of jealousy, which made
it of no effect to the innocent, Num. v. 23. He
will not remember the sin; which intimates not only
that he will remit the punishment of what is past,
but that it shall be no diminution to his love for the
future. When God forges, he forgets. (2.) What
is the ground and reason of the pardon. It is not
for the sake of any thing in us, but for his own sake;
for his mercies sake, his promise sake, and es-
specially for his Son’s sake, and that he may himself
be glorified in it. (3.) How God glories in it; I,
even I, am he: he glories in it as his prerogative;
one cannot forgive sin but God only, and he will do it,
it is his settled resolution, he will do it willingly and
with delight: it is his pleasure, it is his honour; so
he is pleased to reckon it.

Those words, (v. 26.) put me in remembrance,
may be understood either, [1.] As a rebuke to a
proud Pharisee, that stands upon his own justifica-
tion before God, and expects to find favour for his
merits, and not to be beheld to free grace; “If
you have any thing to say in your own justification,
any thing to offer for the sake of which you should
be pardoned, and not for my sake, put me in
remembrance of it; I will give you leave to plead
your own cause with me, declare what your merits are,
that you may be justified by them” but those who
are thus challenged will be speechless. Or, [2.] As a direction and encouragement to a penitent pub-
lican. Is God thus ready to pardon sin, and, when
he pardons it, will he remember it no more? Let us
then put him in remembrance, mention it before him,
those sins which he has forgiven; for they must be
ever before us, to humble us, though they are par-
doned, Ps. li. 3. Put him in remembrance of the
promises he has made to the penitent, and the satis-
faction his Son has made for them. Plead these
with him in wrestling for pardon, and declare these
things, in order that thou mayest be justified freely
by his grace: This is the only way, and it is the sure
way, to peace; only acknowledge thy transgression.

CHAP. XLIV.

God by the prophet, goes on, in this chapter, as before, 1.

To encourage his people with the assurance of great
blessings he had in store for them at their return out
of captivity, and those typical of much greater, which the
gospel-church, his spiritual Israel, should partake of in
death of the Messiah, and whereby he proves himself
to be God alone against all pretenders. v. 1-8. 11. To
expose the sottishness and amazing folly of idol-makers,
and idol-worshippers, v. 9-20, 11. To testify and confir-
m the promise made to his servant, v. 1, 2, to his people of these great
blessings, and to raise their joyful and believing expecta-
tions of them, v. 21-28.

1. YET now hear, O Jacob my servant;
and Israel, whom I have chosen;

2. Thus saith the Lord that made thee,
and formed thee from the womb, which will
help thee; Fear not, O Jacob my servant;
and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.

3. For I will pour water upon him that is
thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I
will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my
blessing upon thine offspring: 4. And they
shall spring up as among the grass, as wil-
loes by the water-courses. 5. One shall
say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call
himself by the name of Jacob; and another
shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord,
and surname himself by the name of Israel.

6. Thus said the Lord the King of Israel,
and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am
the first, and I am the last: and besides me
there is no God. 7. And who, as I, shall
call, and shall declare it, and set it in order
for me, since I appointed the ancient peo-
ples, and the things that are coming, and shall
come, let them show unto them. 8. Fear ye not,
neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time,
and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there
a God besides me? yea, there is no God; I
know not any.

Two great truths are abundantly made out in
these verses:

1. That the people of God are a happy people,
especially upon account of the covenant that is be-
tween them and God. The people of Israel were
so as a figure of the gospel-Israel.

Three things complete their happiness:

1. The covenant-relations wherein they stand to
God, v. 1, 2. Israel is here called Jesurun—the
upright one; for these only, like Nathanael, are Is-
raelites indeed, in whom is no guile; and these only
shall have the everlasting benefit of these promises.
Jacob and Israel had been represented, in the close
of the foregoing chapter, as very provoking and
obnoxious to God’s wrath, and already given to the
curse and to reproaches; but, as if God had been
made to bear with much more patience than he was
killed together, mercy steps in with a non-obstante
notwithstanding, to all these quarrels; Yet now
hear, O Jacob my servant; then will I be friends
again for all this. God had said, (ch. xliii. 25.) I
am he that blotteth out all thy transgression, which
is the only thing that creates this distance; and
when that is taken away, the streams of mercy run
again in their course, and his people are kisse-
ted together, mercy steps in with a non-obstante,
notwithstanding, to all these quarrels; Yet now
hear, O Jacob my servant; then will I be friends
again for all this. God had said, (ch. xliii. 25.) I
am he that blotteth out all thy transgression, which
is the only thing that creates this distance; and
when that is taken away, the streams of mercy run
again in their course, and his people are kisse-
ted together, mercy steps in with a non-obstante,
197

womb; and therefore he will help them over their difficulties, and help them in their services.

2. The covenant-blessings which he has secured to them and theirs. (1.) They that are sensible of their spiritual wants, and the insufficiency of the creature to supply them, shall have abundant satisfaction in God: I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, that thirsts after righteousness; he shall be filled. Water shall be beheved out to the rivers and streams of all the covenant-blessings above all the delights of sense. (2.) They that are barren as the dry ground shall be watered with the grace of God, with floods of that grace, and God will himself give the increase. If the ground be ever so dry, God has floods of grace to water it with. (3.) The water God will pour out is, his Spirit. (John vii. 38.) which God will pour out without measure upon the Seed, that is, Christ. (Gal. iii. 16.) and by measure upon all the seed of the faithful, upon all the praying, wrestling seed of Jacob, Luke xi. 13. This is the great New Testament promise, that God, having sent his Servant Christ, and upheld him, will send his Spirit to uphold us. (4.) This gift of the Holy Ghost is the great blessing God had reserved the plentiful church shall have from him, I will give you the spirit of my blessing; for where God gives his Spirit, he will give all other blessings. (5.) This is reserved for the seed and offspring of the church; for so the covenant of grace runs, I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed. To all who are thus made to partake of the privileges of adoption, God will give the spirit of adoption. (6.) Hereby there shall be a great amendment of the church: thus it shall be spread to distant places. Thus it shall be propagated and perpetuated to after-times; they shall spring up, and grow as fast as willows by the water-courses, and in every thing that is virtuous and praiseworthy shall be eminent, and excel all about them, as the willows overtop the grass among which they grow, v. 4. Note, It is a great happiness to the church, and a great pleasure to good men, to see the rising generation hopeful and promising. And it will be so if God pour his Spirit upon them, that blessing, that blessing of blessings.

3. The consent they cheerfully give to their part of the covenant, v. 5. When the Jews returned out of captivity, they renewed their covenant with God. (Jer. i. 5.) particularly that which shall be no more than of the second Testation, H. 2, 3, 8. Backsliders must thus repent, and do their first works. Many of these that were without, did at that time join themselves to them, invited by that glorious appearance of God for them, Zech. viii. 23. Esth. viii. 17. And they say, We are the Lord's, and call ourselves by the name of Jacob; for there was one law, one covenant, for the stranger and for those that were born in the land. And doubtless it looks further yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them who, upon the effusion of the Spirit, after Christ's ascension, should be joined to the Lord, and added to the church. These converts are one and another, very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God, Col. iii. 11. When one does it, another shall be his example, and another, and another, thus the zeal of one may provoke many. (1.) They shall resign themselves to God: not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, I am the Lord's; he has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to him, to all his commands, to all his dispositions. I am, and will be, his only, his very own, into whom he has put all the blessings he has for his people, living and dying I will be his. (2.) They shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, call themselves by the name of Jesus, forgetting their own people and their father's house, and desire to wear the character and livery of God's family. They shall love all God's people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, espouse their cause, seek the good of the church in general, and of all the particular members of it, and be willing to take their lot with them in all conditions. (3.) They shall do this very solemnly; some of them shall subscribe with their consent to that new covenant, for they come to agree again, a man sets his hands to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God, the better: Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. xxiv. 26, 27. Neh. ix. 38. Fast bind, fast find.

11. That, as the Israel of God are a happy people, so the God of Israel is a great God, and he is God alone. This also, as the former, speaks abundant satisfaction to all that trust in him, v. 6. Solomon waited when he had made an end of building the temple, and it was consecrated to God, 2 Chron. xxvii. 6. and again, a man sets his hands to it, and delivers it as his act and deed. The more express we are in our covenanting with God, the better: Exod. xxiv. 7. Josh. xxiv. 26, 27. Neh. ix. 38. Fast bind, fast find.

1. That, the God we trust in is a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power. He is the Lord, Jehovah, self-existent and self-sufficient; and he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, of angels and men.

2. That he stands in relation to us and has a particular concern for us. He is the King of Israel and his Redeemer; therefore his Redeemer, because his King; and those that take God for their King shall have him for their Redeemer. When God would assert himself God alone, he proclaims himself Israel's God, that his people may be encouraged both to adhere to him and to triumph in him.

3. That he is eternal; the first and the last. He is God from everlasting, before the worlds were, and will be so to everlasting, when the world shall be no more. If there were not a God to create, nothing had ever been; and if there were not a God to uphold, all would soon come to nothing again. He is all in all; is the first Cause, from whom are all things, and the last End, to and for whom are all things; (Nom. xi. 36.) the Alpha and the Omega, Rev. i. 11.

4. That he is God alone; (v. 6.) Beside me there is no God. Is there a God beside me? v. 8. We will appeal to the greatest scholars. Did they ever in all their reading meet with any other? To those that have the largest acquaintance with the world: did they ever meet with any other? There are many gods in the Gentiles, but there are no gods at all; yet none beside our God, that is infinite and eternal; any, beside him, that is the Creator of the world, and the Protector and Benefactor of the whole creation; any, beside him, that can do that for their worshippers which he can and will do for his? Ye are my witnesses. I have been a Nesuchah to you. You have tried other gods; you know you are subject to any of them all-sufficient to yourself, or any of them like me? Yes, there is no god; no rock, so the word is; none beside that can be a rock for a foundation to build on, a rock for shelter to flee to. God is the Rock, and their rock is not as ours, Deut. xxxiii. 4, 31. I know not any; as if he had said, "I never met with any that offered to stand in competition with me, or that durst bring their pretensions to a trial; if I did know of you and any, you could befriend you better than I can, I would recommend you to them; but I know not any." There is no God beside Jehovah; he is infinite, and therefore there can be no other; he is all-sufficient, and therefore there needes no other. This is designed for the confirming of the hopes of God's people in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, and, in order to that, for the confirming them of their idolatry; when the affliction had done its work, it should be removed. They are reminded of the first and greatest article of their creed, that the Lord their God is one Lord, Deut. vi. 4. And therefore,
13. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he maketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, and he maketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. 14. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. 15. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. 16. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roareth roast, and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: 17. And the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. 18. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. 19. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it; and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? 20. He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?

Often before, God, by the prophet, had mentioned the folly and strange setthiness of idolaters; but here he enlarges upon that head, and very fully and particularly exposes it to contempt and ridicule. The discourse is intended to show how much the people of Israel against the strong temptation they would be in to worship idols, when they were captives in Babylon, in compliance with the custom of the country, (they being far from the city of their own solemnities,) and to humour those who were now their lords and masters. 2. To cure them of their inclination to idolatry, which was the sin that did most easily beset them, and to reform them from which they were sent into Babylon. As the rod of God is of use to enforce the word, so the word of God is of use to explain the rod, that the voice of both together may be heard and answered. 3. To furnish them with something to say to their Chaldean task-masters. When they insulted over them, when they asked, Where is your God? they might then with honour ask them, What are your Gods? 4. To take off their fear of the gods of their enemies, and to encourage their hope in their own God, that he would certainly appear against those who set up such scandalous competitors as these with him for the throne. Now here, for the conviction of idolaters, we have, 1. A challenge given to them to clear themselves, if they can, from the imputation of the most shameful folly and senselessness imaginable, v. 9.—11. They set their wits on work to contrive, and their hands on work to frame, graven images, and they call them their delectable things; extremely fond they are of them, and mighty things they expect from them. Note, Through the corruption of men's nature, those things which should be detestable to
them are desirable and delectable; but these are far gone in a distemper, to whom that which is the food and fuel of it is most agreeable. Now, 1. We tell them that they that do so are all vanity, they deceive themselves and one another, and put a great cheat upon those for whom they make these images. 2. We tell them that their delectable things shall not profit them, nor make them any return for the pleasure they take in them; they can neither supply them with good, nor protect them from evil. The good which is in the images is not in them, but all, we will they ever get any thing by the devours they pay to them. 3. We appeal to themselves, whether it be not a silly, sottish thing to expect any good from gods of their own making; they are their own witnesses, witnesses against themselves, if they would but give their own consciences leave to deal faithfully with them, that they are blind and ignorant in doing this; they see not nor know, and let them own it, that they may be ashamed. If men would but be true to their own convictions, ordinarily we might be sure of their conversion, particularly idolaters; for who has formed a god? Who but a madman, or one out of his wits, would think of forming a god, of making that, if he made it a god, he would suppose to be his maker? We charge them to think of their own incongruities, and to have confidence or assurance. If any one has the front to say that he has formed a god, when all his fellows come together to declare that what each of them has done toward the making of this god, they will all be ashamed of the cheat they have put upon themselves, and laugh in their sleeves at those whom they have deluded. Who can form this god? Who can, in the whole of men, of men, or weak and impotent, and therefore cannot possibly make a being that shall be omnipotent, nor can they, without blushing, pretend to it; let them all be gathered together, as Demetrius and the craftsmen were, to support their sinking trade, let them stand up to plead their own cause; and make the best they can of it, with hand joined in hand; yet they shall fear to undertake it, when it comes to the setting to, as conscious to themselves of the weakness and badness of their cause; and they shall be ashamed of it, not only when they appear singly, but when by appearing together they hope to keep one another in countenance. Note, Idolatry and impieties are things which men may justly both tremble and blush to appear in. 11. A particular narrative of the whole proceeding in making a god; and there needs no more to express it than to describe it, and tell the story of it. 1. The persons employed about it are handicraft tradesmen, the meanest of them, the very same that you would employ in making the common utensils of your husbandry, a cart or a plough. You must have a smith, a blacksmith, not with the tongs works in the coals; and it is hard work, for he works with the strength of his arms, till he is hungry, and his strength fails, so eager is he, and so hasty are those who set him at the work, to get it despatched. He cannot allow himself time to eat or drink, for he drinks no water, and therefore is faint, v. 12. Perhaps it was a piece of superstition, and thevery iron-work was to be done about it, he fashioned it with hammer, and made it all very exact, according to the model given him. Then comes the carpenter, and he takes as much care and accuracy in fashioning the thing as if it was in his box of tools, for he has occasion for them all; he stretches out his rule upon the piece of wood, marks it with a line, where it must be sawed or cut off; he fits it, or polishes it, with planes, the great first, and then the less; he works out with the compass what must be the size and shape of it, and it is just what he pleases it to be, and altogether unfit to represent the beauty of the Lord. God put a great honour upon men, when, in respect of the powers and faculties of his soul, he made them after the image of God; but man does a great dishonour to God, when he makes him, in respect of bodily parts and members, after the image of man. Nor will it of all things for the deformity to complain of his god, as to take the fairest of the children of men for his original, whence to take his copy, and to give him all the beauty of a man that he can think of; for all the beauty of the body of a man, when pretended to be put upon him who is an infinite Spirit, is a deformity and diminution to him. And when the goodly piece is finished, it must remain in the house, in the temple, or perhaps is coveled up in the dwelling-house, if it be one of the laces or janitors—the household gods. 3. The matter of which it is mostly made is sorry stuff to make a god of; it is the stock of a tree. (1.) The tree itself was fetched out of the forest, where it grew among other trees, of no more virtue or value than its neighbours. It was a cedar, it may be, or a cypress, or a cedron, v. 14. Perhaps he had an eye upon it some time before for this use, and strengthened it for himself, used some art or other to make it stronger and better grown than other trees were. Or, as some read it, which hath strengthened or lift up itself among the trees of the forest, the tallest and strongest he can pick out. Or, it may be, it pleases his fancy better to take an ash, which is of a quicker growth, and which was of his own planting, for this use, and which has been nourished with rain from heaven. See what a fallacy he puts upon himself, in making that his refuge, which was of his own planting, and which he not only gave the form to, but prepared the matter for. And what an affront he puts upon the God of heaven, in setting up that as a rival with him, which was nourished with rain from heaven, that rain which falls upon the just and unjust. (2.) The houghs of this tree were good for nothing but for fuel; to that use were they put, and so were the chips that were cut off from it in the working of it; they are for a man to burn, v. 15, 16. And to show that that tree has no innate virtue in it for its own protection, it is as capable of being burnt as any other tree, and to show that he who chose it had no more antecedent value for it than for any other tree, he makes no difficulty of throwing part of it into the fire as common rubbish, asking no question for conscience-sake. (1.) It serves him for his parLOUR-fire; he will take thereof, and warm himself, v. 15, and he finds the comfort of it, and is so far from having any regard in his mind for it that he says, I have seen the fire; and certainly that part of the tree which served him for fuel, the use for which God and nature designed it, does him a much greater kindness, and yields him more satisfaction, than ever that will which he makes a god of. (2.) It serves him for his kitchen-fire; he eats flesh with it, that is, he makes it serve him in his cuisine, he feeds on his reaseth roast, and is satisfied that he has not done amiss to put it to this use. Nay, (3.) It serves him to heat the oven with, in which we use that fuel which is of least value; he kindles it, and bakes
of a tree has lost its glory, and he has lost his that gives glory to it."

Upon the whole, the sad character given of these idolaters, (v. 20.) is, 1. That they put a cheat upon themselves; 2. That they feed on ashes; 3. That they feed themselves with hopes of advantage by worshipping these idols; but they will be disappointed as much as a man that would expect nourishment by feeding on ashes. Feeding on ashes is an evidence of a depraved appetite, and a disaffected mind. So much of, indeed, is a sign that the soul is overpowered by very bad habits, when men, in their worship, go no further than the sight of their eyes will carry them. They are wretchedly deluded, and it is their own fault; a deceived heart of their own, more than the deceiving tongue of others, has turned them aside from the faith and worship of the living God to dumb idols. They are drunk with the wine of their own fashion and notion. The apostasy of states from God is owing entirely to themselves, and to the evil heart of unbelief that is in their own bosom. A revolting and rebellious heart is a deceived heart. 2. That they willfully persist in their self-delusion, and will not be undeceived. There is none of them that can be persuaded so far to suspect himself as to say, \emph{Is there not a lie in my right hand? and so to think of delivering his soul. Note, (3.) They take a lie in their right hand; for an idol is a lie, is not what it pretends, performs not what it promises, and it is a teacher of lies, Hab. ii. 18. (2.) It highly concerns those that are secure in an evil way, seriously to consider whether there be not a lie in their right hand. Is not that a lie which with complacency we hold fast as our chief good? Are our hearts set upon the wealth of the world, and the pleasures of sense? They will certainly prove a lie in our right hand. And is not that a lie which with confidence we hold fast by, as the ground on which we build our hopes of heaven? If we trust to our external professions and performances, as if those would save us, we deceive ourselves with a lie in our right hand, with a house built on the sand. (3.) Self-suspection is the first step toward self-deliverance. We cannot be faithful to ourselves, unless we are jealous of ourselves. He that would deliver his soul must begin with the putting of this question to his own conscience, \emph{Is there not a lie in my right hand?} (4.) Those that are given up to believe a lie, are under the power of strong delusions, which it is hard to get clear of, 2 Thess. ii. 11."

21. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. 22. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins; return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. 24. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25. That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh
their knowledge foolish: 26. That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27. That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28. That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

In these verses we have,

1. The duty which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are called to, that they might be qualified and prepared for the deliverance designed them. Our first care must be to get good by our afflictions, and then we may hope to get out of them. The duty is expressed in two words, Remember and Return, as in the counsel to Ephesus, Rev. ii. 4, 5. 1. Remember these, O Jacob; remember what thou art under; think of the folly of idolatry and apostasy, and the convictions thou art now under to be ready to thee whenever thou art tempted to that sin. Remember that thou art my servant, and therefore must not serve other masters. 2. Return unto me, v. 22. It is the great concern of those who have backslidden from God, to hasten their return to him; and this is that which he calls them to, when they are in the wilderness, and when he is returning to them in a way of mercy.

II. The favours which Jacob and Israel, now in captivity, are assured of; and what is here promised to them upon their remembering and returning to God, is in a spiritual sense promised to all that in like manner return to God. It is a very comfortable word, for more is implied in it than is expressed; (v. 21.) "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me, though for the present thou seem to be so." When we begin to remember God, he will begin to remember us, nay, it is he that remembers us first. Now observe here,

1. The grounds upon which God's favourable intentions to his people were built, and on which they might build their expectations from him. He will deliver them from captivity, give them a return of their servants, and therefore he has a just quarrel with those that detain them; Let my people go, that they may serve me. The servants of the King of kings are under special protection. 2. He formed them into a people, formed them from the womb, v. 24. From the first beginning of their increase into a nation, they were under his particular care and government. The original constitution of his kingdom, and his covenant with them was the charter by which they were incorporated. They are his, and he will save them. (3.) He has redeemed them formerly, has many a time redeemed them out of great distress, and he is still the same, in the same relation to them, has the same concern for them. Therefore return unto me, and I will return unto thee, v. 22. Note, God will not only forgive, but will also wittingly go, but to me? Having redeemed them as well as formed them, he has acquired a further title to them, and property in them, which is a good reason why they should dutifully return to him, and why he will graciously return to them. The Lord has redeemed Jacob, he is about to do it, (v. 24.) he it is determined to do it; for he is the Lord their Redeemer, v. 24. Note, The word of redemption which God has by his Son wrought for us, encoun-

Vol. IV.-2 C

not lose his purchase. (4.) He has glorified himself in them, (v. 23.) and therefore he will do so still, John xii. 28. It is matter of comfort to us to see God's glory interested in the deliverances of the church; for therefore he will certainly redeem Jacob, because this he will glorify himself. And this assures us that he will perform the redemption of his saints by Jesus Christ, because there is a day set for the redemption of all his people, he will be glorified and admired in them all. (5.) He has prepared the way of their redemption, which is the cause of their calamity, and the only obstruction to their deliverance, v. 22. Therefore he will break the yoke of captivity from off their necks, because he has blotted out, as a thick cloud, their transgressions. Note, [1.] Our transgressions and our sins are as a cloud, a thick cloud; they interpose between him and us, and for a time suspend and intercept the correspondence between his deliverances and lower worlds; (sin separates between us and God, ch. vi. 1.) they threaten a storm, a deluge of wrath, as thick clouds do, which God will rain upon sinners, Ps. ix. 6. [2.] When God pardens sin, he blest out this cloud, this thick cloud, so that the intercourse with heaven is had open again. God looks down upon the cloud with favour, the soul looks up to him with pleasure. The storms of our sins, and the influence of the Sun of righteousness. It is only through Christ that sin is pardoned. When sin is pardoned, like a cloud that is scattered, it appears no more, it is quite gone; the iniquity of Jacob shall be sought for, and not found, Jer. i. 20. And the comforts that flow into the soul when sin is pardoned, are like clear shining after clouds and rain.

2. The means by which the counsels of God's people should bring along with it; (v. 23.) Sing, O ye heavens. This intimates, (1.) That the whole creation shall have cause for joy and rejoicing in the redemption of God's people; to that it is owing, that it subsists, (that it is rescued from the curse which the sin of man brought upon the ground,) and that it is again put into a capacity of answering the ends of its being, and is assured, that though now it groans, being barren, it shall at last be delivered from the bondage of corruption. The greatest establishment of the world is the kingdom of God in it, Ps. xcviii. 8. xcviii. 7, 9. (2.) That the angels shall rejoice in it, and the inhabitants of the upper world. The heavens shall sing, for the Lord has done it. And there is joy in heaven when God and men are reconciled, (Luke x. 21.) and when Babylon falls, Rev. xv. 4. (3.) That those who lay at the greatest distance, even the inhabitants of the Gentile world, should join in these praises, as sharing in these joys. The lower parts of the earth, the forest and the trees there, shall bring in the tribute of Thanksgiving for the redemption of Israel.

3. The encouragement we have to hope, that, though great difficulties, and such as have been thought insuperable, lie in the way of the church's deliverance, yet, when the time for it is come, they shall all be got over with ease, for thus saith Israel's Redeemer, I am the Lord that maketh all things, did make them at first, and am still making them; for providence is a continued creation; all being, power, life, power, life, are from him. He stretched forth the heavens alone, has no need nor needs any; and the earth too he spreadd abroad by himself, and by his own power. Man was not by him when he did it, (Job xlvii. 4.) nor did any creature advise or assist; only his own eternal Wisdom and Word was by him then as one brought up; with him, Prov. viii. 30. His stretching out the heavens by himself and with less extent of his power. The strongest men, if he be to stretch a thing out, must get somebody or other to lend a hand; but God stretched out the vast expense, and
keeps it still upon the stretch himself, by his own power. Let not Israel be discouraged then; nothing is too hard for him to do that made the world, Ps. cxlvii.; he can make what use he pleases of all, and has it in his power to serve his own purposes by them.

4. The confusion which this would put upon the oracles of Babylon, by the confusion it would give them, v. 23. God, by delivering his people out of Babylon, would frustrate the tokens of the haruspice, of all the lying prophets, that said the Babylonian monarchy would stand. He would make all and every one of them, instead of grounding their predictions upon some token, some sign or other, which, according to the rules of their art, foreboded its prosperity. How mad will these conjurers grow with vexation, when they see that their skill fails them, and that the contrary happens to that which they so coveted, and were so confident of. Nor would it only baffle their pretended prophecies, but their celebrated politicians too; he turns the wise men backward; finding they cannot go on with their projects, they are forced to quit them; and so he makes the judges fools, and makes their knowledge foolish. Those that are made acquainted with Christ, see all the knowledge they had before to be foolishness in comparison with the knowledge of him. And those that are adversaries to him, will find all their counsels, like Ahab's prophetic, turned to their own undoing, and themselves taken in their own craftiness. 1 Cor. iii. 19.

5. The confirmation which this would give to the oracles of God, which the Jews had distrusted, and their enemies despised; God confirms the word of his servant; (v. 26.) he confirms it by accomplishing it in his season, and performing the counsel of the messengers whom he hath many a time sent to his people, who, in the possession of these things, he had in store for them. Note, The exact fulfilling of the prophecies of scripture is a confirmation of the truth of the whole book, and an incontrovertible evidence of its divine original and authority.

6. The particular favours God designed for his people, that were now in captivity, v. 26.—28. These were foretold long before they went into captivity, that they might see reason to expect a correction, but no reason to fear a final destruction.

(1.) It is here supposed that Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, shall for a time lie in ruins, disppeled and uninhabited; but it is promised that they shall be rebuilt and repeopled. When Isaiah lived, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, were full of inhabitants; but they will be emptied, burnt, and destroyed; it was then hard to believe that concerning such strong and populous cities. But the justice of God will do that; and when that is done, it will be hard to believe that ever they will recover themselves again, and yet the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do that too. God has said to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; for, while the world stands, God will have a church in it; and therefore he will raise up a city, to dwell in the midst of the remnant of his people, and he made's, built; for, if it be built, it cannot be inhabited, Ps. lxi. 35, 36. When God's time is come for the building up of his church, let him alone to find both houses for his people, for they shall not lie exposed, and people for his houses, for they shall not stand empty. The cities of Judah too shall again be built.

The Asyrrian army under Semachorib only took the suburbs without the temple itself; but Nebuchadnezzar returned undamaged to the right owners; but the Chaldean army demolished them, and by carrying away the inhabitants left them to go to decay of themselves; for if lesser judgments prevail not to humble and reform men, God will send greater; yet these desolations shall not be perpetual, God will raise up the wastes and decayed places thereof; for he will not contend for ever! The city of strangers, when it is ruined, shall never be built; (ch. xx. 2.) but the city of God's own children is out discontinued.

(2.) It is here supposed that the temple too should be destroyed, and lie for a time razed to the foundations; but it is promised that the foundation of it shall again be laid, and no doubt built upon. As the desolation of the sanctuary was to all the pious Jews the most mournful part of the destruction, so the restoration and re-establishment of it would be the most grateful part of the deliverance; what joy can they have in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, if the temple there be not rebuilt; for that is that makes it a holy city, and truly beautiful. This therefore was the chief thing that the Jews had at heart, and had in view, in their return; therefore they would go back to Jerusalem, to build the house of the Lord God of Israel there, Ezra i. 3.

(3.) It is here supposed that very great difficulties would lie in the way of this deliverance, which it would be impossible for them to wade through; but it is promised that by a divine power they should all be removed; (v. 27.) God saith to the deep, Be dry; so he did when he brought Israel out of Egypt; and so he will again when he brings them out of Babylon, if there be occasion. Who art thou, 0 great deep? Does thou stand in the way? Before Zerubbabel, the commander-in-chief of the returning captives, thou shalt become a plain, Zech. iv. 7. So, Who art thou, 0 great deep? Dost thou retard their passage, and think to block it up? Thou shalt be dry, and thy rivers that supply thee shall be dried up. When Cyrus took Babylon by draining the river Euphrates into many channels, and so making it impassable for his army, this was fulfilled. Note, Whatever obstacle there be to the way of Israel's redemption, God can remove them with a word's speaking.

(4.) It is here supposed that none of the Jews themselves would be able by might and power to force their way out of Babylon; but it is promised that God will raise up a stranger from afar off, that shall fairly open the way for them, and now at length he makes the very men, many scores of years before he was born or thought of; (v. 28.) That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd. Israel is his people, and the sheep of his pasture; these sheep are now in the midst of wolves, in the hands of the thief and robber; they are impounded for trespass. Now Cyrus shall be his shepherd, employed by him to release these sheep, and to take care of their return to their own green pastures again. "Thou shalt he perform all my pleasure, shall bring about what is purposed by me, and will be highly pleasing to me." Note, [1.] The most contemptible things are certain to the divine presence; he knew who was the person, and what was his name, that should be the deliverer of his people, and, when he pleased, he could let his church know it, that, when they had told of it to the beginning of the world, they might lift up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh. [2.] It is the greatest honour of the greatest men to be employed for God as instruments of his favour to his people. It was more the praise of Cyrus to be God's shepherd, than to be emperor of Persia. [3.] God makes what he pleases of men, of whom his people were least expecting. They knew not by what means he had given them liberty with the greatest freedom; and, when they think to do as they please, he can overrule them, and make them do as he pleases. Nay, in those very things wherein they are serving themselves, and look no further than that, God is serving his own purposes by them, and making them to perform all his pleasure. Rich princes shall do what poor prophets have freted.
CHAP. XLV.

Cyprus was nominated, in the foregoing chapter, to be God’s shepherd: more is said to him, and more of him, in this, partly because he was of paramount importance in the middle east, and partly because he was to be a type of the great Redeemer, and that release was to be typical of the great redemption from sin and death; and thus, for the sake of which release, I say, of the release of all the prophetic witnesses. We have here, I. The great things which God would do for Cyrus, that he might be put into a capacity to discharge God’s people, v. 1. 2. The promise to Cyrus would thereby give rise to his eternal power and godhead, and his universal, incontestable sovereignty, v. 5. 7. III. A prayer for the hastening of this deliverance, v. 8. 10. IV. A check to the unbelieving Jews, who quarrelled with God for his providence, v. 9. 10. V. Encouragement given to the believing Jews, who trusted in God, and continued in prayer, assuring them that God would in due time accomplish this work by the hand of Cyrus, v. 11. 12. VI. A challenge given to the worshippers of idols, and their doom read, and satisfaction given to the worshippers of the true God, and their comfort secured, with an eye to the Mediator, who is made of God to us both Righteousness and Sanctification, v. 16. 25. And here, as in other parts of this prophecy, there is much of Christ, and gospel-grace.

1. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the reins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut: 2. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: 3. And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. 4. For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

Cyrus was a Mede, descended (as some say) from Astyages king of Media; the pagan writers are not agreed in their accounts of his original; some tell us that in his infancy he was an outcast, left exposed, and was saved by a Median woman who took him up as her own. However, it is agreed, that, being a man of an active genius, he soon made himself very considerable; especially, when Croesus king of Lydia made a descent upon his country, which he not only repulsed, but revenged, prosecuting the advantages he had gained against Croesus with such vigour, that in a little time he took Sardis, and made himself master of the rich kingdom of Lydia, and the city itself never since had any rivaled it. This made him very great, (for Croesus was rich to a proverb,) and enabled him to pursue his victories in many countries; but it was near ten years after that, in conjunction with his uncle Darius, and with the forces of Persia, that he made this famous attack upon Babylon, which is here foretold, and which we have thus described. He found the country extremely rich and strong; it was forty-five miles in compass, some say more; the walls thirty-two feet thick, and a hundred cubits high; some say, they were so thick, that six chariots might drive abreast upon them; some say, they were fifty cubits thick, and two hundred high. Cyrus seems to have had a great ambition to make himself master of this place, and to have projected it long; and at last he performed it.

Now here, 110 years before it came to pass, we are told: 1. What great things God would do for him, that he might put it into his power to release his people; in order to this, he shall be a mighty conqueror, and a wealthy monarch, and nations shall become tributaries to him, and help him both with men and money. Now that which God here promised to do for Cyrus, he could have done for Zerubbabel, or some of the Jews themselves; but the wealth and power of this world is so much inferior to that, which God promised him, to trust his own people with much of, so many are the snares and temptations that attend it; but if there has been occasion, for the good of the church, to make use of it, God has been pleased rather to put it into the hands of others, to be employed for them, than to venture it in their own hands.

Cyrus is here called God’s anointed, because he was both designed, and actually to discharge that great service, by the counsel of God, and was to be herein a type of the Messiah. God engages to hold his right hand, not only to strengthen and sustain him, but to direct his motions and intentions, as Elisha put his hands upon the king’s hands, when he was to shoot his arrow against Syria, 2 Kings xiii. 16. Being under such direction.

4. He shall extend his conquests very far, and shall make not only of the opposition that will be given him. Babylon is too strong a place for a young hero to begin with, and, therefore, that he may be able to deal with that, great additions shall be made to his strength by other conquests. (1.) Popular kingdoms shall yield to him; God will subdue nations before him; when he is in the full career of his successes, he shall make nothing of a nation’s being born to him at once; yet it is not thus that subdue them, it is God that subdues them for him; the battle is his, and therefore his is the victory. (2.) Potent kings shall fall before him; I will loose the reins of kings; either the girdle of their reins, divest them of their power and dignity, or the strength of their reins; and then it was literally fulfilled in Bel-shazzar, for when he was terrified by the hand-writing on the wall, the joints of his reins were loosed, Dan. v. 6. (3.) Great cities shall surrender themselves into his hands, without giving him or themselves any trouble. God will incline the keepers of the city, to open before him the two-leaved gates, not treacherously, or timorously, but from a full conviction that it is to no purpose to contend with him; and therefore the gates shall not be shut against him, and he, therefore, as it were, shall admit him as a friend. (4.) The longest and most dangerous marches shall be made easy and ready to him; I will go before thee, to clear the way, and to conduct thee in it, and then the crooked places shall be made straight; or, as some read it, the hilly places shall be levelled and made even. These will find a ready road, that have God going before them. (5.) No opposition will stand in his way; for he gives him his commission will break in pieces the gates of brass that are shut against him, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, wherewith they are fastened. This was fulfilled in the letter, if that be true which Herodotus reports, that the city of Babylon had a hundred gates all of brass, with posts and hooks of the same metal.

He shall fill his coffers very much; (v. 5.) I will give thee the treasures of darkness; treasures of gold and silver, that have been long kept close under lock and key, and had not seen the light of many years; or had been buried under ground by the inhabitants, in their fright, upon the taking of the city. The riches of many nations had been brought to Babylon, and Cyrus seized all together. The hidden riches of secret places, which belonged either to the crown or to private persons, shall be
be a prayer to Cyrus. Thus God, designing him to do a piece of service to his church, paid him richly for it; and Cyrus very honestly owned God's goodness to him; and, in consideration of that, released the captives; (Ezra i. 2.) God has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and thereby has obliged me to build him a house at Jerusalem.

11. We are here told what God designed, in doing all this for Cyrus. What Cyrus aimed at in undertaking his wars, may easily guess; but what God aimed at in giving him such wonderful success in his wars, was here told:

1. It was that the God of Israel might be glorified: "That thou mayest know by all this that I the Lord am the God of Israel; for I have called thee by thy name, long before thou wast born. When Cyrus had this prophecy of Isaiah showed him, and there found his own name, and his own achievements particularly described so long before, he shall thereby be brought to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the Lord Jehovah, the only living and true God, and continues to own his Israel, though now in captivity. It is well when thus men's prosperity brings them to the knowledge of God, for too often it makes them forget him.

2. It was that the God of Israel might be released; v. 4. Cyrus knew not God, as the God of Israel; having been trained up in the worship of idols, the true God was to him an unknown God; but, though he knew not God, God not only knew him when he came into being, but foreknew him, and bespoke him for his shepherd; he called him by his name, Cyrus, my, which was yet a greater honour, he summoned him, and called him his anointed; why did God do all this for Cyrus? Not for his own sake, be it known to him; whether he was a man of virtue or no, is questioned. Xenophon indeed, when he would describe the heroic virtues of an excellent prince, made use of Cyrus's name, and many of the particulars of his story, in his Cyropedia; but other historians represent him as haughty, cruel, and blood-thirsty. The reason why God preferred him, was, for Jacob his servant's sake. Note, (1.) In all the revolutions of states and kingdoms, the sudden falls of the great and strong, and the surprising advancements of the weak and obscure, God is designing the good of his church. (2.) It is therefore the wisdom of those to whom God has given wealth and power, to use it for his glory, by being kind with it to his people. Cyrus's Providence was thus ordered; he shall have a kingdom, only that God's people may have their liberty; for their kingdom is not of this world, it is yet to come. In all this, Cyrus was a type of Christ, who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with unsearchable riches, for the use and benefit of God's servants, his elect. When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, took those captives that had taken others captive, and opened the prison to those that were bound.

5. I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me; 6. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am the Lord, and there is none else, v. 7. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. 8. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I the Lord have created it. 9. Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherders of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What maketh thee? or thy work, He hath no hands! 10. Wo unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?

God here asserts his sole and sovereign dominion, as that which he designed to prove and manifest to the world, in all the great things he did for Cyrus, and by him. Observe,

1. How this doctrine is here laid down, concerning the sovereignty of the great Jehovah, in two things:

1. That he is God alone, and there is no God beside him; this is here inculcated as a fundamental truth, which, if it were firmly believed, would abolish idolatry out of the world. With what an awful, commanding air of majesty and authority, bidding defiance, as it were, to all pretenders, does the great God here put forth all the weight of his name, I am the Lord Jehovah, and there is none else, there is no God beside me, no self-existent, self-sufficient Being, none infinite and eternal. And again, (v. 6.) There is none beside me; all that are set up in competition with me are counterfeits, they are all vanity, and a fig, for I am the Lord, and there is none else. This is here said to Cyrus, not only to exalt his majesty, and to allure him to his worship the only true and living God, but to prevent his falling into the sin of some of his predecessors in victory and universal monarchy, which was, setting up themselves for gods, and being idolized; to which some attribute much of the origin of idolatry. Let Cyrus, when he is become thus rich and great, remember that still he is but a man, and there is no God but one.

2. That he is Lord of all, and there is nothing done without him; (v. 7.) I form the light, which is grateful and pleasing, and I create darkness, which is grievous and displeasing, I make peace, put here for all good, and I create evil, not the evil of sin, God is not the Author of that, but the evil of punishment. I the Lord order and direct, and do all these things. Observe, (1.) The Lord is the Governor of all the affairs of men; light and darkness, opposite to each other, and yet, in the course of providence, sometimes intermixed, like the morning and evening twilights, neither day nor night; (Zech. xiv. 6.) a mixture of joys and sorrows in the same cup, alleys to each other; sometimes they are counterbalanced, as noonday light and midnight darkness; in the revolution of every day each takes its turn, and there are short transitions from the one to the other; witness Job's case. (2.) The selfsame cause of both, and that is he that is the first Cause of all: I the Lord, the Fountain of all being, am the Fountain of all power. He who formed the natural light, (Gen. i. 3.) still forms the providential light; he who at first made peace among the jarring seeds and powers of nature, takes in the affairs of men; he who allowed the natural darkness, which was a mere privation, creates the providential darkness, for concerning troubles and afflictions he gives positive orders. Note, The wise God has the ordering and disposing of all our comforts and all our crosses in this world.

11. How this doctrine is here proved and published.

1. It is proved by that which God did for Cyrus; "There is no God beside me, for (v. 5.) I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. It was not
thine own idol, which thou didst know and worship, that girded thee for this expedition, that gave thee authority and ability for it. No, it was I that girded thee, whom thou didst not know, nor seek to.” By this it appears that the God of Israel is the only true God, that he manages and makes what use he pleases, even of those that are strangers to him, and pay their homage to other gods.

2. It is published to all the world by the word of God, and justified by the testimony of the suffering Jews in Babylon, that all may know from the east and from the west, the Lord is God, and there is none else. The wonderful deliverance of the Israel of God proclaimed to all the world that there is none like unto the God of Jehovah, that rides on the heavens for a chariot.

11. How this doctrine is here improved and applied:

1. For the comfort of those that earnestly longed, and yet quietly waited, for the redemption of Israel; (v. 8.) "Drophi down, ye heavens, from above. Some take this as the σάρξ prayer for the deliverance; I rather take it as God’s precept concerning it, for he does the heavy work. Now the precept is directed to heaven and earth, and all the hosts of both, as royal precepts commonly run. To all officers, civil and military. All the creatures shall be made in their places to contribute to the carrying on of this great work, when God will have it done. If men will not be aiding and assisting, God will produce it without them, as he does the dews of heaven, and the grass the earth, which tarry not for man, nor wait for the sons of men, Mic. v. 7. Observe, (1.) The method of this great deliverance that is to be wrought for Israel; righteousness must first be wrought in them, they must be brought to repent of their sins, to renounce their idolatries, to return to God, and reform their lives, and then the salvation shall be wrought for them, and not till then. We must not expect salvation without righteousness, they spring up together, and together the Lord hath created them; what he has joined together, let not the hand of man put asunder. See Ps. lxxxv. 9—11. Christ died to save us from our sins, not in our sins, and is made Redemption to us, by being made to us Righteousness and Sanctification. (2.) The act time for the great deliverance; rather than it shall fall, when the act time for it is come, the heavens shall drop down righteousness, and the earth shall open to bring forth salvation, and both concur to the redemption, and so to the restoration of God’s Israel. It is from heaven, from above the skies, that righteousness drops down, for every grace and good gift is from above; now, since the more plenteous effusion of the Spirit, it is now poured down, and if our hearts be open to receive it, the product will be the fruits of righteousness, and the great salvation.

2. For reproof to those of the church’s enemies that opposed this salvation, or those of her friends, that despised it of: (v. 8.) "Unto him that strives with his Maker; God is the Maker of all things, and therefore our Maker, which is a reason why we should always submit to him, and never contend with him. (1.) Let not the proud oppressors, in the elevation of their spirits, oppose God’s designs concerning the deliverance of his people, nor think to detain them any longer, when the time is come for their release. We to the insulting Babylons that set God at defiance, as Pharaoh did, and will not let his people go! (2.) Let not the proud oppressed, in the dejection of their spirits, murmure and quarrel with God for the prolonging of their captivity, as if he dealt unjustly or unkindly with them, or think to force their way before God’s time is come. Note. Those will find themselves in a woful condition, that strive with their Maker; for none ever harden’d his heart against God, and prospered. Sinful man is indeed a quadruped creature; but let the footstools strive with the footstools of the earth: men are but carnal pets, say, they are his keen pets and are made so very much by their mutual contending; they are dashed in pieces one against another; and if they are disposed to strive, let them strive with one another, let them meddle with the monuments that remain; but above all, let us contend with him that is infinitely above them, which is as senseless and absurd as, [1.] For the clay to find fault with the potter; ‘Shall the clay return to him that formed it, “What maketh thee? Why dost thou make me of this shape, and not that?” Nay, it is as if the clay should be in such heat and passion with the potters, that lift them up, and with his hands or that he works as awkwardly as if he had none. Shall the clay pretend to be wiser than the potter, and therefore to advise him; or mightier than the potter; and therefore to control him? He that gave us being, that gave us this being, may design concerning us, and dispose of us, as he pleases; and it is impudent presumption for us to prescribe to him. (2.) He that shaketh the earth and all its works, who are ourselves so curiously, so wonderfully, made? Shall we say, He has no hands whose hands made us, and in whose hands we are? The doctrine of God’s sovereignty has enough in it to silence all our discontent and objections against the methods of his providence and grace, Rom. ix. 20, 21. [2.] It is as unnatural as for the child to be fault with the parents; to say to the father, What hast thou brought forth? Why was I not begetten and born an angel, exempt from the infirmities of human nature, and the calamities of human life? Must not those who are children of men expect to share in the common lot, and to fare as others fare? If God is our Father, where is the honor we owe to him by submitting to his will?

11. Thus saith the Lord the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker; Ask me of things concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. 12. I have made the earth, and created man upon it; I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded. 13. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts. 14. Thus saith the Lord; The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabains men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over and they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee, and there is none else; there is no God. 15. Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. 16. They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. 17. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting sa'
vation; ye shall not be ashamed nor con-

founded world without end. 18. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else. 19. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain. I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.

The people of God in captivity, who reconciled themselves to the will of God in their affliction, and were content to wait his time for their deliverance, are here assured that they should not wait in vain.

1. They are invited to inquire concerning the issue of their troubles, v. 11. The Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, though he does not allow them to strive with him, yet encourages them. 1. The Holy One of Israel is the name by which he addressed them, as a name which they had good reason to trust in. 2. They who have recourse to the prophets and their prophecies, and see what they say concerning these things. Ask the watchmen, What of the night? Ask them, How long? Things to come, as far as they are revealed, belong to us and to our children, and we must not be strangers to them. 2. To seek unto him by prayer; "Concerning my sons, and concerning the servant of my Lord. My sons, and the work of my hands, command ye me; so some read it; bring them to me, and leave them with me. See the power of prayer, and its prevalence with God; Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am; what would ye that I should do unto you? Some read it with an interrogation, as carrying on the reproof, (v. 9, 10.) Do ye question me concerning things to come? Do ye ask me of things that are to come and I bound to give, you and your children, all that you desire? And concerning my children, even concerning the work of my hands, will you command me, or prescribe to me? Dare you so? Shall any teach God knowledge, or give law to him? Those that complain of God, do in effect assume an authority over him.

3. They are encouraged to depend upon the power of God, when they were brought very low, and were utterly incapable of helping themselves, v. 12. Their help stands in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth; which he mentions here, not only for his own glory, but for their comfort. The heavens and earth shall contribute, if he pleases, to the deliverance of the church; (v. 8.) for he created both, and therefore has both at command. 1. He made the earth, and created man upon it, for it was intended to be a habitation for man, Ps. cxv. 16. He has therefore not only authority, but wisdom, and power, sufficient to govern man here on this earth, and to make what use he pleases of him. 2. His hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts he commanded into being at first, and therefore still governs all their motions and influences. It is good news to God's Israel, that their God is the Creator and Governor of the world.

11. They are particularly told what God would do for them, that they might know what to depend upon; and this shall lead them to expect a more glorious Redeemer, and redemption, of whom, and of which, Cyrus, and their deliverance by him, were types and figures.

1. Liberty shall be proclaimed to them, v. 13. Cyrus is the man that shall do it; and, in order hereunto, God will put power into his hands; Have raised him up in righteousness, in pursuance and performance of the promises to this people's just but injured cause. He will give him success in all his enterprises, particularly that against Babylon; I will direct all his ways, and then it follows, I will prosper him; for these must needs speed well that are under a divine direction: and God will make plain the way of those whom he designs to employ for him. Two things Cyrus must do for God. (1.) Jerusalem is God's city, but it is now in ruins, and he must rebuild it, he must give orders for the rebuilding of it, and give wherewithal to do it. (2.) Israel is God's people, but they are now captives, and he must release them freely and generously; not demanding any ransom, or compounding with them for price or reward. And Christ is anointed to do that for poor captive souls, which Cyrus was to do for the captive Jews, to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that were bound, (ch. lxi. 1.) enlargement from a worse bondage than that in Babylon.

2. Provision shall be made for them. They went out poor, and unable to bear the expenses of their return and re-establishment; and therefore it is promised that the labour of Egypt and other nations should come over unto them, Cyrus having conquered those countries, out of their spoils provided for the returning Jews; and he ordered his subjects to furnish them with necessaries, (Ezra. i. 4.) so that they did not go out empty from Babylon any more than from Egypt. Those that are redeemed by Christ, shall be not only provided for, but enriched. Thine whose spirits God stirs up to go to the heavenly Zion, may depend upon him to bear their charges. The world is theirs as far as is good for them.

3. Proselytes shall be brought over to them; Men of stature shall come after thee in chains; they shall fall down to thee, saying, Surely God is in thee. This was in part fulfilled when many of the people of the land became Jews, (Esther viii. 17.) and some of the heroes of the world, who were capable of doing great things, were brought back to the Church, and brought over to it; and a promised enlargement of the Church is here represented, as though those, though it be in chains, that have God with them.

IV. They are taught to trust God farther than they can see him. The prophet puts this word into
their mouths, and goes before them in saying it; (v. 15.) Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself. 1. God hid himself when he brought them into the trouble; hid himself and was wrath, ch. i. 17. Not, Though God be his people. God and the church, yet sometimes, when they provoke him, he hides himself from them in displeasure, suppresses his favours, and lays them under his frowns; but let them wait upon the Lord that hides his face, ch. viii. 17. 2. He hid himself when he was bringing them out of the trouble. Note, When God is acting as Israel's God and Saviour, commonly his way is in the sea, Ps. xxxvii. 10. The salvation of the church is carried on in a mysterious way, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working in men's spirits, (Zech. iv. 6.) by weak and unlikely instruments, small and accidental occurrences, and not wrought till the last extremity; but this is our comfort, though God hide himself, we are sure he is the God of Israel, the Saviour, Job xxxv. 14.

V. They are instructed to triumph over idolaters and all the worshippers of other gods; (v. 16.) They who are makers of idols, not only who fame them, but who make gods of them by praying to them, they shall be ashamed and confounded, when they shall be convinced of their mistakes, and shall be forced to acknowledge that the God of Israel is the only true God, and when they shall be disappointed in their expectations from them, keep them in the same state of amazement which they were in before. They shall go to confusion, when they shall find that they can neither excuse the sin, nor escape the punishment of it, Ps. cvii. 7. It is not here and there one more timorous than the rest that shall thus shrink, and give up the cause, but all of them; nay, though they appear in a body, though hand join in hand, and they do all they can to keep one another, yet they shall go to confusion together: bind them in bundles, to burn them.

VI. They are assured that those who trust in God, shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, v. 17. Now that God was about to deliver them out of Babylon, he directed them by his prophet. 1. To look up to him as the Author of their salvation; Israel shall be saved in the Lord, and his word, Isa. liv. 11. Not only their salvation shall be wrought out by his power, but it shall be treasured up for them in his grace and promise, and so secured to them: they shall be saved in him, for his name shall be their strong tower, into which they shall run, and in which they shall be safe. 2. To look beyond this temporal deliverance, to that which is spiritual, and has reference to another world; to think of that salvation by the Messiah, which is an everlasting salvation, the salvation of the soul, a rescue from everlasting misery, and a restoration to everlasting bliss; "Give diligence to make that sure, for it may be made sure, so sure, that ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. Ye shall not only be delivered from the everlasting shames and contempt which will be the portion of idolaters, Dan. ix. 7, 8.) yet God tells them that they shall not be confounded, but shall have assurance for ever. They who are confounded as penitents for their own sin, shall not be confounded as beholders in God's promise and power.

VII. They are engaged for ever to cleave to God, and never to desert him, never to distrust him. What had been often inculcated before, is here again repeated, for the encouragement of his people to continue faithful to him, and to hope that he would be so to them; I am the Lord, and there is none else. That the Lord we serve and trust in is God alone, appears by the two great lights; that of nature, and that of revelation.

1. It appears by the light of nature; for he made the world, and therefore may justly demand its homage; (v. 18.) Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, and formed the earth, I am the Lord; the sovereign Lord of all, and there is none else. The gods of the heathens did not make this, may, they think, not proper to God; but God, who created the heavens, and forms the earth, has no equal, hence the heathen are not able to answer. He created the creation of the heavens, but enlarges more upon that of the earth, because that is the part of the creation which we have the nearest view of, and are most conversant with. It is here observed, (1.) That he formed it: it is not a rude and indigested chaos, but cast into the most proper shape and size by infinite wisdom. (2.) That he fixed it. When he had made it, he established it, founded it on the seas, (Ps. xxiv. 2.) hung it on nothing, (Job. xxvi. 7.) as at first he made it of nothing, and yet made it substantial, and hung it fast; Ponderibus libritus suis—Pois'd by its weight. (3.) That he fitted it for use, and for the service of man, to whom he designed it to give it. He created it not in vain, merely to serve his own purpose; but he fitted it to be inhabited by the children of men. For that end he drew the waters off it with which it was at first covered, and made the dry land appear, Ps. cv. 6. 7. Be it observed here, to the honour of God's wisdom, that he made nothing in vain; but intended every thing for some end, and fitted it to answer the intention. If any man prove to have been made in vain, it is his own fault. It should also be observed, that God's wisdom directs, and his favour to man, that he reckoned that made in vain, which serves for his use and benefit, to be a habitation and maintenance for him.

2. It appears by the light of revelation; as the works of God abundantly prove that he is God alone, so does his word, and the discovery he has made of himself and of his mind and will by it. His oracles are a perfect key to the understanding of his purposes as well as his operations, v. 19. The preference is here placed in three things. All that God has said, is plain, satisfactory, and just. (1.) In the manner of the delivery of it, it is plain and open: I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. The Pagan deities delivered their oracles out of dens and caverns, with a low and hollow voice, and in ambiguous expressions; these that delivered familiar spirits, whispered and muttered; (ch. viii. 19.) but God delivered his law from the top of mount Sinai, before all the thousands of Israel, in distinct, audible, and intelligible sounds; Wisdom cries in the chief places of concourse, Prov. i. 20, 21. viii. 1.—3. The vision is written, and made plain, so that he who reads may read it; it is not obscure and difficult, they that try to make it so, have confounded themselves in their own defence what God says here; In secret have I said nothing, John xviii. 20. (2.) In the use and benefit of it, it was highly satisfactory; I said not unto the seed of Jacob, who consulted these oracles and governed themselves by them, Seek ye me in vain; as the false gods did to their worshippers, who sought, for the living to the dead, ch. vii. 19. The most inward and essential part of it was directly given to those who consulted him, his word is to them a faithful guide; and to those that prayed to him, the seed of Jacob are a praying people, it is the generation of them that seek him, Ps. cv. 6. And as he has in his word invited them to seek him, so he never denied their believing prayers, nor disappointed their believing expectations. He said not
to them, to any of them, Seek ye me in vain; for if
he did not think fit to give them that particular thing they
prayed for, yet he gave them grace sufficient, and the com-
fut and satisfaction which was their equivalent. What was
necessary of winter, is true of prayer; It never rots in the skies.
God not only gives a gracious answer to, but will be the bountiful
Rewarder of, those that diligently seek him. (3.) In
the matter of it, it was incontestably just, and there
was no iniquity in it; I the Lord speak righteousness,
I declare things that are right, and commit to the
eternal rules and reasons of good and evil. The
human deities dictated those things to their
worshippers, which were the reproach of human
nature, and tended to the extirpation of virtue; but
God speaks righteousness, dictates that which is
right in itself, and tends to make men righteous;
and therefore he is God, and there is none else.

20. Assemble yourselves and come; draw
near together, ye that are escaped of the
nations: they have no knowledge that set
up the wood of their graven image, and
pray unto a god that cannot save. 21. Tell
ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take
counsel together: who hath declared this
from ancient time? who hath told it from
that time? have not I the Lord? and there
is no God else besides me; a just God, and
a Saviour: there is none besides me. 22. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all
the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there
is none else. 23. I have sworn by myself, the
word is gone out of my mouth in right-
eousness, and shall not return. That unto
me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall
swear. 24. Surely, shall one say, In the
Lord have I righteousness and strength:
even to him shall men come; and all that
are incensed against him shall be ashamed.
25. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel
be justified, and shall glory.

What is here said is intended, as before,
the conviction of idolaters, to show them
their folly in worshiping gods that cannot help them,
and neglecting a God that can. Let all that are
escaped of the nations, not only the people of the Jews,
but those of other nations that were by Cyrus
released out of captivity in Babylon, let them come,
and hear what is to be said against their worship-
ing idols, that they may be cured of it as well as the
Jews; that Babylon, which had of old been the
world's great metropolis, was the seat of God's
grace to the world. Let the refuges assemble themselves, and
come together; God has something to say to them
for their own good, and it is this, that idolatry is
a foolish foolish thing, upon two accounts:

1. It is setting up a refuge of lies for themselves.
They set up the wood of their graven image, for that
truth; and whether they overlay it with gold, deck it
with ornaments, and put marks of power on it, still
it is but wood. They pray to a god that cannot
save; for he cannot hear, he cannot help, he
can do nothing; how do they disparage themselves,
who give honour to that as a god, which cannot, as
a god, give good to them! How do they deceive
themselves, who pray for relief to that which is in
no capacity at all to relieve them! Certainly they
have no knowledge, or are brutish in their know-
ledge, who take so much pains, and do so much
penance, in seeking the favour of a god that has no
power.

2. It is setting up a rival with God, the only
living and true God; (v. 21.) "Summon them all,
tell them that the great cause shall again be tried,
though once adjudged, between God and Baal,
bring them near, and let them take counsel together,
what to say in defence of themselves and their idols:
it shall, as before, be put upon this issue; let them
show when any of their gods did with any certainty
fulfill promises, and save in difficulties as is done,
and it shall be acknowledged that they have some
colour for their pretensions. But none of them ever
did; their prophets were lying prophets; but I the
Lord have told it from that time, long before it came
to pass; therefore you must: where is there no God else
beside me." (1.) None besides is fit to rule; he is a
just God, and rules in justice, and will execute justice
for those that are oppressed. (2.) None besides is able
to help; as he is a just God, so is he the Saviour,
who can save without the assistance of any,
but without whom none can save. Those
therefore have no sense of truth and falsehood, good
and evil, no, nor of their own interest, that set up
any in competition with him.

II. For the comfort and encouragement of all
God's faithful worshippers, whoever they are, v.
22. They that worship idols pray to gods that
cannot save; but the God of Israel says it to all the
ends of the earth, to his people, though they are
scattered into the utmost corners of the world,
and seem to be lost and forgotten in their dispersion;
"Let them but look to me by faith and prayer,
look above instruments and second causes, look off
from all pretenders, and lock up to me, and they
shall be saved." It seems to refer further, to the
conversion of the Gentiles that live in the ends of
the earth; the most distant nations, when the standard
of the gospel is set up; to it shall the Gentiles seek.
When Christ is lifted up from the earth, as the
brass serpent upon the pole, he shall draw the
eyes of all men to him; they shall all be invited
to look unto him, as the stump Israelites did to the
brass serpent; and so strong is the eye of faith,
that by divine grace it will reach the Saviour,
and fetch in salvation by him even from the ends of
the earth; for he is God, and there is none else.

Two things are here promised, for the abundant
satisfaction of all that by faith look to the Saviour.

1. That the glory of the God they serve shall be
greatly increased. And this is the hope of the
Lord's people, that, how much sooner they
and their names are depressed, God will be exalted, v.
23. This is confirmed by an oath, that we might have
strong consolation; I have sworn by myself, (and
God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13.) the
word is gone out of my mouth, and shall not be
recalled nor return empty; it is gone forth in righ-
eousness; for it is the most reasonable, equitable
thing in the world, that he who made all should be
the Lord of all: that, since all beings are derived from
him, they should all be devoted to him. He
has said it, and it shall be made good, I will be exalted,
Ps. xlv. 10. He has assured us, (1.) That he will
be universally submitted to, that the kingdoms of
the world shall become his kingdom, they shall do
him homage; (so me every knee shall bow;
and they shall be glorified themselves by an oath of allegiance
to him; Unto me every tongue shall swear. This
is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus; (Rom.
xiv. 10, 11.) We shall all stand before the judgment
seat of Christ, and give account to him; for it is
written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall
bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God;
and it seems to be referred to, Ps. ii. 9, 10, 11.
In heart be brought into obedience to Christ, and made
willing in the day of his power, the knee will bow
to him in humble adorations and addresses, in that faithful obedience to his commands, submission to his dispositions, and compliance with his will in both; and the tongue will swear to him, will lay a bond upon the soul to engage it for ever to him; for he bears an honest mind, never starts it from engagements. (2.) That he will be universally sought unto, and application shall be made to him from all parts of the world; Unto him shall men of distant countries come, to implore his favour; unto thee shall all flesh come, with their requests, Ps. lxx. 2. And when Christ was lifted up from the earth, he drew all men to him. (3.) That it shall be to no purpose to make opposition to him; all that is done against him is as the raging of his adversary, the nations that are angry because he has taken to himself his great power, and has reigned, that have been incensed at the strictness of his laws, the success of his gospel, and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, they shall be ashamed; some shall be brought to a penitential shame for it, others to a remediless ruin. One way or other, sooner or later, all that are uneasy at Christ's government and victories, will be made ashamed of their folly and obstinacy. Blessed be God for the assurance here given us, that whatever becomes of our interests, the Lord will reign for ever! 2. That the welfare of the souls they are concerned for, shall be effectually secured; Surely shall one say, and another shall learn by his example to say, the man that is端正 to the Spirit, shall say, and stand to it: (1.) That God has a sufficiency for them, and that in Christ there is enough to supply all their needs; In the Lord is all righteousness and strength; so the margin reads it; he is himself righteouse and strong, he can do every thing, and yet will do nothing but what is unquestionable and necessary, and what he has a determination of, and is able to supply the needs of those that seek to him, and depend upon him, upon the equity of his providence and the treasures of his grace; nay, we may say, not only "He has it," but "His will, we have it," because he has said that he will be to us a God. In the Lord the captives Jew has righteousness; grace both to sanctify their affections to them as the quality of his deliverance, and for the great and excellent work of Christ, to whom the Lord Jesus we have righteousness to recommend us to the good will of God towards us, and strength to begin and carry on the good work of God in us; he is the Fountain of both, and on him we must depend for both, must go forth in his strength, and make mention of his righteousness, Ps. lxxi. 16. (2.) That they shall have an abundant bliss and satisfaction in this; [1.] The people of the Jews shall in the Lord be justified before men, and openly glory in their God. The oppressors reproached them, loaded them with calumny, and boasted even of a right to oppress them, as abandoned of their God; but when God shall work out their deliverance, that shall be their justification from these hard usuries, and therefore they shall glory in it. [2.] All true Christ's righteousness is that which is clothed with and righteousness, in him shall be justified, and shall glory in that. Observe, First, All believers are the seed of Israel, an upright, praying seed. Secondly, The great privilege they enjoy by Jesus Christ, is, that in him, and for his sake, they are justified before God, Christ being made of God to them Righteousness, and shall be clothed with his righteousness; he8, in the Lord; and let us comply with this intention.

Vol. IV.—2 D

CHAP. XLVI.

God, by the prophet here, designing shortly to deliver them out of their captivity, prepares them for that deliverance, by possessing them with a detestation of idols, and with a believing confidence in God, even their own God. 1. Let them therefore, not look upon the idols of Babylon, who could any way obstruct their deliverance, for they should be defaced; (v. 1, 2.) but let them trust in that God who had often delivered them, to do it still, to do it now, v. 3, 4. Let them think, that as they were men of their own, images of the God of Israel, by them to worship him, as the Babylonians worship their gods, v. 5-7. Let them not be softish, (v. 8.) but have an eye to God in his word, not in an image; let them depend upon that, and upon the promises and predictions of it, and God's power to accomplish them all, v. 9. 11. And let them know that the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of none effect, v. 12, 13.

1. Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy laden: they are a burden to the weary beast. 2. They stoop; they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. 3. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: 4. And even to your old age I am he; and even to bow hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you.

We are here told, 1. That these false gods will certainly fail their worshippers, when they have most need of them, v. 1, 2. Bel and Nebo were two celebrated idols of Babylon; some make Bel to be a contraction of Baal, others rather think not, but that it was Belus, one of their first kings, who, after his death, was deified. As Bel was a deified prince, so (some think) Nebo was a deified prophet, for so Nebo signifies; so that Bel and Nebo were his Jupiter and Mercury, and Baal and Apollo. Barmabai and Paul passed by Lystra for Jupiter and Mercury. The names of these idols were taken into the names of their princes; Bel into Belshazzar's, Nebo into Nebuchadnezzar's and Nebuzaradan's, &c. These gods they had long worshipped, and in their revels praised them for their successes, (as appears, Dan. v. 4.) and they insulted over Israel, as if Bel and Nebo were too hard for Jechovah, and should detain them in captivity in defiance of their God. Now that this might be no discouragement to the poor captives, God here tells them what shall become of these idols, which they threaten them with. When Cyrus takes Babylon, down go the idols. It was usual then with conquerors to destroy the gods of the places and people they conquered, and the gods of the conqueror himself; the spoils of the Babylonians being in the room of them, ch. xxxvii. 19. Cyrus will do so; and then Bel and Nebo, that were set up on high, and looked great, bold, and erect, stoop and bow down at the feet of the soldiers that plunder their temples. And because there is a great deal of gold and silver upon them, which was intended to adorn them, but serves to exposed them, that rape them away with the rest of the spoil; the carriers' horses, or mules, are laden with them, and their other idols, to be sent, among other lumber, (for so it seems they accounted them rather than treasure,) into Persia. So far are they from being able to support their worshippers, that they are themselves a heavy load in the waggons, and a burden to the weary beast. The idols can-
not help one another; (v. 2.) They wooped, they bow down, together, they are all alike in totering things, and their day is ready to fall; their worshippers cannot help them; they could not deliver the burden out of the enemies' hand, but themselves (both the idols and the idolaters) are gone into captivity. Let not therefore God's people be afraid of either. When God's ark was taken prisoner by the Philistines, it proved a burden, not to the beasts, but to the custodiers, who were forced to run with it. Bel and Nebu are gone into captivity, their worshippers may even give their good word with them, they will never recover themselves.

II. That the true God will never fail his worshippers; "You hear what is become of Bel and Nebu, now hearken to me, O house of Jacob, (v. 3, 4.) Am I such a god as these? No, though you are brought low, and the house of Israel is but a remnant, your God has been, is, and ever will be, your powerful and faithful Protector."

1. Let God's Israel do him the justice to own that he has hitherto been kind to them, careful of them, tender over them, and has all along done well for them. Let them own, (1.) That he bare them at first; I have made. Out of what womb came they, but that of his mother, and grace, and promise? He formed them into a people, and gave them their constitution. Every good man is what God makes him. (2.) That he bare them all along; You have been borne by me from the belly, and carried from the womb. God began betimes to do them good, as soon as ever they were formed into a nation, nay, when as yet they were very few, and strangers. God took them under a special protection, and suffered no man to do them wrong, Ps. cv. 12—14. In the infancy of their state, when they were not only foolish and helpless, as children, but froward and peevish, God carried them in the arms of his power and love, bare them as upon eagles' wings, Exod. xix. 6. Deut. xxxi. 11. Moses had not patience to carry them, as the nursing father does the sucking child; (Numb. vii. 12.) but God bare them, and bare their manner, Acts xiii. 18. And as God began early to do them good, (when Israel was a child, then I loved him,) so he had constantly continued to do them good; he had carried them from the womb to this day. And we may all witness for God that he has been thus gracious to us; we have been borne by him from the belly, from the womb, else we had died from the womb, and given up the ghost, when others have but blest their belly; we have been the constant care of his kind providence, carried in the arms of his power, and in the bosom of his love and pity. The new man is so; all that in us that is born of God, is borne up by him, else it would soon fall. Our spiritual life is sustained by his grace as necessarily and constantly as our natural life by his providence. The saints have acknowledged that God has carried them from the cradle to the grave, and have encouraged themselves with the consideration of it, in their greatest straits, Ps. xcvii. 9, 10.—lxx. 5, 6, 17.

2. He will then do them the Kindness to promise that he will never leave them; he that was their First, will be their Last, that was the Author, will be the Finisher, of their well-being; (v. 4.) "You have been borne by me from the belly, nursed when you were a nursing child."

3. To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? 6. They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god: they fall down; yea, they worship. 7. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove; yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. 8. Remember this, and show yourselves men; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. 9. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; 10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: 11. Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. 12. Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: 13. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The deliverance of Israel by the destruction of Babylon, (the general subject of all these chapters,) is here insisted upon, and again promised, for the conviction both of idolaters who set up rivals with God, and of oppressors who were enemies to the people of God,

I. For the conviction of those who made and worshipped idols, especially those of Israel who did so, who would have images of their God, as the Babylonians had of theirs.

1. He challenges them either to frame an image that should be thought a resemblance of him, or to set up any being that should stand in competition with him; (v. 5.) To whom will ye liken me? It is
absurd to think of representing an infinite and eternal Spirit by the figure of any creature whatsoever; it is to change his truth into a lie, and God's glory to become like that of the idol. God will not suffer his similitude of him, nor can see his face, and live. *To whom then can we liken God?* ch. 18. 25. It is likewise absurd to think of making any creature equal with the Creator, who is infinitely above the noblest creatures, yea, or to make any comparison between the creature and the Creator, since, between infinite and finite, there can be no comparison.

2. He exposes the folly of those who made idols, and then prayed to them; v. 6, 7. (1.) They were at great charge upon their idols, and spared no cost to fit them for their purpose; *They lavish gold out of the bag,* no little will serve, and they do not care how much goes, though they pinch their families and weaken their estates by it. How does the profusion of idolaters shame the meanness of many who call themselves God's servants, but are for a religion that will cost them nothing! Some lavish gold out of the bag, to make an idol of it in the house, while others *heard up gold in the bag,* to make an idol of it in the heart; for covetousness is idolatry, as dangerous, though not so scandalous, as the other. They weigh silver in the balance, either to be in a manner of their idol, (Rev. iii. 17.) that were most sottish had so much sense as to think that God should be served with the best they had, the best they could possibly afford; they that represented him by a calf, made it a golden one, (or,) to pay the workman's wages. The service of sin often proves very expensive. (2.) They were in great care about their idols, and took no little pains about them; v. 7. *They bear them upon their shoulders,* and hire porters to do it; *they carry him,* and set him in his place, more like a dead corpse than a living god; they set him on a pedestal, and he stands; they take a great deal of pains to fasten him, and *from his place he shall not remove,* that they may know where to find him, though at the same time they know he can neither move a hand, nor stir a step, to do them any kindness. (3.) After all, they paid great respect to their idols, though they were but the works of their own hands, and the creatures of their own fancies: when the goldsmith has made it that which they please to call a god, *they fall down,* yea, *they worship it.* If they magnified themselves too much in pretending to make a god, as if they would alone for that, they vilified themselves as much as they exalted their gods; and it is quite contrary to what they knew the original of. And if they were deceived by the custom of their country in making such gods as those, they did no less deceive themselves when they cried unto them; though they knew they could not answer them, could not understand what they said to them, nor so much as reply Yea, or No, much less could they save them out of their trouble. Now, shall any that have some knowledge of, and interest in, the true and living God, thus make fools of themselves?

3. He puts it to themselves, and their own reason; *Let that judge in the case;* v. 8. "*Remember this that is been often told you,* that senseless helpless things idols are, and *show yourselves men,* men and not brutes, men and not babies; act with reason, act with resolution, act for your own interest, do what is best for your own safety, and do not disparage your own judgment as you do when you worship idols." Note, Sinners will become saints, if they would but show themselves men, if they would but support the dignity of their nature, and use aright its powers and capacities. "Many things you have been reminded of; bring them again to mind, recollect them into your memories, and resolve them there: *O ye transgressors, consider your ways, remember whence ye are fallen, and repent, and so recover yourselves*"

4. He again produces incontrovertible proofs that he is God, that he, and none besides, is so; (v. 9.) *I am God and there is none else,* none besides me; *I am God and there is none like me.* This is that which we have need to be reminded of again and again; for proofs of it, he refers,

(1.) To the sacred history; "*Remember the former things of old,* what the God of Israel did for his people in their beginnings, whether he did not that for them, which no one else could, and which the gods did not, nor could do, for their worshippers. Remember that thou art a God, and none other that I am God and there is none else."

This is a good reason why we should give glory to him as a Nounasch, and why we should not give that glory to any other, which is due to him alone, Exod. xi. 11.

(2.) To the sacred prophecy. *He is God alone,* but it is only that declares the end from the beginning, v. 10. From the beginning of time he declared the end of time, the end of all things; Enoch prophesied, *Behold, the Lord comes.* From the beginning of a nation, he declares what the end of it will be; he told Israel what should befall them in the latter days, what their end should be, and wished they were so wise as to consider it, Deut. xxxiv. 29. From the beginning of an event he declares what the end of it will be; *know my works, and when he pleases, he makes them known;* further than prophecy guides us it is impossible for us to find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end, Exod. iii. 11. He declares from ancient times the things that are not yet done. Many scripture prophecies which were declared long ago, are not yet accomplished, but the accomplishment of some in the mean time is an earnest of the accomplishing of the rest in due time. By this it appears that he is *God, and none else,* it is he, and none besides, that can say, and make his words good, "*My counsel shall stand, and all the powers of hell and earth cannot control or dissuade it,* nor all their policies correct or counteract it." As God's operations are all according to his counsels, so his counsels shall all be fulfilled in his operations, and none of his measures shall be broken, none of his designs shall miscarry. This yields abundant satisfaction to those who have bound up all their comforts in God's counsels, that his counsel shall undoubtedly stand; and if we are come to this, that whatever pleases God pleases us, nothing can contribute more to make us easy than to be assured of this, that *God will do all his pleasures,* Ps. cxxxv. 6.

The accomplishment of this particular prophecy, which relates to the elevation of Cyrus, and his agency in the deliverance of God's people out of their captivity, is mentioned for the confirmation of this truth, that the Lord is God, and there is none else; and that the same thing that shall shortly come to pass, v. 11. God by his counsel calls a ravenous bird from the east, a bird of prey, Cyrus, who, they say, had a nose like the beak of a hawk or eagle, to which some think this alludes, or, as others say, to the eagle which was his standard, as it was afterward that of the Romans, to which there is supposed to be a reference, Matth. xxiv. 28. Cyrus came from the east at God's command, and not under the guidance and of those that have hosts at command; and if God gave him a call, he will give him success. He is the man that shall execute God's counsel, though he comes from a far country, and knows nothing of the matter. Note, Even those that know not, and mind not, God's revealed will, are made use of to fulfill the counsels of his secret will, which shall all be punctually accomplished in their season by whose hand he pleases. That which is here added, to ratify this particular prediction, may abundantly
to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel; “I have spoken it by my servants the prophets, and what I have spoken is just the same with what I have purposed.” For though God has many things in his purposes, which are not in his prophecies, he has nothing in his prophecies but what are in his purposes; and he will do it, though it may change his mind, without the help of any creature to control him. Observe with what majesty he says it, as one having authority; “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; Dictum factum—No sooner said than done; I have purposed it, and he does not say, “I will take care it shall be done,” but, “I will do it.” Heaven and earth shall pass away sooner than one tittle of the word of God.

As I. For the conviction of those that daringly oppose the counsel of God, assurance is here given not only that they shall be accomplished, but they shall be accomplished very shortly, v. 12, 13. This is addressed to the stout-hearted, that is, either, 1. The proud and obstinate Babylonians, that are far from righteousness, far from doing justice, or showing mercy, to those they have power over; they say they will never let the oppressed go free, but will still detain them in spite of their petitions or God’s predictions; that are far from any thing of eleemosy or compassion to the miserable; or, 2. The unhumbled Jews, that have been long under the hammer; long in the furnace, but are not broken, are not melted, that, like the unbelieving, murmuring Israelites in the wilderness, think what is far from God’s righteousness, from the performance of his promise, and his appearing to judge for them, and by their distrusts set themselves at yet a further distance from it, and keep good things from themselves, as their fathers, who could not enter into the land of promise because of unbelief. This is applicable to the gospel of Christ; when they rejected the gospel of Christ, though they followed after the law of righteousness, they attained not to righteousness, because they sought it not of faith, Rom. ix. 31, 32. They perished, far from righteousness; and it was because they were stout-hearted, Rom. x. 3.

Now to them God says, that, whatever they think, the one in presumption, the other in despair, (1.) Salvation shall be certainly wrought for God’s people. If men have done justice, God will, and his righteousness shall effect that for them, which men’s righteousness would not reach to. He will place salvation in Zion, he will make Jerusalem a place of safety and defence to all those who will plant themselves there; thence shall salvation go forth for Israel his glory. God glories in his Israel; and he will be glorified in the salvation he designs to work out for them; it shall redound greatly to his honour. This salvation shall be in Zion, for thence the gospel shall take rise, (ch. ii. 3.) thither the Redeemer comes, (ch. lix. 20. Rom. xi. 26.) and it is Zion’s King that has salvation, Zech. ix. 9. (2.) It shall be very shortly wrought; this is especially insisted on with those who thought it at a distance; “I bring near my righteousness, nearer than ye think of, perhaps it is shall return all when your stones are greatest, and your enemies most injurious; it shall not be far off when there is occasion for it, Ps. lxxxv. 9. Behold, the Judge stands before the door. My salvation shall not tarry any longer than till it is ripe, and you are ready for it; and therefore though it tarry, wait for it; wait patiently, for he that shall come, shall come, and will not tarry.”

CHAP. XLVI.

Infinite Wisdom could have ordered things so that Israel might have been released, and yet Babylon unfruit; but made to pave the way to Israel’s release, that ruin is here, in this chapter, largely foretold, not to gratify a spirit of revenge in the people of God, who had been used barbarously by them, but to awaken the fear of the nations concerning their own deliverance, and to be a type of the downfall of that great enemy of the New Testament church, which, in the Revelation, goes under the name of Babylon. In this chapter, we have, 1. The prospect of the ruin threatened; that Babylon should be brought down to the dust, and made completely miserable, should fall from the height of prosperity into the depth of misery, v. 1—5. The ruin shall be prepared to bring this ruin upon them; 1. Their cruelty to the people of God, v. 6. 2. Their pride and carnal security, v. 7—9. 3. Their confidence in themselves, and contempt of God, v. 10. 4. The use of magic arts, and the means they take upon each other, which should be so far from standing them in any stead, that they should but hasten their ruin, v. 11—15.

1. COME down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. 2. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. 3. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. 4. As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. 5. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms. 6. I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thy hand: thou didst show them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

In these verses God, by the prophet, sends a messenger even to Babylon, like that of Jonah v Nineveh; “The time is at hand when Babylon shall be destroyed.” Fair warning is thus given her, that she may by repentance prevent the ruin, and there be no further longsuffering of her tranquillity. We may observe here, 1. God’s controversy with Babylon; we will begin with that, for there all the calamity begins; she has made God her Enemy, and then who can befriend her? Let her know that the righteous Judge to whom vengeance belongs, has said, (v. 3.) I will take vengeance. She has provoked God, and shall be reckoned with for it; when the measure of her iniquities is full. Wo to these on whom God comes to take vengeance; for who knows the power of his anger, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands? Were it a man like ourselves, who would be revenged on us, we might hope to be a match for him, either to make our escape from him, or to make our part good with him. But he says, “I will not meet thee as a man; but with the conceptions of a man, but I will be to thee as a lion, and a young lion” (Hos. v. 14.) or, rather, not with the strength of a man, which is easily resisted, but with the power of a God, which may not be resisted. Not with the justice of a man, which may be bribed or biassed, or mollified by a foolish pity, but with the justice of a God, which is strict and severe, and can never be evaded. As in pardoning the penitent, so in punishing the impenitent, he is God, and not man, Hos. xi. 9.

2. The particular ground of this controversy; we are sure that there is cause for it, and it is just...
cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, (Jer. 1.28.)

it is for violence done to Zion, Jer. ii. 35. God will plead with his people, and among them. It is also

well-known (v. 6) that God had, in wrath, deluged

every thing of the hands of the Babylonians, had

make use of them for the correction of his children,

and had by their means polluted his inheritance;

It hath brought upon himself a great calamity.

Ps. lixxix. 1. Herein God was righteous; but

the Babylonians carried the matter too far, and

and when they had them in their hands, (triumphing to

see a people that had been so much in reputation for

wisdom, holiness, and honour, brought thus low,

with a base and servile spirit they trampled upon

them, and shone them no mercy, no, not the common

instances of humanity, which the miserable

are entitled to purely by their misery. They used

them barbarously, and with an air of contempt, nay,

and of complacency in their calamities. They were

brought under the yoke; but as if that were not

enough, they laid the yoke on very heavily, adding

affliction to the afflicted. Nay, they laid it on the

ancient, the elders in years, who were past their

labour, and must sink under a yoke which these in

their maturest strength would never have borne.

Elders in office, those that had been judges and

magistrates, and persons of the first rank, took a pride

in putting them to the meanest, hardest drudgery.

Jeremiah laments this, that the faces of elders were

not honoured, Lam. v. 12. Nothing brings a surer and

sorer ruin upon any people than cruelty, espe-

cially to God's Israel.

3. The terror of this controversy; she has reason to

tremble when she is told who it is that has this

quarrel with her, v. 4. "As for our Redeemer, our

God, that undertakes to plead our cause as the

Avenger of our blood; he has two names which

speak not only comfort to us, but terror to our

adversaries." (1.) "He is the Lord of hosts, that has

all the creatures at his command, and therefore has

all power both in heaven and in earth." Wo to those

against whom the Lord fights, for the whole

creation is at war with them. (2.) "He is the Holy

One of Israel, a God in covenant with us, who has

his residence among us, and will faithfully perform

all the promises he has made to us." God's power

and holiness are engaged against Babylon, and for

Zion. This may fitly be applied to Christ, our

glorious Redeemer; he is both Lord of the hosts, and

the Holy One of Israel.

4. The consequences of it to Babylon; she is called

a virgin, because so she thought herself,

though she was the mother of harlots, beautiful as a

virgin, and courted by all about her; she had been
called tender and delicate, (v. 1.) and the lady of

kingdoms; (v. 5.) but now the case is altered.

(1.) Her honour is gone, and she must be forced

to wear the rags of the world, and sit at the upper

end of the world, sat in state, and sat at ease, must

now come down, and sit in the dust, as very mean,

and a deep mourner, must sit on the ground, for

she shall be so emptied and impoverished, that she

shall not have a seat left her to sit upon.

(2.) Her power is gone, and she must bid farewell
to her dominion; she shall rule no more in the

world; she and her shall have none to come to her

neighbours; there is no throne, none for thee, O daugh-
ter of the Chaldeans. Note, Those that abuse their

honour and power, provoke God to deprive them of

it, and to make them come down, and sit in the dust.

(3.) Her ease and pleasure are gone; she shall no

more be called tender and delicate as she has been,

for she shall not only be deprived of all those things

with which she pampered herself, but shall be put

to hard service, and made to feel both want and

penance, which should be more than doubly grievous
to her, who once would not venture to set so much

as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and
delicacy, Deut. xxviii. 56. It is our wisdom not to

use ourselves to be tender and delicate, because we

know not how hardly others may use us before we

die, nor what straits we may be reduced to.

(4.) Her liberty is gone, and she is brought into

a state of servitude and as sore a bondage as she in her

prosperity had her brother to. 2. She shall be the

great men of Babylon must now receive the same

law from the conquerors, that they used to give to

the conquered; "Take the millstones, and grind

meal, (v. 2.) set to work, to hard labour," (like

beating hemp in Bridewell,) "which will make thee

sweat so that thou must throw off all thy head

dresses, and uncover thy locks." When they were

driven from one place to another, at the capricious

humours of their masters, they must be forced to

wade up to the middle through the waters; to make

bare the leg, and uncover the thigh, that they might

pass over the rivers, which would be a great morti-

fication to them that used to ride in state; but let

them not complain, for just thus they had used their

captives; and with what measure they then meted,

it is now measured to them again. Let those that

have power use it with temper and moderation,

considering that the spade which is uppermost will

be under.

(5.) All her glory, and all her glorying are gone.

Instead of glory, she has ignominy; (v. 3.) Thy

nakedness shall be uncovered, and thy shame shall

be seen; according to the base and barbarous usage

they commonly gave their captives, to whom, for

covetousness of their clothes, they did not leave rags

sufficient to cover their nakedness; so void were

they of the modesty, as well as of the pity, due to

the human nature. Instead of glorying, she sits

silent, and gets into darkness, (v. 5.) ashamed to

show her face, for she has quite lost her credit, and

shall no more be called the lady of kingdoms. Note,

God can make these sit silent, that used to make

the greatest noise in the world, and send them into

darkness, that used to make the greatest figure.

Let him that glories, therefore, glory in a God that

changes not, and not in any worldly wealth, plea-

sure, or honour, which are subject to change.

7. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for

ever: so that thou didst not lay these things to

thy heart, neither didst remember the lat-
	er end of it. 8. Therefore hear now this

thou that art given to pleasures, that dwell

est, carelessly; that sayest in thine heart, I am,

and none else besides me: I shall not

sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of

children: 9. But these two things shall

come to thee in a moment, in one day, the

loss of children, and widowhood: they shall

come upon thee in their perfection for the

multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great

abundance of thine enchantments. 10. For

thou hast trusted in thy wickedness; thou

 hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and

thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and

thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and

none else besides me. 11. Therefore shall

evil come upon thee: thou shalt not know

from whence it riseth: and mischief shall
fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off; and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. 12. Stand now with thy enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13. Thou art weary in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. 14. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. 15. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.

Babylon, now doomed to ruin, is here justly upbraided with her pride, luxury, and security, in the day of her prosperity, and the confidence she had in her own wisdom and forecast, and particularly in the prognostications and counsels of the astrologers. These things are mentioned, both to justify God in bringing these judgments upon her; and to mortify her, and to put her to so much the greater shame, under these judgments; for when God comes forth to take vengeance, glory belongs to him, but confusion to the sinner.

I. The Babylonians are here upbraided with their pride and haughtiness, and the conceit they had of themselves, because of their wealth and power, and the vast extent of their dominion; it was the language both of the government, and of the body of the people; Thou sayest in thine heart, (and God, who searches all hearts, can tell men what they say there, though they never speak it out,) I am, and none else beside me, v. 8. 10. The repetition of this part of the charge intimates that they said it often, and that it was very offensive to God. It is the very word that God has often said concerning himself. I am, and none else beside me; denoting self-existence, his infinite and incomparable perfections, and his sole supremacy; all this Babylon professes to. No wonder if she that assumed a power to make what gods and goddesses she pleased for the people to worship, made herself one among the rest. It is presumption to say of any creature, It is, and there is not its like, there is none beside it; for creation is not upon a level with one another; but it is insufferable arrogance for any to say so of themselves, and an evidence of their self-ignorance. II. They are upbraided with their luxury and love of ease; (v. 8.) "Thou that art given to pleasures, art a slave to them, art them as in thine element, and, that thou mayest enjoy them without disturbance or interruption, dwellest carelessly, and layest up for thyself a nest of rest. Yet are great temptations to sensuality, and where there is fulness of bread, there is commonly abundance of idleness. But if those that are given to pleasures, and dwell carelessly, would but hear this, that for all these things God shall bring them into judgment, it would be a dam to their nath, an alay to their pleasure, and would find them something to be in care about. III. They are upbraided with their carnal security, and their vain confidence of the perpetuity of their pomp and pleasures. This is much insisted on here. Observe, 1. The cause of their security. They therefore thought themselves safe and out of danger, not because they were ignorant of the uncertainty of all earthly enjoyments, and the inevitable fate that attends states and kingdoms, as well as particular persons, but because they did not lay this to heart, did not at all consider it, and had no fear of it. 2. Their state when God came upon them. They did not remember the latter end of it; nor the latter end of their prosperity, that it is a fading flower, and will wither; but the latter end of their iniquity, that it will be bitterness, that the day will come when their injustice and oppression must be reckoned for and punished. She did not remember her latter end; so some read it; she forgot that her day will come to fall, and what would be in the end hereof. It was the ruin of Jerusalem, (Lam. i. 9.) that she remembered not her last end, therefore she came down wonderfully; and it was Babylon's ruin too. Therefore the children of men are wise, and think themselves safe, in their sinful ways, because they never think of death, and judgment, and their future state.
selves out of the reach of adverse fate. (2.) "No one sees me when I do amiss, and therefore there will be none to call me to an account." It is common for sinners to promise themselves impunity, because they promise themselves secrecy, in their wicked ways. They trust to their wicked arts and designs to stand them in stead, because they think they have carried them on so plausibly that none can discern the wickedness and deceit of them.

It shall be their ruin; and it will be, (1.) A complete ruin, the ruin of all their comforts and confidences; "These two things shall come upon thee, (the very two things that thou didst set at defiance,) loss of children, and widows." Both thy princes and thy people shall be cut off, so that thou shalt be no more a government, no more a nation." Note, God often brings up to ruin the basest and greatest of men, who are afraid of whatever which they least feared, and thought themselves in least danger of; "They shall come upon thee in their perfection, with all their aggravating circumstances, and without any thing to ally or mitigate them.

Afflictions to God's children are not afflictions in perfection. Widowhood is not to them a calamity in perfection, for they have this to comfort them, that they have no children. Miserable it had been for children of Israel, if he had been better to them than ten sons; but on his enemies they come in perfection. Widowhood and loss of children are either of them great griefs, but both together great indeed. Naomi thinks she may well be called Mara, when she is left both of her sons and of her husband; (Ruth 1. 5.) and yet on her these evils did not come in perfection; for she had two daughters-in-law, yet she were comforted to; but on Babylon they come in perfection, she has no comfort remaining. (2.) It shall be a sudden and surprising ruin. The evil shall come in one day, nay in a moment, which will make it much the more terrible, especially to those that were so very secure. "Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt have neither time nor way to provide against it, or to prepare for it; for thou shalt not know whence it rises, and therefore shalt not know where to stand upon thy guard." Thou shalt not know the morning thereof, so the Hebrew phrase is. We know just when and where the day will break, and the sun rise, but we know not what the day, when it is come, will bring forth, nor when or where trouble will arise; perhaps the storm may come even now, that is before we can reflect on what we thought of. Babylon pretended to great wisdom and knowledge, (v. 10.) but with all her knowledge cannot foresee, nor with all her wisdom prevent, the ruin threatened; "Desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, as a thief in the night, which thou shalt not know, which thou little thoughtest of." Fair warning was indeed given them by this and other prophets of the Lord, of this desolation; but they slighted that warning, and would give no credit to it, and therefore justly is it so ordered, that they should have no other notice of it, but that, partly through their own security, and partly through the swiftness and subtlety of the enemy, when it came it should be a perfect surprise to them. Those that slight the warnings of the written word, let them not expect any other premonition. (3.) It shall be a complete ruin, in which they shall come to no assistance; "Mischief shall come upon thee so suddenly, that thou shalt have no time to turn thee in, so strongly, that thou shalt not be able to make head against it, and to put it off and save thyself." There is no opposing of the judgments of God when they come with commission. Babylon herself, with all her wealth, and power, and multitude, is not able to withstand the mischief that comes.

IV. They are upbraided with the utter invidiousness, and insufficiency of all their pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether with the help of their enchantments, which the Chaldeans, above any other nation, were notorious for, and from them other nations borrowed all their learning of that kind.

I. This is here spoken of as one of their proving sins, which would bring the judgments of God upon them, v. 9. These evils shall come upon thee to punish thee for the multitude of thy sorceries, and the great abundance of thine enchantments. Witchcraft is a sin in its own nature, excelling heathen; those who are good at it are deceivers; it is a sin by giving the gift of God to evil ends. They will give their gift to God only, making God's enemy our guide, and the father of lies our oracle; in Babylon it was a national sin, and had the protection and countenance of the government; conjurers, for that appears, were their privy counsellors, and prime ministers of state. And shall not God visit for these things? Observe what a multitude, what a great abundance of sorceries and enchantments there were none in Babylon such a bewitching sin this was, that, when it was once admitted, it spread like wildfire, and they never knew any end of it; the deceived and the deceivers both increased strangely.

II. It is here spoken of as one of their vain confidences, which they relied much upon, but should be deceived in, for it would not serve so much as to make their judgments coming, much less to guard against them.

(1.) They are here upbraided with the mighty pains they had taken about their sorceries and enchantments; Thou hast laboured in them from thy youth. They trained up their young men in these studies, and those that applied themselves to them were indefatigable in their labours about them; they were ever making concoctions, and casting enchantments. Well, let them stand up now with their enchantments, and try their skill in the critical moment. Let them make a stand, if they can, in opposition to the invading enemy, let them stand to offer their service to their country; but to what purpose? Thou art vexed in the multitude of thy enchantments of this kind, thou hast advised with them all, but hast received no satisfaction from them; the different schemes they have erected, and the different judgments they have given, have but increased thy perplexity, and tired thee out." In the multitude of such counsellors there is no safety.

(2.) They are upbraided with the variety they had of such kind of people among them, v. 13. They had their astrologers, or viewers of the heavenly bodies, which were named almanack-makers, who pretended to hold the wisdom and power of God in them, but, under pretence of foretelling future events by them, they viewed the heavens, and forgot him that made them, and set their dominion on the earth, (Job. xxxviii. 33.) and has himself dominion over them, for he rides on the heavens. They had their star-gazers, who, by the motions of the stars, their conjunctions and oppositions, were to read the doom of states and kingdoms; they had their monthly prognosticators, their almanack-makers, that told what weather it should be, or what news they should have each month. The great stock they had of these, was what they valued themselves much upon; but they were all cheats, and their art a sham. I confess, I see not how the judicial astrology which some pretended to, did not make them as David did under take to prophesy concerning things to come, could be distinguished from that of the Chaldeans, and therefore how it can escape the censure and contempt which this text lays that under; yet I fear there are some who study their almanacks, and regard them and their prophesies, more than their Bibles and the prophecies there.

(3.) To these they are upbraided with the utter invidiousness, and insufficiency of all these pretenders to do them any kindness in the day of their distress. Let them see whether with the help of their enchantments...
they can prevail against their enemies, or profit themselves, inspite their own forces, or despit those that came against them, v. 12. Let them see how those can do this, if they have the power of a trade of divination: let them stand up, and either by their power save thee from these evils that are against thee, or by their foresight make such a discovery of them beforehand, that thou mayest by needful precautions save thyself; as Elisha, by notifying to the king of Israel the motions of the Syrian army, enabled him to save himself not only once, v. 13, but six times, in the course of a year. This art of the Jews was literally fulfilled, when, the night that Babylon was taken, and Belshazzar slain, all his astrologers, soothsayers, and wise men, were quite confounded with the handwriting on the wall, that pronounced the fatal sentence, Dan. v. 8. 2. They are upbraided with the fall of the wise men themselves in the common ruin, v. 14. They are charged with their standing in their stead, who cannot secure themselves; they are as stabbled at the best, worthless and useless, and they shall be as stabbled before a consuming fire. The Persians, to make room for their own wise men, will cut off those of Babylon, that fire shall burn them, and they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame. They can expect no other than to be devoured, who by their sins make themselves fuel to a devouring fire. When God kindles a fire among them, it shall not be a coal to warm at, and a fire to sit before, but a coal to burn them. Or, rather, it denotes that they shall be utterly consumed by the judgments of God, burnt quite to ashes, and there shall not remain one live coal to do any body any service; for when God judges, he will overcome. Lastly, They are upbraided with their mercantile deals, v. 15, such as they dealt with from their youth, either, [1.] In a way of consultation; these astrologers that dealt in the black art, they always loved to be dealing with, and they were in effect their merchants; fortune-telling was one of the best trades in Babylon, and those that followed that trade, probably lived as much, and got as much money as the richest merchants; yet, when some of them were devoured, others fled their country, every one to his quarter, and there was none to save Babylon. Miserable comforters are they all. Or, [2.] In a way of commerce. As their astrologers, with whom they had laboured, failed them, so did their merchants; they took care to secure their own effects, and then valued not what became of Babylon. They expended much of their money in their own safety, but none would offer to lend an helping hand, not to a city by which they had got so much money. Every one was for himself, but few for his friends. The New Testament Babylon is lamented by the merchants that were made rich by her, but they very prudently stand afar off to lament her, (Rev. xvii. 15.) not willing to suffer the destruction of one who used to go by and bless her. He that is by help and prayer deals with one that will be a very present help in time of trouble.

CHAP. XLVIII.

God having, in the foregoing chapter, reckoned with the Babylonians, and showed them their sins, and the description that was contemplated for them for their punishment, he now proceeds to show that he hates sin wherever he finds it, and will not con- vince it in his own people, comes, in this chapter, to show the house of Jacob their sins, but, withal, the mercy God had in store for them notwithstanding; and he therefore sets their sins in order before them, that by their repentance and reformation they might be prepared for that mercy. 1. He charges them with hypocrisy in that which was godliness and holiness in the men of evil, especially in their idolatry, notwithstanding the many convincing proofs God had given them, that he is God alone, v. 1-8. 2. He assures them that their deliver-

ance would be wrought purely for the sake of God's own name, and not for any merit of theirs, v. 9-11. He encourages them to depend purely upon God's power and promise for this deliverance, v. 12-15. 3. He shows them that as it was by their own sin that they brought themselves into captivity, so it would be only by the grace and power of God that they should be delivered from their present misery, v. 16-19. 4. He proclaims their release, yet with a proviso that the wicked shall have no benefit by it, v. 20-22.

1. HEAR ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness. 2. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is his name. 3. I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. 4. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; 5. I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. 6. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. 7. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them. 3. Yea, thou hearest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb. We may observe here,

1. The hypocritical profession which many of the Jews made of religion and relation to God; to those who made such a profession, the prophet is here ordered to apply himself for their conviction and humiliation, that they might own God's justice in what he had brought upon them. Now observe here,

1. How high their profession of religion soared, what a fair show they made in the flesh, and how far they went toward heaven, what a goodly work they wrought, and what a great deal of greatness and glory was thrown off as that of a very bad heart. (1.) They were the house of Jacob, they had a place and a name in the visible church, Jacob have I loved, Jacob is God's chosen, and they are not only retainers to his family, but descendants from him. (2.) They were called by the name of Israel, an honourable name; they were of that people to whom pertained both the giving of the law, and the promise of Israel signifies a prince with God; the people prided themselves in being of that prince's race. (3.) They came forth out of the waters of Judah, and thence were called Jews; they were of the royal tribe, the tribe of which Shiloh was to come, the tribe that adhered to God when the rest revolted. (4.) They flaire by the
217

2. Because he would anticipate their boastings of themselves and their idols. (1.) God by his prophets told them beforehand of their deliverance, lest they should attribute the doing of it to their idols. Thus he saw it necessary to secure the glory of that to himself, which otherwise would have been given by some of them to their graven images; "I spake of it," (says God,) "lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol has done it, or has commanded it to be done," v. 5. There were those that would be apt to say so, and so would be confirmed in their idolatry by that which was intended to cure them of it. But they would now be forever prevented from this; for God would have forsworn it, and the prophets of the idols would have foretold it; but the prophets of the Lord having foretold it, it was no doubt the power of the Lord that effected it. (2.) God forsook it by his prophets, lest they should assume the foresight of it to themselves. Those that were not so profane as to have ascribed the thing itself to an idol, were yet so proud as to have presumed that they should have had the foresight of it, if God had not been beforehand with them and spoken first; "Lest thou shouldst say, Behold, I knew them." Thus vain men, who would be thought wise, commonly undervalue a thing which is really great and surprising, with this suggestion, that it was no more than what they expected, and they knew it would come to this. To anticipate this, and that this boasting might be prevented that by their own sagacity they foresaw what God did, is a great argument of their ignorance. God has said and done enough to prevent men's boastings of themselves, and that no flesh may glory in his presence, which, if it have not the intended effect, will aggravate the sin and ruin of the proud; and, sooner or later, every mouth shall be stopped, and all flesh shall become silent before God.

3. Because he would leave them insensible in their obstinacy. Therefore he took this pains with them, because he knew they were obstinate, v. 4.
He knew they were so obstinate and perverse, that if he had not supported the doctrine of providence by prophesy, they would have had the impudence to do it, and would have said, that their idol had done that which God did. He knew very well, (1.) How wilful they would be, and how fully bent they would be upon that which is evil; I knew that thou wouldest do so; the word is. There were prophesies as well as precepts, which God gave them because of the hardness of their hearts; "Thy neck is an iron neck, and thy brow brass: Thou art given unto idleness, and sold to the work of God's commandments, unapt to turn, and look back upon his dealings with thee, or look up to his displeasure against thee; not flexible to the will of God, nor pliable to his intentions, not manageable by his word or providence. Thy brow is brass; thou art impudent, and cannot but blush; insolent, and wilt not fear or give back, but will thrust on in the way of thine heart." God uses means to bring men to comply with him, though he knows they are obstinate. (2.) How deceitful they would be, and insincere in that which is good, v. 8. God sent his prophets to them, but they did not hear, they would not know, and it was no more than was expected, considering what they had been; Thou wouldest, and not miscalled, a transgressor from the womb. Even since the first, they were so prone to idolatry; they brought with them out of Egypt a strange addictedness to that sin; and they were murmurers as soon as ever they began their march to Canaan. They were justly upbraided with it then, Deut. ix. 7, 24. Therefore I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously. God foresaw their apostasy, and gave this reason for it, that he had always found them false and fickle, Deut. xxxi. 16, 27, 29. This is applicable to particular persons; we are all born children of disobedience, we were called transgressors from the womb, and therefore it is easy to foresee that we will deal treacherously, very treacherously. Where original sin, actual sin will follow of course. God knows it, and yet deals not with us according to our deserts.

9. For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. 10. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. 11. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another. 12. Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he: I am the first, also am the last. 13. My hand also laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath hasted the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. 14. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him; he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. 15. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. The deliverance of God's people out of their captivity in Babylon was a thing upon many accounts so improbable, that there was need of line upon line for the encouragement of the faith and hope of God's people concerning it. Two things were discouraging to them; their own unworthiness that God should do it for them, and the many difficulties in the thing itself; hence these discouragements are removed, for here is,

1. A reason why God would do it for them, though they were unworthy; not for their sake, be it known to them, but for his name's sake, for his own sake, v. 9.—11. 1. It is true, they had been very provoking, and God had been justly angry with them—their captivity was a judgment on them; when he had them in Babylon, he had left them to pine away and perish there, and made the desolations of their country perpetual, he had but dealt with them according to their sins, and it was what such a sinful people might expect from an angry God. "But," says God, "I will defer mine anger," (or, rather, stifle and suppress it,) "I will make it appear that I am slow to wrath, and will refrain from thee, not pour upon thee what I justly might, that I should cut thee off from being a people." And why will God thus stay his hand? For my name's sake; because this people was called by his name, and made profession of his name, and, if they were cut off, the enemies would blaspheme his name. It is for my praise; because it would remove the reproach that has been cast upon his name, and reprove them and if he continued them to be him a people, they might be to him for a name and a praise.

2. It is true, they were very corrupt and ill-disposed, but God would himself reprove them, and make them fit for the mercy he intended for them; "I have refined thee, that thou mightest be made a vessel of honour." Though he does not find them meet for his favour, he will make them so. And this accounts for his bringing them into the trouble, and continuing them in it so long as he did; it was not to cut them off, but to do them good; it was to refine them, but not as silver, or with silver, not so thoroughly as men refine their silver, which they continue in the furnace till all the dross is separated from it; if God should take that course with them, they should be always in the furnace, for they are all dross, and, as such, might justly be put away, (Ps. cxxix. 119.) as reprobate silver, Jer. vi. 30. He therefore takes them as they are, refined in part only, and not thoroughly. "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction, I have made thee a choice one by the good which the affliction has done thee, and then designed thee for great things." Many have been brought home to God as chosen vessels, and a good work of grace been begun in them, in the furnace of affliction. Affliction is no bar to God's choice, but subservient to his purpose.

3. It is true, they could not pretend to merit at God's hand so great a favour as their deliverance out of Babylon, which would put such an honour upon them, and bring them so much joy; Therefore will I gather thee, saith the Lord, even mine own sake, will I do it, v. 11. See how the emphasis is laid upon that, for it is a reason that cannot fail, and therefore the resolution grounded upon it cannot fail to the ground. God will do it, not because he owes them such a favour, but to save the honour of his own name, that that may not be polluted by the insolent triumphs of the beholders, who, in triumphing over the honour of Israel, thought they triumphed over the God of Israel, and imagined their gods too hard for him. This was plainly the language of Belshazzar's revels, when he profaned the holy vessels of God's temple at the same time when he praised his idols, (Dan. v. 2.) and of the Babylonians' demand, (Ps. xxxivii. 5.) Sing us one of the songs of Zion. God will therefore deliver his people, but he will not suffer their glory to be thus given to another. Mess. pleaded this often with
God, Lord, what will the Egyptians say? Note, God is jealous for the honour of his own name, and will not suffer the wrath of man to proceed any further than he will make it turn to his praise. And it is matter of comfort to God's people, that, whatever comes of them, God will secure his own honour; and, as far as is necessary to that, God will work deliverance for them.

11. Here is a proof that God could do it for them, that is, he is able to help themselves, and the thing seemed altogether impracticable. Let Jacob and Israel hearken to this, and believe it, and take the comfort of it. They are God's called, called according to his purpose, called by him out of Egypt, (Hos. xi. 1) and now out of Babylon, a people whom with a distinguishing favour he calls by name, and calls to; there are his called, for they are called to him, called by his name, and called his: and therefore he will look after them; and they may be assured that as he will deliver them for his own sake, so he will deliver them by his own strength; they need not fear them, for,

1. He is God alone, and the eternal God; (v. 12.) "I am he, who can do what I will, and will do what is right and good in my own eyes, and can command my will, and less contend with; I am the First, I am also the Last." Who can be too quick for him that is the First, or prevent him? Who can be too hard for him that is the Last, and will keep the field against all opposers, and will reign till they are all made his footstool? What room then is left to doubt of their deliverance, when he undertakes it, whose design he will fulfill for him the First; that will be well executed, for he is the Last: as for this God, his work is perfect.

2. He is the God that made the world, and he that did that can do any thing, v. 13. Look we down? We see the earth firm under us, and feel it so, it was his hand that laid out the foundation of it. Look we up? We see the heavens spread out as a canopy over our heads, and it was his hand has spread them, that spanned them, that stretched them out, and did it by an exact measure, as the workman sometime metes out his work by spans. This intimates that God has a vast reach, and can compass designs of the greatest extent. If the palm of his right hand (so the margin reads it) has gone so far as to stretch out the heavens, what will he do with the earth? Yet he has not only made the heavens and the earth, and therefore in whom our hope and help is, omnipotent, (Ps. cxxxv. 8.) but he has the command of all the hosts of both; when he calls them into his service, to go on his errand, they stand up together, they come at the call, they answer to their names; "Here we are, what wilt thou have us to do?" They stand up, not only in reverence to their Creator, but in a readiness to execute his orders; they stand up together unanimously, concordantly, and helping one another in the service of their Maker. If God therefore will deliver his people, he cannot be at a loss for instruments to be employed in it.

3. He has already foretold it, and, having infinite knowledge, so that he foresaw it, no doubt he has almighty power to effect it; "All ye of the house of Jacob, assemble yourselves, and hear this for your comfort, Which among them, among the gods of the heathen, or their wise men, has declared these things, or could declare them?" v. 14. They had no foresight of them at all, but those who consulted them were very confident that Babylon should be a lady for ever, and Israel a perpetual slave; and their oracles did not give them the least hint to the contrary, to undeceive them; whereas God by his prophets had given notice to the Jews, long before, of their captivity, and the destruction of Jerusalem; as he had now likewise given them notice of their release; (v. 15.) I even, I have spoken, and I will not have spoken it, if he could not have made it good; none could outsee him, and therefore we may be sure that none could outdo him.

4. The person is pitched upon, who is to be employed in this service, and the measures are concerted in the divine counsels, which are unalterable. Cyrus is the man who must do it: and it tends much to strengthen our assurance that a thing shall be done, when it is afterwards done by the partaker in it, and by whom. It is not left at uncertainty who shall do it, but the matter is fixed: (1.) It is one whom God is well pleased in, upon this account, because he is designed for this service; The Lord has loved him; (v. 14.) he has done him this favour, this honour to make him an instrument of the redemption of his people, and to carry the work of the great Redeemer, God's beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. Those God does a great kindness to, and has a great kindness for, whom he makes serviceable to his church. (2.) It is one whom God will give authority and commission to; I have called him, have given him a sufficient warrant, and therefore will bear him out. (3.) It is one whom God will by a series of miraculous events make a way for; and Cyrus brought him from a far country, brought him to engage against Babylon, brought him step by step, quite beyond his own intentions." Whom God calls he will bring, will cause them to come, (so the word is,) to come at the call. (4.) It is one whom God will own, and give success to. Cyrus will do God's pleasure in Babylon, the which it is his pleasure should be done, and which he will be pleased with the doing of, though Cyrus has ends of his own to serve, and has no regard either to the will of God, or to his favour, in the doing of it. His arm, Cyrus's army, and in it God's arm, shall come, and be upon the Chaldeans, to bring them down; (v. 14.) for if God call him, and bring him, he will certainly make his way prosperous, v. 15. Then we may hope to prosper in our way, when we follow a divine call and guidance.

16. Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. 17. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go. 18. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea; 19. Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me. 20. Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. 21. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. 22. There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.

Here, as before, Jacob and Israel are summoned to hearken to the prophet speaking in God's name.
or rather to God speaking in and by the prophet, and that as a type of the great Prophet by whom God has in these last days spoken unto us, and that is sufficient; Come ye near therefore, and hear this. Note, These that would hear and understand the word of God be not to come near, and approach to him; let them come as near as they can; let those that have hearkened to the temple, now come near, and hear this, that they may be confirmed in their resolutions to serve God. Those that draw nigh to God may depend upon this, that his secret shall be with them. Here, I. He always spoke plainly to them, from the beginning, by Moses and all the prophets; I have not spoken in secret, but publicly, from the top of Mount Sinai, and in the chief places of conourse, the solemn assemblies of their tribes; he did not deliver his oracles obscurely and ambiguously, but so that they might be understood, Hab. ii. 2. He had always acted wonderfully for them; From the time that they were first formed into a people, there am I, there have I been resident among them, and presiding in their affairs. He sent them prophets, raised them up judges, and frequently appeared for them. And therefore I will be still with him that has been with his people hitherto, will be to the end.

II. The prophet himself, as a type of the great Prophet, asserts his own commission to deliver this message; Now the Lord God (the same that spoke from the beginning, and did not speak in secret,) has by his Spirit sent me, v. 16. The Spirit of God is upon me, Isa. vi. 9, and having a divine authority to send prophets. Note, Whom God sends the Spirit sends. Those whom God commissions for any service, the Spirit in some measure qualifies for it: and those may speak boldly, and must be heard obediently, whom God and his Spirit send. As that which the prophet says to the same purport with this (ch. xi. 1.) is ascribed to God, (Isa. xiv. 23.) so may this be; the Lord sent him, and he had the Spirit without measure.

III. God by the prophet sends them a gracious message for their support and comfort under their affliction. The preface to this message is both awful and encouraging; (v. 17.) Thus saith Jehovah, the eternal God thy Redeemer, that has often been so, that he engages him, for he gives an understanding. Whom God redeems, he teaches, whom he designs to deliver out of their afflictions, he first teaches to profit by their afflictions, makes them partakers of his holiness; for that is the profit for which he chastens us, Heb. xii. 10. (2.) Their Guide; he leads them to the way, and in the way by which they should go; he leads them, and enlightens their eyes, but directs their steps; by his grace he leads them in the way of duty, by his providence he leads them in the way of deliverance. Happy they that are under such a guidance!

2. Here is the good will which God declares he had for them, by his good wishes concerning them, 18, 19. He had indeed brought them into captivity, but it was their own fault, nor did he afflict them willingly. (1.) As when he gave them his law, he earnestly wished they might be obedient, (O that there were such a heart in them! Deut. v. 29. O that they were wise! Deut. xxxii. 29.) so, when he had punished them for the breach of his law, he wished they had been obedient; O that thou wouldst hearken to my commandments! Ps. lv. 13. This confirms what God has said and sworn, that he has no pleasure in the death of sinners. (2.) He assures them that if they had been obedient, that would not only have prevented their captivity, but would have advanced and perpetuated their prosperity. He had abundance of good things ready to bestow upon them, If their sins had not turned them away, ch. lix. 1, 2. (1.) They should have been carried on in a constant uninterrupted stream of prosperity: Thy peace should have been as a river, thou shouldst have enjoyed a series of merices, one continually following another, as the waters of a river, which always last; Labitur, et labitur in omne volubilis avium—It, flows, and will for ever flow; it will persist, like the springs of the Jordan long since gone. (2.) Their virtue and honour, and the justice of their cause, should in all cases have borne down opposition by their own strength, as the waves of the sea; such should their righteousness have been, nothing should have stood before it; whereas now they have been disobedient, the current of their prosperity was interrupted, and their righteousness did not prevail. They were wonderfully delivered, but their good works have been very numerous, and very prosperous; whereas they were now very few, as appears by the small number of the returning captives, (Ezra ii. 64.) not so many as of one tribe when they came out of Egypt; they should have been numberless as the sand, according to the promise (Gen. xiii. 17.) which they had forsook the benefit of; The ebb and flow of thy bowels has been immeasurable, as the gravel of the sea, if thy righteousness had been irresistible and unconquerable as the waves of the sea.

[4.] The honour of Israel had still been unstaicn, untouched; His name should not have been cut off; as now it is in the land of Israel, which is either desolate, or inhabited by strangers; nor should it have been destroyed from before God. Now he cannot reckon the name either of a family or of a kingdom, and destroyed it, till it is destroyed from before God, till it ceases to be a name in his holy place. Now God tells them thus what he would have done for them, if they had persevered in their obedience; First, That they might be the more humbled for their sins, by which they had forfeited such rich merices. Note, This should engage us, I might say, enrage us against ourselves; that it has such a tendency to the good things we have enjoyed, but prevented the good things God had in store for us. It will make the misery of the disobedient the more intolerable, to think how happy they might have been. So comity, That his mercy might appear the more invaluable, in working deliverance and salvation for them, when they were so ungrateful, and rendered themselves unworthy of it. Nothing but a prerogative of mercy would have saved them.

3. Here is assurance given of the great work which God designed to work for them, even their salvation out of their captivity, when he had accomplished his work in them. (1.) Here is a commission granted them to leave Babylon; God proclaimed it long before Cyrus did, that whoever would, might return to his own land,
"You have a full discharge sent you, go ye forth out of Babylon; the prison-doors are thrown open, and the trumpet sounds, proclaiming a release. Perhaps, with this word, as a means, the Spirit of the Lord is new with spirits to those that did take the benefit of Cyrus's proclamation; (Ezra i. 5. ) Flee ye from the Chaldeans, not with an ignomious, stolen flight, as Jacob fled from Laban, but with a holy disdain, as scorning to stay any longer among them; flee ye, not silently and sorrowfully, but with a voice, with a voice of singing, as they fled of old out of Egypt, Exod. xvi. 1.

(2.) End of this prophecy is, to declare it to all parts; "Let it be declared, let it be told, let it be uttered, made to be heard by the most remote, by the most remiss, send the tidings of it by word of mouth, send it by writing from city to city, from kingdom to kingdom, even to the utmost regions, to the ends of the earth." This was a figure of the publishing of the gospel to all the world; but that brings glad tidings which all the world is concerned in, this only that which it is fit all should take notice of, that they may be invited by it to forsake their idols, and come into the service of the God of Israel. Let them all know then,

[1.] That those whom God owns for his are such as he has dearly bought and paid for; The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob; he has done it formerly, when he bought out of Egypt, to Jacob at first; but here is nothing about it again. Jacob was God's servant, and therefore he redeemed him; for what had other masters to do with God's servants? Israel is God's son, therefore Pharaoh must let him go. God redeemed Jacob, and therefore it was that he should be his servant; (Ps. cxxi. 16.) the bonds God has loosed, tied them the faster to him, that he may do usurpation no more right to us.

[2.] That those whom God designs to bring home to himself, he will take care of, that they want not for the necessary expenses of their journey. When he brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the deserts, (v. 21.) they thirsted not, (v. 21.) for in all their removes the water out of the rock followed them; hence he caused the waters to flow, and since rock-water is the clearest and finest, God clave the rock, and the waters gushed out; for he can fetch in necessary supplies for his people the way that they think least likely. This refers to what he did for them when he brought them out of Egypt; when all this was literally true. But it should not be in effect done again, in their return out of Babylon; they were not delivered from the springs of their lives in return, but theirs be in their return. God does his work as effectually by marvellous providences as by miracles, though perhaps they be not so much taken notice of. This is applicable to those treasures of grace laid up for us in Jesus Christ, from which all good flows to us as the water did to Israel out of the rock, for that Rock is Christ.

Here is a great put in against the wicked who go on still in their trespasses; Let not them think to have any benefit among God's people, though in show and profession they herd themselves among them; let them not expect to come in sharers; no, (v. 22.) though God's thoughts concerning the body of that people were thoughts of peace, yet to those among them that were wicked, and hated to be tried, he has an unmerciful sentence, no peace, no peace with God or their own consciences, no, no real good, whatever is pretended to. What have they to do with peace, who are enemies to God? Their false prophets cried Peace to them to whom it did not belong; but God tells them that there shall be no peace, nor any thing like it, to the wicked. The curious sinners have commenced with God, if not taken up in time by repentance, will be an everlasting quarrel.

GLORIOUS things have been spoken in the chapters before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; but lest any should think, when it was accomplished, that it looked much greater and brighter in the prophecy than in the performance, and that the return of about 40,000 Jews in a panic, whom out of Babylon to Jerusalem, was not an event sufficiently answering to the height and grandeur of the expressions used in the prophecy, he here comes to show that the prophecy had a further indication, and was to have its full accomplishment in a redemption that should as far outdo these expressions as the other seemed to come short of them; even the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of whom Paul in a parenthesis, when accusing his servant in working the Jews' deliverance, but Isaiah too, who was God's servant in foretelling it, was a type. In this chapter, we have, 1. The designation of Christ, under the type of Isaiah, to his office, and to his work; The Lord has redeemed his servant given him of the success of his undertaking among the Gentiles, v. 3. 8. III. The redemption that should be wrought by him, and the progress of that redemption, v. 3. 13. IV. The encouragement given hence to the afflicted church, v. 13. 17. V. The addition of many to it, and the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, v. 18. 23. VI. A ratification of the prophecy of the Jews' release out of Babylon, which was to be the figure and type of all these blessings, v. 24. 26. If this chapter be rightly understood, we shall see ourselves to be more concerned in the prophecies relating to the Jews' deliverance out of Babylon than we thought we were.

LISTEN, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. 2. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me. 3. And said unto me, Thou art my servant O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. 4. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God. 5. And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. 6. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel, I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Here, I. An auditory is summoned together, and attention is commanded. The sermon in the chapter before was directed to the house of Jacob and the people of Israel, v. 1. 12. But this is directed to the isles, the Gentiles, for they are called the isles of the Gentiles, p. 30. and to the people from far, that were strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and afar off. Let these listen (v. 1.) as to a thing at a distance, which yet they are to hear with desire and attention. Note, 1. The tidings of a Redeemer are sent to the Gentiles, and to those that lay most remote; and they are concerned to hear to them. The Gentiles are listened to the gospel, when the Jews were deaf to it.

II. The great Author and Publisher of all this.
deputation produces his authority from heaven for the
work he had undertaken. 1. God had ap-
pointed him, and set him apart for it; The Lord
has called me from the womb to this office, and
made mention of my name, nominated me to be
the Saviour: by an angel he called him Jesus—a Sa-
vour, who should save his people from their sins,
Matth. i. 21. Nay, from the womb the divine coun-
sels, which he was called to this service, and help was laid upon him; and he came
called to the call, for he said, Lo, I come, with an eye to
what was written of him in the volume of the book.
This was said of some of the prophets, as types of
him, Jer. i. 5. Paul was separated to the apostleship
from his mother's womb, Gal. i. 15. 2. God had
fitted and qualified him for the service; He had
previously designed him he made his mouth like a sharp
sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a
bright arrow; furnished him with every thing
necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of
darkness, to conquer Satan, and reduce God's re-
volted subjects to their allegiance, by his word, that
is, the two-edged sword (Heb. iv. 12.) which comes
out of his mouth, Rev. xix. 15. The convictions of
the word are the sword of the spirituality, and
the power of the kingdom, Ps. xlv. 3. God had preferred
him to the service for which he had reserved him;
He has hid me in the shadow of his hand and
in his quiver, which denotes, (1.) Concealment: the
gospel of Christ, and the calling in of the Gentiles
by it, were long hidden from ages and genera-
tions, hidden in God, (Eph. iii. 5. Rom. xvi. 25.)
hidden in the shadow of his hand, Ps. xliii. 5. in
the shadow of the most High, the two Testament
types. (2.) Protection: the
house of David was the particular care of the Di-
vine Providence, because that blessing was in it.
Christ in his infancy was sheltered from the rage
of Herod. 4. God had owned him; had said unto
him, "Thou art my Servant, whom I have em-
ployed, and will cause to succeed; thou art Israel in
effect, the Prince with the Two Edged Sword, and
the Ancient of Days, and the Two Edges of the
old Testament types. (3.) The power of
the sword, as Heb. iv. 12. God had
previously designed him he made his mouth like a sharp
sword, and made him like a polished shaft, or a
bright arrow; furnished him with every thing
necessary to fight God's battles against the powers of
darkness, to conquer Satan, and reduce God's re-
volted subjects to their allegiance, by his word, that
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the Ancient of Days, and the Two Edges of the
old Testament types. (3.) The power of
the sword, as Heb. iv. 12. 

He receives from God a further answer to this
objection, v. 5. 6. He knew very well that God had
set him on work, had formed him from the womb
to be his servant, had not only called him so early
to it, (v. 1.) but begun so early to fit him for it,
and dispose him to it. Those whom God designs to
employ as his servants, he is fashioning and prepar-
ing to be so long before, when perhaps neither
they themselves nor others are aware of it. He is he
that forms the spirit of man within him. Christ was to
be his Servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that
had treacherously departed from him; the seed of
Jacob, therefore, according to the flesh, must first
be dealt with, and means used to bring them back,
Christ, and the word of salvation by him, are sent
to them first; next, Christ comes in person to them
only to the last sheep of the house of Israel. But
what if Jacob will not be brought back to God, and
Israel will not be gathered? So it proved; but this
is a satisfaction in that case.

(1.) Christ will be glorious in the eyes of the
Lord; and those are truly glorious, that are so in
God's eyes. Though few of the Jewish nation
were converted by Christ's preaching and miracles,
and many of the house of Israel and dis-
grace, yet God put honour upon him, and made
him glorious, at his baptism, and in his transfigu-
racion, spake to him from heaven, sent angels to
minister to him, made even his shameful death glo-
rious by the many prodigies that attended it, much
more his resurrection. In his sufferings, God was
his Strength, so that though he met with all the
corruption of the world, yet he was exalted, and
constituted into a person whom he had done so much to oblige, yet
he did not fail, nor was discouraged. An angel was
sent from heaven to strengthen him, Luke xxii. 43.

Faithful ministers, though they see not the fruit of
their labours, shall yet be accepted of God, and in that they shall be truly glorious, for his favour is our honour; and they shall be assisted to proceed and persevere in their labours notwithstanding. This weakens their hands, but their God will be their Strength.

(2.) The gospel shall be glorious in the eyes of the world; though it be not so in the eyes of the Jews, yet it shall be entertained by the nations, (v. 6.) The Messiah seemed as if he had been principally designed to bring Jacob back, v. 5. But he is here told that it is comparatively but a small matter; a higher orb of honour than that, and a larger sphere of usefulness, are designed him: "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my Servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to give them a name and dignity and dominion they expect by the Messiah, and to restore the preserved of Israel, and make them a flourishing church and state as formerly;" (nay, considering what a little handful of people they are, it would be but a small matter, in comparison, for the Messiah to be the Saviour of them only;) and therefore, I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles, many great and mighty nations, to which thy name shall be known; and of this the gospel, and the knowledge and worship of the true God, that thou mayest be my Salvation, the Author of that salvation which I have designed for lost man, and this to the end of the earth, to nations at the greatest distance, &c. Hence Simeon learned to call Christ a Light to lighten the Gentiles; (Luke ii. 32.) and St. Paul's exposition of this text is worthy of note, and it serves for a key to the context, Acts xiii. 47. Therefore, says he, we turn to the Gentiles, to preach the gospel to them, because so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles. In this, the Redeemer was truly glorious, though Israel was not gathered; the setting up of his kingdom in the Gentile world was more of honour than if he had raised up all the tribes of Jacob. This promise is in part fulfilled already, and will have a further accomplishment if that time be yet to come, which the apostle speaks of when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in. Observe, God calls it his salvation, which some think intimates how well pleased he was with it, how he gloried in it, and (if I may so say) how much his light shone in it. They further observe, it is said, But Christ is given for a Light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish; Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

7. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. 3. Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: 9. That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves; they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them; for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12. Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, those from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

In these verses, we have,

1. The humiliation and exaltation of the Messiah; (v. 7.) The Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and Israel's Holy One, who had always taken care of the Jewish church, and wrought out for them these deliverances that were typical of the great salvation, speaks here to him who was the Undertaker of that salvation. And, 1. He takes notice of his humiliation, the instances of which were uncommon, nay, unparalleled. He was one whom men despised; (ch. iii. 3.) he is despised and rejected of men. To be despised by so mean a creature, (man, who himself a worm,) bespeaks the lowest and most contemptible condition imaginable. Man, whom he came to save, and to put honour upon, yet despised him, and placed himself beneath him; and the more grateful were his persecutors. The ignominy he underwent was not the least of his sufferings: they not only made him despicable, but odious; he was one whom the nation abhorred; they treated him as the worst of men, and cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. The nation did it, the Gentiles as well as Jews, and the Jews herein worse than Gentiles; for they crossed not, they crucified him, and the other foolishness. He was a servant of rulers, he was trampl'd upon, abused, scourged, and crucified as a slave. Pilate boasted of his power over him, John xix. 10. This he submitted to for our salvation. 2. He promises him his exaltation. Honour was done him, even in the depth of his humiliation. Herod the king stood in awe of him, saying, It is John the Baptist; we know him; he is the prophet that should come. They further observe, it is said, But Christ is given for a Light to all those to whom he is given for salvation. It is in darkness that men perish; Christ enlightens men's eyes, and so makes them holy and happy.

II. The blessings he has in store for all those to whom he is made salvation.

1. God will own and stand by him in his undertaking; (v. 8.) In an acceptable time have I heard thee, that is, I will hear thee. Christ, in the day of his flesh, offered up strong cries, and was heard, Heb. v. 7. He knew that the Father heard him always, (John xii. 42.) heard him for himself, for though the cup might not pass from him, yet he was enabled to drink it,) heard him for all that are his, and therefore he interceded for them as one having authority, Father, I will, John xvii. 24. All our happiness results from the Son's interest in the Father, and the prevalence of his intercession, that he always heard him; and this makes the gospel an acceptable time, welcome to us, because we are accepted of God, both reconciled and recommended to him, that God hears the Redeemer for us, Heb. vii. 25. Nor will he hear him only, but help him to go through with his undertaking. The
Father was always with him at his right hand, and did not leave him when his disciples did. Violent attacks were made upon our Lord Jesus by the powers of darkness, when it was their hour to have driven him off from his undertakings, but God promised to preserve him, and enable him to persevere in it; on that one stone was seven eyes, Zech. iii. 2. God would preserve him, would preserve his interest; his kingdom among men, though fought against on all sides. Christ is preserved while Christianity is.

2. God will authorize him to apply to his church the benefits of the redemption he is to work out. God's preserving and helping him was to make the day of his gospel a day of salvation. The day of salvation is the day of salvation. Of the day of salvation, see the note on the word the day of reconciliation by Christ is preached, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

(1.) He shall be a Guarantee of the treaty of peace between God and man; I will give thee for a covenant of the people. This we had before, (ch. xlii. 6.) and it is here repeated as faithful, and well worthy of all acceptance and observation. He is given for a covenant, for a pledge between God and man, that it should be tied up to him that God was reconciling the world to himself, and he that spared not his own Son, will deny nothing. He is given for a Covenant, not only as he is the Mediator of the covenant, the blessed Days-man who has laid his hand upon us both, but as he is all in all in the covenant. All the duty of the covenant is summed up in our being his; and all the privilege and happiness of the covenant are summed up in his being ours.

(2.) He shall repair the decays of the church, and build it upon a rock. He shall establish the earth, or rather, the land, the land of Judah, a type of the church; he shall cause the desolate heritages to be inherited; so the cities of Judah were after the return out of captivity, and so the church, which in the last and degenerate ages of the Jewish nation had been as a country laid waste, but was again replenished by the fruits of the preaching of the gospel.

(3.) He shall free the souls of men from the bondage of guilt and corruption, and bring them into the glorious liberty of God's children. He shall say to the prisoners that were bound over to the justice of God, and bound under the power of Satan, for ever, death, that is terrified from the curse of the law, and renewing grace is a release from the dominion of sin; both are from Christ, and are branches of the great salvation; it is he that says, Go forth; it is the Son that makes us free, and then we are free indeed. He saith to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves: Not only see but be seen, to the glory of God, and your own comfort. When he discharged the lepers from his confinement, he said, Go show yourselves to the priest; when we see the light, let our light shine.

(4.) He shall provide for the comfortable passage of those whom he sets at liberty, to the place of their rest and happy settlement, v. 9. 11. These verses refer to the provision made for the Jews' return out of their captivity, who were taken under the particular care of the Divine Providence, as vertices of grace, who shall be preserved, and now so in a special manner; but it is applicable to that guidance of divine grace, which all God's spiritual Israel are under, from their release out of bondage to their settlement in the heavenly Canaan.

[1.] They shall have their charges borne, and shall be fed at free cost with food convenient; they shall feed on the ways, as sheep; for now, as formerly, God leads Joseph like a flock. When God pleases, even highway ground shall be good ground for the sheep of his pasture to feed in. Their pastures shall be not only in the valleys, but in all high places, which are commonly dry and barren. Wherever God brings his people, he will take care they shall want nothing that is good for them, Ps. xxxiv. 10. And so well shall they be provided for, that they shall not hunger nor thirst, for they shall need them, and have no need of them, and need of their need of it comes to any extremity. [2.] They shall be sheltered and protected from every thing that would inconvenience them; Neither shall he heat nor sun smite them, for God causes his flock to rest at noon, Cant. i. 7. No evil thing shall befall those that put themselves under a divine protection; they shall be enabled to bear the burdens and heat of the day.

[3.] They shall be enabled to follow God with all heart. He that has mercy on them, in bringing them out of their captivity, shall lead them, as he did their fathers in the wilderness, by a pillar of cloud and fire; Even by springs of water, which will be ready to them in their march, shall he guide them. God will furnish them with suitable and seasonable comforts, not like the pools of rain-water in the valley of Baca, but like the water out of the rock which followed Israel. Those who are under a divine guidance, and follow that closely, while they do so, may, upon good grounds, hope for divine comforts and cordials. The world leads its followers by broken cisterns, or breaks that fail in summer; but God leads those that are his by springs of water. And those whom God guides, shall find a ready road, and all obstacles removed; v. 11. All else He takes in hand: He then in times past made the sea a way, now with as much ease will make the mountains a way, though they seemed impassable. The highway, or causey, shall be raised, to make it both the plainer and the fairer. Note, The ways in which God leads his people, he himself will be the Overseer of, and will take care that they be well mended, and kept in repair, as of old the way, and all the cities of it, were. The leveling of the roads from Babylon, as it was foretold, (ch. xlii. 5.) was applied to gospel-works, and so may this be. Though there be difficulties in the way to heaven, which we cannot by our own strength get over, yet the grace of God shall be sufficient to help us over them, and to make even the mountains a way, ch. xxxv. 8.

(5.) He shall bring them all together from all parts, that they may return in a body, that they may encourage one another, and be the more taken notice of. They were dispersed into several parts of the country of Babylon, as their enemies pleased to prevent any combination among themselves. But when God's time is come to bring them home together, one spirit shall animate them all that lie at the greatest distance from each other; and those also that had taken shelter in other countries, shall meet them in the land of Judah, v. 12. Here shall a party come from far, some from the north, some from the west, some from the land of Sinim, which, probably, is some province of Babylon, not elsewhere named in scripture. But some make it to be a country belonging to one of the chief cities of Egypt, called Sin, of which we read, Ezek. xxx. 16. But that this promise was to have a further accomplishment in the great confinence of converts to the gospel-church, and its full accomplishment when God's chosen shall come from the east and from the west, to sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, Math. viii. 11.

13. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

14. But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. 15
Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. 16. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. 17. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee.

The scope of these verses is to show that the return of the people of God out of their captivity, and the eternal redemption to be wrought out by Christ, (which was a type of,) would be great occasions of joy to the church, and great proofs of the tender care God has of the church.

1. Nothing can furnish us with better matter for songs of praise and thanksgiving, v. 13. Let the whole creation join with us in songs of joy, for it shares with us in the benefits of the redemption, and all they can contribute to this sacred melody, is little enough in return for such inestimable favours, Ps. cvi. 11. Let there be joy in heaven, and let the earth and the mountains, particularly the great ones of the earth, be joyful, and break forth into singing, for the earnest expectation of the creature that waits for the glorious liberty of the children of God, (Rom. viii. 19, 21.) shall now be abundantly answered; God's people are the blessings and ornaments of the world, and therefore let there be universal joy, for God has comforted his people that were in sorrow, and he will have mercy upon the afflicted because of his compassion, upon his afflicted because of his covenant.

2. Nothing can furnish us with more convincing arguments, to prove the most tender and affectionate concern God has for his church, and her interests and comforts.

1. The troubles of the church have given some occasion to question God's care and concern for it, v. 14. Zion, in distress, said, The Lord has forsaken me, and looks after me no more; My Lord has forgotten me, and will look after me no more. See how deplorable the case of God's people may be sometimes, such that they may seem to be forsaken and forgotten of their God; and at such a time God may be truly said to be their Saviour. Infidels, in their presumption, say, God has forsaken the earth, (Ezek. viii. 12.) and has forgotten their sins, Ps. x. 11. Weak believers, in their despondency, are ready to say, "God has forsaken his church, and forgotten the sorrows of his people." But we have no more reason to question his promise and grace, than we have to question his providence and justice. He is as sure a Redeemer as he is a Revenger. Away therefore with these distrusts and jealousies which are the bane of friendship.

2. The triumphs of the church, after her troubles, will in due time put the matter out of question. What God will do for Zion, we are told, v. 17. (1.) Her friends, who had deserted her, shall be gathered to her, and shall contribute their utmost to her comfort and peace. Let her enemies that made haste, Convert to the faith of Christ are the children of the church; they shall join themselves to her with great readiness and cheerfulness, and flock into the communion of saints, as doves to their windows; "Thy builders shall make haste!" (so some read it,) "who shall build up thy houses, thy walls, especially thy temple, they shall do it with expedition." Church work is usually slow work, but when God's time is come, it shall be done suddenly. (2.) Her enemies, who had threatened and assaulted her, shall be forced to withdraw from her; Thy destroyers, and they who made thee waste, who had made themselves masters of the city, and ravaged it, shall go forth of thee. By Christ the prince of this world, the great destroyer, is cast out, is dispossessed, his power broken, and his attempts quite baffled.

Now by this it will appear that Zion's suggestions were altogether groundless, that God has not forsaken her, or forgotten her, nor ever will. Be assured.

[1.] That God has a tender affection for his church and people, v. 15. In answer to Zion's fears, God speaks as one concerned for his own glory; he takes himself to be reflected upon, if Zion say, The Lord has forsaken me; and he will clear himself. As one concerned also for his people's safety, he would not have them droop and be discouraged, and give way to any uncharitable thoughts. You think that I have forgotten you, can a woman forget her sucking child? First, It is not likely that she should. A woman, whose honour it is to be of the tender sex as well as the fair one, cannot but have compassion for a child, which, being both harmless and helpless, is a proper object of compassion. And besides, especially, cannot but be concerned for her ownStreaming prosperity, the woman herself, and very lately one with her. Nursing mother, most of all, cannot but be tender of her sucking child; her own breasts will soon put her in mind of it, if she should forget it. But, Secondly, It is possible that she may forget. A woman may perhaps be so unhappy as not to be able to remember her sucking child, she may be sick, and dying, and going to the land of eternity; or, she may be so unnatural as not to have compassion on the son of her womb, as those who, to conceal their shame, are the death of their children as soon as they are their life. Lam. iv. 10. Duet. xxviii. 57. But, says God, I will not forget thee. Note, God's compassion to his people infinitely exceed these of the tenderest parents toward their children. What are the affections of nature to these of the God of nature!

[2.] That he has a constant care of his church and people; (v. 16.) I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. This does not allude to the foolish art of palmistry, which imagine every man's fate to be engraved in the palms of his hands, and that he is legible in the lines there; but to the custom of those who tie remembrance of some great persons to their fingers, to put them in mind of things which they are afraid they shall forget; or to the wearing of signet or locket-rings in remembrance of some dear friend. His setting them thus as a seal upon his arm, denotes his setting them as a seal upon his heart, and his being ever mindful of them and their interest, v. 17. Or, if we bind God's law as a sign upon our hand, (Deut. vi. 8—11.) he will engrave our interests as a sign on his hand, and will not forget that and remember the covenant. He adds, Thy walls shall be continually before me; thy ruined walls, though no pleasing spectacle, shall be in my thoughts of compassion. Do Zion's friends favour her dust? Ps. xxvi. 14. So does her God. Or, "The plant and fruit of thy walls, that are to be rebuilt, is before me, and will not be remembered according to it." Or, "Thy walls (thy safety) are my continual care; so are the watchmen on thy walls." Some apply his graving of his church on the palms of his hands to the wounds in Christ's hands when he was crucified; he will look on the marks of them, and remember those for whom he suffered and died.

18. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith

Vol. iv. — 2 F
ISAIAH, XLIX.

the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doth. 19. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. 20. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place for me that I may dwell. 21. Then shalt thou say in thy heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? 22. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up thy hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. 23. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.

Two things are here promised, which were to be in part accomplished in the reviving of the Jewish church, after its return out of captivity, but more fully in the planting of the Christian church, by the preaching of the gospel of Christ; and we may take the comfort of these promises.

1. That the church shall be replenished with great numbers added to it. It was promised, (v. 17.) that her children should make haste; that promise is here enlarged upon, and is made very encouraging. It is promised,

1. That multitudes shall flock to the church from all parts of the earth, and see how they gather themselves to thee, (v. 18.) by a local accession to the Jewish church. They come to Jerusalem from all the adjacent countries, for that was then the centre of their unity; but, under the gospel, it is by a spiritual accession to the mystical body of Christ in faith and love; those that are come to Jesus as the Mediator of the new covenant, thereby come to the mount Zion, the church of the first-born, Heb. xii. 22. Life in one eye, and behold how the fields are white unto the harvest, Johniv. 35. Note, It is matter of joy to the church to see a multitude of converts to Christ.

2. That such as are added to the church shall not be a burden and blemish to her, but her strength and ornament. This part of the promise is confirmed with an oath, As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt not be ashamed of these numbers to the church shall complete her clothing; and when all that were chosen are effectually called, then the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall have made herself ready, shall be quite dressed, Rev. xix. 7. They shall make her to appear comely and considerable; and she shall therefore bind them on with as much care and complacency as a bride does her ornaments. When those that are added to the church, are serious and holy, did exemplary in their conversation, they are an ornament to it.

3. That thus the country which was waste and desolate, and without inhabitant, (ch. v. 9.—vi. 11.) shall be again peopled, nay, it shall be over-peopled; (v. 19.) Thy waste and thy desolate places, that have long lain so, and the land of thy destruction, that land of thine which was destroyed with thee, and which nobody cared for dwelling in, shall now be able to hold full passengers, as they did when it was inhabited. Here is a blessing poured out till there be not room enough to receive it, Mal. iii. 10. Not that they should be crowded by their enemies, or straitened for room, as Abraham and Lot were, because of the Canaanite in the land; No, they that swallowed thee up, and took possession of thy land when thy possession of it was discontinued, shall be far from thee, and thy people are as the sands of the sea; therefore if thou be a stranger, no enemy, among them. Thus the kingdom of God among men, which had been impoverished and almost depopulated, partly by the corruptions of the Jewish church, and partly by the abominations of the Gentile world, was again peopled and enriched by the setting up of the Christian church, and by its graces and glories.

4. That the new converts shall strangely increase and multiply. Jerusalem, after she has lost abundance of her children by the sword, famine, and captivity, shall have a new family growing up instead of them; children which she shall have after she has lost the other, (v. 20.) as Seth, who was appointed another seed instead of Abel, and Job's children, which God blessed him with instead of those that were killed in the ruins of the house. God will repair his church's losses, and secure to himself a seed to serve him in it. It is promised to the Jews, after their return, that Jerusalem shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets, Zech. viii. 5. The church, after it has lost the Jews, who will be cut off by their own in fidelity, shall have abundance of children still, more than she had when the Jews belonged to her. See Gal. iv. 27. They shall be so numerous, that, (1.) The children shall complain for want of room; they shall say, and it is a good hearing, "Our numbers increase so fast, that the place is too strait for us," as the sons of the prophets complained, 2 Kings vi. 1. But strait as the place is, still more shall desire to be admitted, and the church shall gladly admit them, and the church shall be pressed with the number of children, and also the want of room, and the necessity of choosing a place of worship for either, for it will be found, whatever we think, that even when the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, are brought in, yet still there is room, room enough for those that are in, and room for more, Luke xiv. 21, 22. (2.) The mother shall stand amazed at the increase of her family, v. 21. She shall say, Who has begotten me these? and Who has brought up these? They are brought up in all the duty, affection, and submission of children; and yet she never bore any pain for them, nor took any pains with them, but has them ready receiv'd to her hand. This gives her a pleasing surprise, and she cannot but be astonished at it, considering what her children had been very lately, and very long. The Jewish nation had left her children, they were cut off, she had been desolate, with their teeth, and then complained of these tokens of God's especial love to her; may, she had been a captive, and continually removing to and fro, in an unsettled condition, and not likely to bring up children either for God or herself. She was left alone in obscurity; This is Zion whom no man seeks after; left in all the solitude and sorrow of a widowed state. How then came she to be thus replenished? See here, that the church is not perpetually visible, out there are times when it is desolate, and left alone, and
made few in number. 

2. That yet on the other hand its desolations shall not be perpetual, nor will it stand destined to be and end: the Lord shall cut off stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 

3. That sometimes this is done in a very surprising way, as when a nation is born at once, ch. lxvi. 

5. That this shall be done with the help of the Gentiles, v. 22. The Jews were cast off, among whom it was expected that the church should be built up; but God calls all the Gentiles, and out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 

Observe, (1.) How the Gentiles shall be called up; God will lift up his hand to them, to invite or beckon them, having all the day stretched it out in vain to the Jews, (ch. lxxv. 2.) Or it denotes the exerting of an almighty power, that of his Spirit and grace, to compel them to come in, to make them willing. And he will set up his standard to them, the preaching of the everlasting gospel, to which they shall gather, and under which they shall list themselves. (2.) How they shall come; They shall bring thy sons in their arms. They shall assist the sons of Zion, which are found among them, in their return to their own country, and shall forward them with as much tenderness as ever any parent was with any child. Be sure God can raise up friends for returning Israelites, even among Gentiles; the earth helped the woman, Rev. xii. 16. Or, "When they come themselves, they shall bring their children, and make them thy children;" compare ch. lx. 4. "Dost thou ask, Who has begotten and brought up these? Know, that thou hast begotten and brought up among the Gentiles, but they have been brought into thy family." Let all that are concerned about young converts, and young beginners in religion, learn hence to deal very tenderly and carefully with them, as Christ does with the lambs, whom he gathers with his arms, and carries in his bosom. 

11. That the church shall have a great and pleasant interest in all nations, v. 23. Some of the princes of the nations shall become patrons and protectors to the church: Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, to carry thy sons in their arms, v. 22. As Moses, Numb. xi. 12. And because women are the most proper nurses, their queens shall be thy nursing mothers. This promise was in part fulfilled in the Jews, after their return out of captivity; divers of the kings of the Gentiles, especially of that part where the interest was, contended and encouraged them, as Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes; Esther the queen was a nursing mother to the Jews that remained in their captivity, putting her life in her hand to snatch the child out of the flames. The Christian church, after a long captivity, was happy in some such kings and queens as Constantine and his mother Helen, and afterward Theodore, and others, who nursed the church with all possible care and tenderness. Whenever the sceptre of government is put into the hands of religious princes, then this promise is fulfilled. The church, in this world, is in an infant state, and it is in the power of princes and magistrates to do it a great deal of service; it is happy when they do so, when their power is a praise to them that do well. 2. Others of them, who stand it out against the church's interests, will be forced to yield, and to repent of their opposition; They shall bow down to thee, and lick the dust. The promise to the church of Philadelphia seems to be borrowed from this; (Rev. iii. 9.) I will make them of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before the feet of him, who is the Governor of the willing subject-ion which kings and kingdoms shall pay to Christ, the church's King, as he manifests himself in the church? (Ps. lxii. 11.) All kings shall fall down before him. And by all this it shall be made to appear, (1.) That God is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, against whom there is no standing out, or rising up. (2.) That those who wait for him, in a dependence upon his promise, and a resignation to his will, shall not be made ashamed of their hope; for the vision of peace is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak, and shall not lie. 

24. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? 

But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. 26. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord art thy Saviour, and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. 

Here is, 1. An objection started against the promise of the Jews' release out of their captivity in Babylon, suggesting that it was a thing not to be expected; for, (v. 24.) they were a prey in the hand of the mighty, of such as were then the greatest potentates on earth, and therefore it was not likely they should be rescued by force; yet that was not all, they were enemies; but while God, having offended, they were justly delivered into captivity; and by the law of nations, being taken in war, they were justly detained in captivity till they should be ransomed or exchanged. Now this is spoken either, (1.) By the enemies, as justifying themselves in their refusal to let them go; they plead both might and right. Proud men think all their own that they can lay their hands on, and their title good if they have but the longest sword. Or, (2.) By their friends; either in a way of distrust, despairing of the deliverance, "For who is able to deal with those that detain us, either by force of arms or a treaty of peace?" Or, in a way of thankfulness, admiring the deliverance, "Who could have thought that ever the prey should be taken from the hand of the mighty?" We are so often and so unexpectedly applied to our redemption by Christ; as to Satan, we were a prey in the hand of the mighty, and yet delivered even from him that had the power of death, by him that had the power of life. As to the justice of God, we were lawful captives and yet delivered by a price of inestimable value. 

2. This objection answered by an express promise, and a further promise; for God's promises being all yea, and amen, they may well serve to corroborate one another. 

(1.) Here is an express promise with a non-obstante—notwithstanding to the strength of the enemy; (v. 25.) "Even the captives of the mighty, though they are mighty, shall be taken away, and it is no purpose for them to oppose it; and the prey of the terrible, though they are terrible, shall be delivered; and as they cannot with all their strength outrace, so they cannot with all their impudence outface, the deliverance, and the counsels of God concerning it." The Lord saith thus, who, having all power in his hands, and all hearts, is able to make his enemies his footstool. 

(2.) Here is a further promise, showing how, and in what way, God will bring about the deliverance. He will bring judgments upon the oppressors, and so will work salvation for the oppressed; "I will contend with him that contends with thee, will plead thy cause against those that justify themselves in
Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away. 2. Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea: I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dithe for thirst. 3. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.

Those who have professed to be the people of God, and yet seem to be dealt severely with, are apt to complain of God, and to lay the fault upon him, as if he had been hard with them. But, in answer to their murmurs, we have here,

I. A challenge given them to prove, or produce any evidence, that the quarrel began on God's side, v. 1. They could not say that he had done them any violence: God was no wronser, nor did he send a Husband to them: and husbands were then al owed a power to put away their wives upon any little disgust; if they found not favour in their eyes, they made nothing of giving them a bill of divorcement.

Deut. xxiv. 1. Math. xix. 7. But they could not say that God had dealt so with them; it is true, they were now separated from him, and had abused many of his gifts, while they enjoyed them; but what was the fault was that? They could not say that God had given their mother a bill of divorcement; let them produce it, if they can, for a bill of divorcement was given into the hand of her that was divorced.

2. He had been a Father to them; and fathers had then a power to sell their children for slaves to their creditors, in satisfaction for the debts they were not otherwise able to pay; it is true, the Jews were sold to the Babylonians then, and afterward to the Romans; but did God sell them for payment of his debts? No, he was not indebted to any of those to whom they were sold, or, if he had sold them, he did not increase his wealth by their price, Ps. xlv. 12. When God chastens his children, it is neither for his pleasure, (Heb. xii. 10.) nor for his profit; all that are good are not saved, and saved by a parent's choice; but those that perish, are cut off by an act of divine holiness and justice, not of absolute sovereignty.

II. A charge exhibited against them, showing them that they were themselves the authors of their own ruin; Behold, for your iniquities, for the pleasure of them, and the gratification of your own base lusts, you have sold yourselves, for your iniquities you are sold; not as children are sold by their parents, to pay their debts, but as malefactors are sold by the judges, to punish them for their crimes. You sold yourselves to work wickedness, and therefore God justly sold you into the hands of your enemies, 2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 8. It is for your transgressions that your mother is put away, for her whoredoms and adulteries; which were always abominations to be a just cause of children's exile. The Jews were sent into Babylon for their idolatry, a sin which broke the marriage-covenant, and were at last rejected for crucifying the Lord of glory; these were the iniquities for which they were sold and put away.

III. The confirmation of this charge, and this charge.

1. It is plain that it was their own fault that they were cast off; for God came, and offered them his favour, offered them his helping hand, either to prevent their trouble, or to deliver them out of it, but they slighted him and all the tenders of his

**CHAP. L.**

In this chapter, I. Those to whom God sends are justly charged with bringing all the troubles they were in upon themselves, by their own wilfulness and obstinacy; it being made to appear that God was able and ready to help them, if they had been fit for deliverance, v. 1-3. II. He here also exhorts, and protesteth with his communications, (v. 4.) alleges his own readiness to submit to all the services and sufferings he was called to in the execution of his office, v. 5, 6.) and assures himself that God, who sent him, would stand by him, and bear him out against all opposition, v. 7-9. III. The message that is sent is, life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse; comfort to desponding saints, and terror to presuming sinners, v. 10, 11. Now all this seems to have a double reference: 1. To the unbelieffing Jews in Babylon, who quarrelled with God for his dealings with them: and to the prophet Isaiah, who, though dead long before the execution of this prophecy, is here spoken of, as if he were living, to fit to produce his credentials, to justify what he had said. 2. To the unbelieving Jews in our Saviour's time, whose own fault it was, that they were rejected; Christ having preached much to them, and suffered much from them, and being hence banished up by a divine power. The contents of this chapter, in our Bibles, give this sense of it, very concisely, thus; Christ shows that the destruction he suffered was not to be imputed to his enemies, but to his ability to save, by his obedience in that work, and by his confidence in divine assistance. The prophet concludes with an exhortation to trust in God, and not in ourselves.
grace; "Do you lay it upon me?" (says God, "Tell me then, wherefore when I came, there was no man to meet me, when I called, there was none to answer me."—2. God came to them by his servants the prophets, demanding the fruits of his vineyard; (Matth. xxi. 34.) he sent them his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending them; (Jer. xxxv. 13.) he called to them to leave their sins, and so prevent their own ruin: but there was no man, or next to none, that had any regard to the warnings which the prophets gave them, none that answered the call of God, or replied to the commission sent them; and this was for it which they were sold and put away; because they mocked the messengers of the Lord, therefore God brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16, 17. Last of all, he sent unto them his Son, he came to his own, but his own received him not; he called to them himself, but there were none that answered; he had gathered Jerusalem's children together, but they would not, they knew not, because they would not know, the things that belonged to their peace, nor the day of their visitation, and for that transgression it was that they were put away, and their house left desolate, Matth. xxi. 41.—xxiii. 37, 38.

Luke xix. 41, 42. When God calls men to happiness, they that answer not, they are justly left to be miserable.

2. It is plain that it was not owing to a want of power in God, for he is almighty, and could have recovered them from so great a death, nor was it owing to a want of power in Christ, for he is able to save to the uttermost. The unbelieving Jews in Babylon thought they were not desired because their God was not able to deliver; and those in Christ's time were ready to ask, in scorn, Can this man save us? For himself he cannot save. "But," (says God) "is my hand shortened at all, or is it weakened? Can any limits be set to Omnipotence? Can he redeem, who is the great Redeemer? Has he no power to deliver, whose all power is? To put to silence, and to put for ever to shame, their doubts concerning his power, he here gives unquestionable proofs of it."

(1.) He can, when he pleases, dry up the seas, and make the rivers a wilderness; he did so for Israel when he redeemed them out of Egypt, he can do so again for their redemption out of Babylon. It is done at his rebuke, as easily as with a word's speaking; he can so dry up the rivers, as leaving not a drop of water, that he might throw it into his enemies' faces. When God turned the waters of Egypt into blood, he slew the fish, Ps. cv. 29. The expression our Saviour sometimes used concerning the power of faith, that it will remove mountains, and plant sycomores in the sea, is not unlike this; if their faith could do that, no doubt, their faith would save them, and therefore they were inexcusable if they perished in their unbelief. (2.) He can, when he pleases, eclipse the lights of heaven, clothe them with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering, by thick and dark clouds interposing, which he balances, Job xxxvi. 32.—xxxvii. 16.

4. The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; he waketh morning by morning; he waketh mine ear to hear as the learned.

5. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. 6. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. 7. For the Lord God will help me: therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. 8. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. 9. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.

Our Lord Jesus, having proved himself able to save, here shows himself as willing as he is able. He suppose the prophet Isaiah to say something of himself in the verses previous, and calls himself to go on in his work, as a prophet, notwithstanding the many hardships he met with, not doubting but that God would stand by him, and strengthen him; but, like David, he speaks of himself as a type of Christ, who is here prophesied of, and promised to be the Saviour.

VI. As an acceptable Preacher, v. 4. Isaiah, as a prophet, was qualified for the work to which he was called, so were the rest of God's prophets, and others whom he employed as his messengers; but Christ was anointed with the Spirit above his fellows. To make the man of God perfect, he has, 1. The tongue of the learned, to know how to give instruction, how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, 2. The ear of the learned, who would receive the matter of learning, who are to be the hearers of the learned, to hear the word by which the enemy of Satan is overthrown. We are to learn to be very careful of our own conduct, that we may not divert the Lord's mouth to speak the terror and conviction of Pharaoh, Exod. iv. 11, 12. He gave to Christ the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season for the comfort of those that are weary and heavy laden under the burden of sin, Matth. xi. 28. Grace was poured into his lips, and they are said to drop sweet-smelling myrrh. See what is the best learning of a minister, to know how to comfort troubled consciences, and to speak pertinently, properly, and plainly, to the various cases of poor souls. An ability to do this is God's gift, and it is one of the best gifts, which we should covet earnestly. Let us repose ourselves in the many comfortable words which Christ has spoken to the weary, 2. The ear of the learned, to receive instruction of and about the commandments of God, which need of this, and of the tongue of the learned; for they must deliver what they are taught, and no other; must hear the word from God's mouth diligently and attentively, that they may speak it exactly, Ezek. iii. 17. Christ himself received, that he might give. None must undertake to be teachers, who have not first been learners; Christ's apostles were first disciples; scrivis inscriptos intus intus est ingens sententiae, Matth. xiii. 52.

Nor is it enough to hear, but we must hear as the learned, hear and understand, hear and remember, hear as those that would learn by what we hear. Those that would hear as the learned, must be awake, and wakeful, for we are naturally drowsy and sleepy, and unapt to hear at all, or we hear by the halves, and do not understand the words we need to be wakened; we need to have something said to rouse us, to awaken us out of our spiritual slumber, that we may hear as for our lives. We need to be wakened morning by morning, as duly as the day returns, to be awakened to do the work of the day in its day. Our case calls for continual fresh supplies of divine grace, to free us from the darkness we contract daily. The morning, when our spirits are most lively, is a proper time for communion with God; then we are in the best frame both to speak to him, My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, and to hear from him, the people came early in the morning to hear Christ in the temple, Luke xxii. 38. For, it seems, his were morning lectures, and it is God that wakens us morning by morning; if we de
any thing to purpose in his service, it is he, who, as our Master, calls us up; we should do perpetually, if he did not waken us morning by morning.

II. As a patient Sufferer, v. 5, 6. One would think that he who was commissioned and qualified to speak comfort to the very men he should meet with in distress, and to whose duration he should be witness; it is, however, quite otherwise; he hath both hard work to do, and hard usage to undergo; and here he tells us with what undaunted constancy he went through with it. We have no reason to question but that the prophet Isaiah went resolutely in the work to which God had called him, though we read not of his undergoing any such hardships as are here supposed; but this he most undauntedly verified in Jesus Christ: and here we have,

1. His patient obedience in his suffering-work. "The Lord God has not only wakened my ear to hear what he says, but has opened my ear to receive it, and comply with it; (Ps. xl. 6, 7.) Mine ear hast thou opened; then said I, Lo, I come," for when he adds, I was not rebellious, neither turned away back, more is implied than expressed—that he was willing, that, though he foresaw a great deal of difficulty and discouragement, though he was to take pains, and give constant attendance as a Servant, though he was to empty himself of that which was very great, and humble himself to that which was very mean, yet he did not fly off, did not fail, nor was discouraged. He continued very free and forward to do the work of God, and suffered the hardships of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good will to the work and service of God is from the grace of God.

2. His obedient patience in his suffering-work. "I call it obedient patience, because he was patient with an eye to his Father's will; thus pleading with himself, This commandment have I received of my Father; and thus submitting to God. Not as I will, but as thou wilt. In this submission, he resigned himself, (1.) To be scourged; I gave my back to the smiters; and that not only by submitting to it when he was smitten, but by permitting it (or admitting it rather) among the other instances of pain and shame which he would voluntarily undergo for us.

(2.) To be buffeted; I gave my cheeks to them that not only smote them, but plucked off the hair of the beard, and made his face to undergo both of pain and ignominy. (3.) To be spit upon; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. He could have hid his face from it, could have avoided it, but he would not, because he was made a Reprisal of men, and thus he would answer to the prostrate, Joh, that man of sorrows, of whom it is said, that they smote him on the cheek reproachfully, (Job xvii. 10.) and shared not to spit in his face, (Job xxx. 10.) an expression only of contempt, but of abhorrence and indignation. All this Christ underwent for us, and voluntarily, to convince us of his willingness to save us.

III. As a courageous champion, v. 7—9. The Redeemer is as famous for his boldness as for his humility and patience, and, though he yields, yet he is more than a workman.

Observe, 1. The dependence he has upon God. What was the prophet Isaiah's support, was the support of Christ himself; (v. 7.) The Lord God will help me; and again, v. 9. "Whom employeth we will assist, and will take care they want not any help that they or their work call for. God, having said help upon his Son for us, gave help to him, and his hour was filled along with the Man of his right hand. Nor will he assist his Servant, he has no other prospect, (He is near that justifieth me.) Isaiah, no doubt, was falsely accused, and loaded with reproach and calumny, as other prophets were; but he digested it, knowing that God would roll away the reproach, and bring forth his righteousness as the light, perhaps in this world, (Ps. xxxvii. 6.) at furthest in the great day, when there will be a resurrection of names as well as bodies, and the righteous shall shine forth as the morning sun. And so it was veriﬁed in Christ; by his resurrection he was proved to be innocent, not a blasphemer, not a deceiver, not an enemy to Caesar. The judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; the centurion, or sheriff, that had charge of his execution, declared him a righteous man: so near was he that justiﬁed him. But it was true of him in a further and more peculiar sense; the Father justiﬁed him, when he was tried, and constituted him the Lord our Righteousness, who was made sin for us: he was justiﬁed in the Spirit, 1 Tim. iii. 16. He was near who did it; for his resurrection, by which he was justiﬁed, soon followed his condemnation and cruciﬁxion; he was straightway glorified, John xiii. 32.

2. The conﬁdence which he thereupon has of success in his undertaking; "If God will help me, if I will justify me, will stand by me, and bear me out, I shall not be confounded, as these are that come short of the end they aimed at, and the satisfaction they promised themselves; I know that I shall not be ashamed." Though his enemies did all they could to put him to shame, yet he kept his ground, he kept his countenance, and was not ashamed of the work he had done for God and his Father, as much as they desired of it. Note, As a good understanding in the truths of God, so a good will to the work and service of God is from the grace of God.

3. The defence which, in this conﬁdence, he bids to all opposers and opposition; "God will help me, therefore wherefore I shall not be ashamed."

The prophet did so; he was held in reprover sin, in warning sinners, (Ezek. iii. 8, 9.) and in asserting the truth of his predictions. Christ did so; he went on in his work, as Mediator, with unshaken constancy, and undaunted resolution; he did not fail, nor was discouraged; and here he challenges all his opposers, (1.) To enter the lists with him; Who will contend with me, either in law, or by the sword? Let us contend together, (Ps. xxxvii. 31.) (2.) To be the defendant. Who is mine adversary? Who is the master of my cause? so the word is. "Who will pretend to enter an action against me? Let him appear, and come near to me, for I will not absent."

Many offered to dispute with Christ, but he put them to silence. The prophet speaks this in the name of all faithful ministers; those who keep close to the pure word of God, in delivering their message, need not fear contradiction; the scriptures will bear them out, whoever contends with them. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Christ speaks this in the name of all believers, speaks it as their Champion. Who dares be an enemy to these whom he is a Friend to, or contend with these for whom he is an Advocate? Thus St. Paul applies it, (Rom. viii. 33.) Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? (2.) He challenges them to prove his crime upon him; (v. 9.) Who is he that shall condemn me? The prophet, perhaps, was condemned to die; Christ, we are sure, was; and yet both could say, Who is he that shall condemn me? For there is no condemnation to them whom God justifies. There were those that did condemn them, but what came of them? The wall shall wax old as a garment, The righteous shall abound and his work will outlive all opposition. The moth shall eat them up silently and insensibly; a little thing will serve to destroy them. But the lioning himself shall not prevail against God's witnesses. All believers
are joined to make this challenge, Who is he that shall condemn? It is Christ that died.

10. Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light! Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. 11. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.

The prophet, having the tongue of the learned given him, that he might give to every one their portion, here makes use of it, rightly dividing the word of truth. It is the summary of the gospel; he that believeth shall be saved, he that trusts in the name of the Lord shall be comforted, though for awhile he walk in darkness, and have no light. But he that believes not shall be damned; though for awhile he walk in the light of his own fire, yet he shall lie down in sorrow.

1. Comfort is here spoken to disconsolate saints, and they are encouraged to trust in God's grace, v. 10. Where observe,

1. What is always the character of a child of God; he is one that fears the Lord with a final fear, that stands in awe of his majesty, and is afraid of incurring his displeasure. This is a grace that usually appears most in good people then when they walk in darkness, when other graces appear not. They then tremble at his word; (ch. lxvi. 2) and are afraid of his judgments, Ps. cxix. 120. He is one that obeys the voice of God's servant; is willing to be ruled by the Lord Jesus, as God's servant in the great work of man's redemption: one that yields a sincere obedience to the law of Christ, and cheerfully comes up to the terms of his covenant. Those that truly fear God will obey the voice of Christ.

2. What is sometimes the case of a child of God. It is supposed, that though he has in his heart the fear of God, and faith in Christ, yet for a time he walks in darkness, and has no light, is disquieted, and is afraid of his judgment. This intimates that it is a case which sometimes happens among the professors of religion, yet not very often; but whenever it happens, God takes notice of it. It is no new thing for the children and heirs of light sometimes to walk in darkness, and for a time not to have any glimpse or gleam of light. This is not meant so much of the comforts of this life, (those that fear God, when they have ever so slight an abundance of them, do not walk in them as their light,) as of their spiritual comforts, which relate to their souls. They walk in darkness, when their evidences for heaven are clouded, their joy in God is interrupted, the testimony of the Spirit is suspended, and the light of God's countenance is eclipsed. Penitent Christians are apt to be melancholy, and those who fear always, to fear too much.

3. What is likely to be an effectual cure in this sad case. He that is thus in the dark, (1.) Let him trust in the name of the Lord, in the goodness of his nature, and that which he has made known of himself, his wisdom, power, and goodness. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, let him run into that. Let him depend upon it, that it, walk before God, which a man may do though he walk in the dark, he shall find God all-sufficient to him. (2.) Let him lay himself upon his God, his covenant; let him keep hold of his covenant-relation to God, and call God his God, as Christ on the cross, My God, My God. Let him lay himself upon the promises of the covenant, and build his hopes on them. When a child of God is ready to sink, he will find enough in God to stay himself upon. Let him trust in Christ, for God's name is in him; (Exod. xxviii. 21.) trust in that name of his, The Lord our Righteousness, and stay himself upon God as his God, in and through a Mediator.

11. Conviction is here spoken to presuming sinners, and to those that are warned not to trust in themselves, v. 11. Observe, 1. The description of the sinners: They kindle a fire, and walk in the light of that fire; they depend upon their own righteousness, offer all their sacrifices, and burn all their incense, with that fire, (as Nadab and Abihu,) and not with the fire from heaven; in their hope of acceptance with God, they have no regard to the righteousness of Christ, they refuse to release themselves with a concord of their own merit and sufficiency, and wants themselves with that: it is both light and heat to them. They compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling. As they trust in their own righteousness, and not in the righteousness of Christ, so they place their happiness in their worldly possessions and enjoyments, and not in the favour of God. Creation and the world keep them in their own light, as that is abandoned; yet the children of this world, while they last, warm themselves by them, and walk with pride and pleasure in the light of them. 2. The doom passed upon them; they are ironically bid to walk in the light of their own fire: **Make your best of it, while it lasts.** This shall ye have of mine hand, (says Christ, for to him the judgment is committed;) ye shall have no light; the fire shall go back to back in the dark. See Job xviii. 5, 6. His candle shall be put out with him. Those that make the world their comfort, and their own righteousness their confidence, will certainly meet with a fatal disappointment, which will be bitterness in the end. A godly man's way may be melancholy, but his end shall be peace and everlasting light. A wicked man's way may be pleasant, but his end and endless abode will be utter darkness.

CHAP. I. 1. This chapter is designed for the comfort and encouragement of those that fear God and keep his commandments, even then when they walk in darkness, and have no light. Whether one were to be called to come out of the midst of the captives in Babylon, is not certain, probably it was, but comforts thus generally expressed ought not to be so confined. Whenever the church of God is in distress, and the people of God are scattered and dispersed, believers may comfort themselves and one another, with these words; 1. That God, who raised his church at first out of nothing, will take care that it shall not perish, v. 1. 2. That the righteousness and salvation he designs for his church are sure and near, very near and very sure, v. 4, 8, 11. That the persecutors of the church are weak and dying creatures, v. 7, 8, 11. That the same power which did wonders for the church formerly, is now engaged and employed for her protection and deliverance, v. 9, 11. That God himself, the Maker of the world, had undertaken both to deliver his people out of their distress, and to execute vengeance upon their enemies, and he will not let them down, nor will he be sure of them, v. 10, 16. That, deplorable as the condition of the church now was, (v. 17, 19.) to the same woful circumstances her persecutors and oppressors should shortly be reduced, and worse, v. 20, 23. The three first paragraphs of this chapter begin with, Hearken unto me, and they are God's people that are all along called to hearken; for even when comforts are roken to them, hearing is a thing that they need, (as hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit, (Exod. vi. 9.) therefore they are again and again called to hearken, v. 1, 4, 7. The two other paragraphs of this chapter begin with, Awake, awake; in the former, (v. 5.) be reduced, and worse, v. 20, 23. God calls upon them to awake, and help themselves. The latter, (v. 17.) God calls upon them to awake, and help themselves.

1. HEARKEN to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the
ISAIAH, I.

1. Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit, whence ye are digged. 2. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. 3. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Observe, 1. How the people of God are here described, to whom the word of this consolation is sent, and who are called upon to hearken to it. v. 1. They are such as follow after righteousness, as are very desirous and solicitous both to be justified and to be sanctified, are pressing hard after this, to have the favour of God restored to them, and the image of God renewed on them. These are they that seek themselves, who it is only in the way of righteousness that we can seek him with any hope of finding him. I. How they are here directed to look back to their original, and the smallness of their beginning; “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn,” (the idolatrous family in Ur of the Chaldees, out of which Abraham was taken, the generation of slaves which the heads and fathers of their tribes were in Egypt,) “and unto the hole of that pit out of which ye were digged, as clay, when God formed you into a people.” Note, It is good for those that are privileged by a new birth, to consider what they were by their first birth: how they were conceived iniquity and shapen in sin. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; how hard was that rock out of which we were hewn, unapt to receive impressions, and how the hole of that pit out of which we were digged! The consideration should fill us with low thoughts of ourselves, and high thoughts of divine grace. Those that are now advanced, would do well to remember how they began; (v. 2.) “Look unto Abraham your father, the father of all the faithful, of all that follow after the righteousness of faith as he did;” (Rom. iv. 11.) and unto Sarah that bare you, and whose daughters you all are, and how you have so much reason to think how Abraham was called alone, and yet was blessed and multiplied; and let that encourage you to depend upon the promise of God, even then when a sentence of death seems to be upon all the means that lead to the performance of it. Particularly let it encourage the captives in Babylon, though they are reduced to a small number, and few of them left, to hope that yet they shall increase so as to replenish their own land again. When Jacob is very small, yet he is not so small as Abraham was, who yet became father of many nations. “Look unto Abraham, and see what he got by trusting in the promise of God, and take example by him to follow God with an implicit faith.”

5. How they are here assured that their present smallness of tears should at length end in a harvest of joy: though they have increase so as to replenish their own land again, the gospel-Zion, has sometimes had her deserts and waste places: many parts of the church, through either corruption or persecution, made like a wilderness, unfruitful to God, or uncomfortable to the inhabitants; but God will find out a time and way to comfort Zion, not only by speaking comfortably to her, but by acting graciously for her. God has comforted Zion for the waste places of his church, though for those parts of it that seem not regarded or valued. (1.) He will make them fruitful, and so give them cause to rejoice; her wilderesses shall put on a new face, and look pleasant as Eden, and abound in all good fruits as the garden of the Lord. Note, It is the greatest comfort of the church to be made serviceable to the glory of God, and to be as his garden in which he delights. (2.) He will make them cheerful, and so give them hearts to rejoice: with the fruits of righteousness, joy and gladness shall be found therein; for, the more delights they have to eat, and the more good they do, the more gladness they have. And where there is gladness, to their satisfaction, it is fit that there should be thanksgiving, to God’s honour; for, whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving; and the returns of God’s favour ought to be celebrated in the voice of melody, which will be the more melodious, when God gives songs in the night, songs in the desert.

4. Hearken unto me, my people, and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. 5. My righteousness is near: my salvation is gone forth, and mine arm shall judge the people: the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. 6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. 7. Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. 8. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Both these proclamations, as I may call them, and alike with an assurance of the perpetuity of God’s righteousness, and his salvation; and therefore we put them together, both being designed for the comfort of God’s people. Observe, 1. Who they are to whom this comfort belong; “My people, and my nation, that I have set apart for myself, that own me, and are owned by me.” These are God’s people and his nation, who are subject to him as their King and their God, pay allegiance to him, and put themselves under his protection accordingly. They are a people who know righteousness, who not only have the means of knowledge, and to whom righteousness is made known, but who improve those means, and are able to form a right judgment of truth and falsehood, good and evil. And as they have not words, so they have great hearts, far from the law of God in them, written and ruling there. Those God owns for his people, in whose heart his law is. Even those who know righteousness, and have the law of God in their heart, may yet be in great distress and sorrow, and loaded with reproach and contempt: but their God will comfort them with the righteousness they know, and the law they have in their hearts.

II. What the comfort is, that belongs to God’s people: 1. That the gospel of Christ shall be preached
and published to the world; A law shall proceed from me, an evangelical law, the law of Christ, the law of faith, ch. ii. 3. This law is his judgment, for it is that law of liberty by which the world shall be governed and judged; this shall not only go forth, but shall continue and rest, it shall take firm footing and deep root in the world; it shall rest not only for the benefit of the Jews, who had the first notice of it, but for a light of the people of other nations. It is not for the Jew only, for the Gentile; for God calleth them, and giveth them a heart to, at our peril; for how shall we escape if we neglect it, and turn a deaf ear to it? When a law proceeds from God, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

2. That this law and judgment shall bring with them righteousness and salvation, shall open a ready way to the children of men, that they may be justified and made right; that all things are now ready; it is near in place, near in time, not far to seek, but the word is nigh us, and Christ in the word, righteousness in the word, Rom. x. 8.

3. That this evangelical righteousness and salvation shall not be confined to the Jewish nation, but shall be extended to the Gentiles: Mine arms shall judge the people. Those that will not yield to the judgments of God’s mouth, shall be crushed by the judgments of his hand. Some shall thus be judged by the gospel, for the judgment Christ came into this world; but others, and those of the isles, shall wait upon him, and bid his gospel, and the commands as well as the comforts of it, welcome. It was a comfort to God’s people, to his nation, that multitudes should be added to them, and the increase of their number should be the increase of their strength and glory. It is added, And on mine arm shall they trust, that arm of the Lord, which is revealed in Christ, ch. iii. 1. Observe, God’s arm shall judge the people that are inimicent, and yet on his arm shall others trust, and be saved by it; for it is to us, as we make it, a savour of life or of death.

4. That this righteousness and salvation shall be for ever, and shall never be abolished, v. 8. It is an everlasting righteousness that the Messiah brings in, (Dan. ix. 24.) an eternal redemption that he is the Author of, Heb. v. 9. As it shall spread through all the nations of the earth, so it shall last through all the ages of the world. We must never expect any other way of salvation, any other covenant of peace, or rule of righteousness, than what we have in the gospel, and what we have there shall continue to the end, Matt. xxviii. 20. It is Messiah, the foundation of our eternal, and the arm of the Lord, which is revealed in Christ, (Rom. xiv. 14.) 2. The cause we suffer for cannot be run down; the falsehood of their reproaches shall be detected, but truth shall triumph, and the righteousness of religion’s injured cause shall be for ever plain. Clouds darken the sun, but give no obstruction to his progress.

9. Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? 10. Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over? 11. Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. 12. I, even I, am that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; 13. And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth
the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy! and where is the fury of the oppressor? 14. The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. 15. But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: the Lord of hosts is his name. 16. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

In these verses, we have,

1. A prayer that God would, in his providence, appear and act for the deliverance of his people, and the mortification of his and their enemies; Awake, awake, put on strength, O Arm of the Lord, v. 3. Then shall the Gentiles seek the Lord, and all the seed of Israel; when he shall put for God himself, as Ps. lxxiv. 23. Awake, why sleepest thou? He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps; but when we pray that he would awake, we mean that he would make it to appear that he watches over his people, and is always awake to do them good. The arm of the Lord is said to awake, when the power of God exerts itself with more than ordinary weight and energy; as to remove mountains, when God or any one of his people is overthrown, when his arm is humbled, we say, It is asleep; when it is stretched forth for action, It awakes. God never needs to be reminded or excused by us, but he gives us leave thus to be humbly earnest with him for such appearances of his power as will be for his own praise; "Put on strength, put forth strength: appear in thy strength, as we appear in the clothes we put on," Ps. cxlv. 13. The church sees her case bad, her enemies many and mighty, her friends few and feeble; and therefore she depends purely upon the strength of God's arm for her relief; "Awake as in the ancient days, do for us now as thou didst for our fathers formerly, repeat the wonders they told us of," Judg. vi. 13.

11. The pleas to enforce this prayer.

1. They pleadingly recount the experiences of their ancestors, and the great things God had done for them; "Let the arm of the Lord be made bare on our behalf, for it hath done great things formerly in defence of the same cause, and we are sure it is neither shortened nor weakened; it did wonders against the Egyptians, who enslaved and oppressed God's son, his first-born; it cut Rahab to pieces with one direful plague after another; and wounded Pharaoh, the Dragon, that was in the sea;" Ps. cxlv. 13, 14. It gave him death's wound. It did wonders for Israel; it dried up the sea, even the waters of the great deep, as far as was requisite to open a way through the sea for the ransomed to pass over," v. 10. God is never at a loss for a way to accomplish his purposes concerning his people, but will either find one, or make one; past examples, as they are great supports to faith and hope, so they are good pleas in prayer, Thou hast, wilt thou not? Ps. lxxxv. 1.—6. 2. They plead promises; (v. 11.) And the redeemed of the Lord shall return; (as it may be supplied) Thou hast said, They shall; referring to ch. xxxix. 10. where we find this promise, that the redeemed of the Lord, when they are released out of their captivity in Babylon, shall come with singing unto Zion. Sinners, when they are brought out of the slavery of sin into the glorious liberty of God's children, may come singing, as a bird got loose out of the cage. The souls of believers, when they are delivered out of the prison of the body, come to the heavenly Zion with singing, and this promise will have its full accomplishment, and we may rest assured it will in the mean time; he that designs such joy for us at last, will he not work such deliverance for us in the mean time as our case requires? When the saints come to heaven, they enter into the joy of their Lord, it crowns their heads with immortal honour, it fills their hearts with complete satisfaction; they shall obtain that joy as the gladness of a bridegroom and bride, and it is the joy that is a gift in this vale of tears. In this world of changes, it is a short step from joy to sorrow, but in that world sorrow and mourning shall flee away, never to return, or come in view again. 111. The answer immediately given to this prayer; (v. 12.) I, even I, am he that comforteth you. They prayed for the operations of his power, he answers them with the consolations of his grace, which may well be accepted as an equivalent. If God do not wound the dragon, and dry the sea, as formerly, yet if he comfort us in soul under our afflictions, we have no reason to complain. If God do not answer immediately, with the saving strength of his right hand, we must be thankful if he answer us, as an angel answered, (Zechar. iv. 13.) with good words and comfort. God in all things is kind and gracious, and resolves to comfort his people; I, even I, will do it. He had ordered his ministers to do it, (ch. xl. 1.) but because they cannot reach the heart, he takes the work into his own hands; I, even I, will do it. See how he glories in it; he takes it among the titles of his honour to be the God that comforteth, and casteth down, and delighteth in being so. Those whom God comforts, are comforted indeed; no, his undertaking to comfort them is comfort enough to them. 1. He comforts those that were in fear; and fear has torment which calls for comf rt: the fear of man has a snare in it which we have need of comfort to preserve us from. He comforts the timorous by chiding them, and that is no improper way of comforting either others or ourselves; Why art thou cast down, and why didst thou? v. 12, 13. God, who comforts his people, would not have them disfrunt themselves with amazing, perplexing fears, either of the reproach of men, (v. 7.) or of their growing, threatening power and greatness, or of any mischief they may intend against us or our people. Observe,

(1.) The absurdity of these fears; it is a disparagement to us to give way to them; Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid? In the original, the pronoun is feminine, Who art thou, O woman, unworthy the name of a man? Such a weak and womanish thing it is to give way to perplexing fears. [1.] It is absurd to be in such dread of a dying man. What! afraid of a man, that shall die, shall certainly and shortly die; of the man of which shall be made gladness, shall either he be laid down, or eaten up? The greatest men, and the most formidable, that are the terror of the mighty, in the land of the living, are but men, (Ps. ix. 20.) and shall die like men; (Ps. lxxiii. 7.) but grass sprang out of the earth, cleaving to it, and retiring again into it. Note, We ought to look upon every man as a man that shall die. Those we admire, and love, and trust in; are men that shall die; let us not therefore delight too much in them, nor depend too much upon them. Those we fear we must look upon as frail and mortal, and consider what a foolish thing it is for the servants of the living God to be afraid of dying men, that are here to-day, and gone to-morrow. [2.] It is absurd to fear continually every day, (v. 13.) to be ourselves in terror when the universe is so easy, nor to have any enjoyment of ourselves. Now and then a danger may be imminent and threaten ing, and it may be prudence to fear it; but to be always:
in a toss, jealous of dangers at every step, and to tremble at the shaking of every leaf, is to make our- selves subject to the fury of the oppressor; (Hab. 1, 13.) and to bring upon ourselves that very judgment which is threatened, Deut. xxxvi, 66, 67. Thou shalt fear day and night. [3.] It is absurd to fear beyond what there is cause: "Thou art afraid of the fury of the oppressor; it is true, there is an oppressor, and he is furious, and he designs, it may be, when he has an opportunity, to do thee a mischief, and to bring in and to bear upon thy guard; but thou art afraid of him, as if he were ready to destroy, as if he were just now going to cut thy throat, and as if there were no possibility of preventing it." A timorous spirit is thus apt to make the worst of every thing, and to apprehend the danger greater and nearer than really it is. Sometimes God is pleased at once to show us the folly of it: "There is the fury of the oppressor. It is gone in an instant, and the danger is over ere then art aware." His heart is turned, or his hands are tied. Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, and the king of Babylon no more. What is gone with all the furious oppressors of God's Israel, that hoc- tored them, and threatened them, and were a terror to them; they passed away, and lo, they were not, and there was no more of them. (2.) The impurity of these fears; "Thou art afraid of a man that shall die, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, who is also the Maker of all the world, who has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, and therefore has all the hosts and all the powers of both at his command and disposal." Note. Our inordinate fearing of man is an implicit forgetting of God. When we disquiet ourselves with the fear of man, we forget that there is a God above him, and that the greatest of men have no power but what is given them from above; we forget the providence of God, by which he orders and overrules all events according to the counsel of his own will; we forget the promises he has made to protect his people, and the experiences we have had of his care concerning us, and his seasonable inter- position for our relief many a time, when we thought the oppressor ready to destroy; we forget our Jeho- vah-priests, monuments of mercy in the mount of the Lord. Did we remember to make God our fear and our dread, we should not be so much afraid as we are of the frowns of men, ch. viii. 13, 13. Happy is the man that fears God always, Prov. xxviii. 14. 15.

2. He comforts those that were in bonds, v. 14, 15. See here, (1.) What they do for themselves; The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, and may return to his own country, from which he is banished; his care is, that he may not die in the pit, not die a prisoner, through the inconveniences of his confinement; and that his bread should not fail, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, or that which should bear his charges home; his stock is low, and therefore he hastens to be loosed. Now some understand this as his fault; he is distrustfully impatient of delays, cannot wait God's time, but thinks he is undone, and must die in the pit, if he be not released immediately; others take it to be his praise, that when the doors are three he need not fear, either the bread he should have to keep him alive in prison, or that which should bear his charges home; with all diligence to procure his discharge; and then it follows, But I am the Lord thy God, which inti- mates, (2.) What God will do for them, that even which they cannot do for themselves. God has all power in his hand to help the captive exiles; for he has divided the sea, when the rearing of its waves was more frightful than any of the impotent multitudes of princes oppressors. He has stilled or quieted the sea, so some think it should be read, Ps. lxv. 7—

LXXIX. 9. This is not only a proof of what God can do, but a resemblance of what he has done, and will do, for his people; he will find out a way to still the fears of his people; though he may not bring them to the harbour; The Lord of hosts is his name, his name for ever; the name by which his people have long known him. And as he is able to help them, so he is willing and engaged to do it; for he is thy God, O captive exile, thine covenant. This is a check to the desponding captives; let them not conclude that they must either be lost immediately, or die in the pit; for he that is the Lord of hosts can help them when they are brought over so low. It is also an encouragement to the diligent captives, who, when liberty is proclaimed, are willing to lose no time; let them know that the Lord is their God, and while they thus strive to help themselves, they may be sure he will help them.

He comforts all his people who depended upon what the prophets said to them in the name of the Lord, and built their hopes upon it. When the deliverances which the prophets spoke of, either did not come soon as they looked for them, or did not come up to the height of their expectation, they began to be cast down in their own eyes; but as to this, they are encouraged, (v. 16.) by what God says to his people, that not the princes, nor the prophets, nor to this, or them, principally, but to Christ, the great Prophet. It is a great satisfaction to those to whom the message is sent, to hear the God of truth and power say to his messenger, as he does here, I have put my words in thy mouth, that by them I may plant the heavens. God undertook to comfort his people; (v. 12.) but still he does it by his prophets, by his words, and then he may do it by these, he were to us, (1.) That his word in them is very true. He owns what they had said to be what he had directed and enjoined them to say; "I have put my words in thy mouth, and therefore he that receives thee and them receives me." This is a great stay to our faith, that Christ's doctrine was not his, but his that sent him; and that the words of the prophets and apostles were God's words which he put into their mouths. God's Spirit not only revealed to them the things themselves they spoke of, but dictated to them the words they should speak, (2 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. ii. 13.) so that these are the true sayings of God, of a God that cannot lie. (2.) That it is very safe; I have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, (as before, ch. xlix. 2.) which speaks the special protection, not only of the particular prophets, but of all the prophets, not only of Christ, but of Christianity, of the gospel of Christ; it is not only the faithful word of God which the prophets deliver to us, but it shall be carefully preserved till it have its accomplishment for the use of the church, notwithstanding the restless endeavours of the powers of darkness to extinguish this light. They shall prophesy again, (Rev. x. 11.) though not in their persons, yet in their writings, which God has always preserved; I have covered in the shadow of my hand, preserved by a special providence, else they had been lost ere this. (3.) That this word, when it comes to be accomplished, will be very great, and will not fall short of the pomp and grandeur of the prophecy; I have put my words in thy mouth, not that by the performance of them I may plant a nation, or found a people, or preserve them from the plagues of God; but that the words of the earth, may do that for my people which will be a new creation." This must look as far forward as to the great work done by the gospel of Christ, and the setting up of his holy religion in the world. As God by Christ made the world at first, (Hch. i. 2.) and by him formed the Old Testament church, (Zech. vi. 9.) and by him he has formed his people into his mouth, he will set up, (1.) A new world; we shall see again plant the heavens, and found the earth. Sin having put the whole creation into disorder, Chris
taking away the sin of the world put all into order again; old things are passed away, all things are become new; things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled, and so put into a new posture, Col. i. 20. Through him, according to the promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, (2 Pet. iii. 13,) and to this the prophets bear witness. [2.] He will set up a new church, a New Testament church; he will say unto Zion, Thou art my people. The gospel-church is called Zion, (Heb. xii. 22,) and Jerusalem, Gal. iv. 26. And when the Gentiles are brought into it, it shall be said unto them, Ye are my people. When God works great deliverances for his church, and especially when he shall complete the salvation of it in the great day, he will thereby own that poor despised hand to be his people, whom he has chosen and loved.

17. Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury: thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. 18. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand, of all the sons that she hath brought up. 19. These two things are come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? 20. Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God. 21. Therefore, hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine: 22. Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling, even the cup of the cup of my fury, thou shalt no more drink it again; 23. But I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over; and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.

God having awaked for the comfort of his people, here calls upon them to awake, as afterward, ch. lii. 1. It is a call to awake not so much out of their sleep of sin, (though that also is necessary in order to their being ready for deliverance,) as out of the stuper of despair. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem were in captivity, they as well as those who remained upon the spot, were so overpowered with the sense of their troubles, that they had no heart or spirit to mind anything that tended to their comfort or relief; they were as the disciples in the garden, sleeping for sorrow, (Luke xxii. 45,) and therefore when the deliverance came, they are said to be like them that dream, (Ps. cxxxvi. 1.) Nay, it is a call to awake, not only out of sleep, but from death, like that to the dry bones to life, Ezek. xxxvii. 9. "Awake, and look about thee, that thou mayest see the day of the deliverance dawn, and mayest be ready to bid it welcome; recover thy senses, sink not under thy load, but stand up, and hasten thyself for thy own help." This may be applied to the Jerusalem that was in the apostle's time, which is said to be in bondage with her children, (Gal. iv. 25,) and to have been under the power of a spirit of slumber; (Rom. xi. 8,) they are called to awake, and mind the things that belonged to their everlasting peace, and then the cup of trembling should be taken out of their hands, and not be spoken to them, and they should triumph over Satan, who had blinded their eyes and lulled them asleep. Now,

1. It is owned that Jerusalem had long been in a very deplorable condition, and sunk into the depths of misery.

2. Those that should have helped her in her distress, failed her, and were either unable or unwilling to help her, as might have been expected, ch. 18. She is intoxicated with the cup of God's fury, and, being so, staggers, and is very unsteady in her counsels and attempts; she knows not what she says or does; much less she knows what to say or do in this unhappy condition, of all the sons that she brought forth and brought up, that she has borne and educated, and were many famous ones, or of Zion it was said, That this and that man was born there, (Ps. lxxxvii. 5,) there is none to guide her, none to take her by the hand, to keep her either from falling, or from shamming herself, to lend either a hand to help her out of her trouble, or to comfort her under it. Think it not strange, if wise and good men are disappointed in their children, and have not that succour from them which they expected, but if those were arrows in their hand, prove arrows in their heart, when Jerusalem herself has none of all her sons, either prince, priest, or prophet, that has such a sense either of duty or gratitude, as to help her when she had most need of help. Thus they complain, (Ps. lxxiv. 9.) There is none to tell us how long.

Now that which aggravated this disappointment, was,

(1.) That her trouble was very great, and yet there was none to pity or help her; These two things are come unto thee, (v. 19,) to complete thy desolation and destruction, and the sword, two sore judgments, and very terrible. Or, the two things were, the desolation and destruction by which the city was wasted, and the famine and sword by which the citizens perished. Or, the two things were, the trouble itself, made up of desolation, destruction, famine, and sword, and her being helpless, forlorn, and comfortless, under it. Two such things indeed, to be in this woful case, and to have none to pity thee, to sympathize with thee in thy griefs, or to help to bear the burthen of thy cares; to have none to comfort thee, by suggesting that to thee which might help to alleviate thy grief, or doing that for thee which might help to redress thy grievances." Or, these two things that were
come upon Jerusalem, are the same with the two things that were afterward to come upon Babylon, (ch. lxviii. 9.) loss of children and widowhood; pitious cases, and yet, when thou hast brought it upon thyself by thy own sin and folly, who shall be sorry for thee? Cases that call for comfort, and yet, when thou art towready under thy trouble, frettest, and makest thyself uneasy, by whom shall I comfort thee? They that will not be counselled, cannot be helped.

(2.) That those who should have been her consolers, were their own tormentors, (v. 20.) They were God's, as quirely as they are of thyself; and yet, their case, they have patience in which to keep possession of their own souls, and the enjoyment of themselves, nor any confidence in God's promise, by which to keep possession of the comfort of that. They throw themselves upon the ground, in vexation in their troubles, and there they lie at the head of all the streets, complaining to all that pass by, (Lam. 1. 12.) pining away for want of necessary food; there they lie like a wild bull in a net, fretting and raging, struggling and pulling, to help themselves, but entangling themselves so much the more, and making their condition the worse, by their own passions and discontent. They that are of a meek and quiet spirit, are, under affliction, like a dove in a net, mourning indeed, but still and patient. The Lord, however, did not suffer them to remain a wild bull in a net, uneasy to themselves, vexations to their friends, and provoking to their God: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of our God. God is angry with them, and contends with them, and they are full of that only, and take no notice of his wise and gracious designs in afflictling them, never inquire wherefore he contends with them, and their griefs, the God that has given them a raging heart at God, and quarrelling with him. They are displeased at God for the dispensations of his providence concerning them, and so they do but make bad worse. This had long been Jerusalem's woful case, and God took cognizance of it. But,

II. It is promised that Jerusalem's troubles shall at length come to an end, and be transferred to her persecutors; (v. 21.) Nevertheless, hear this, thou afflicted. It is often the lot of God's church to be afflicted, and God has always something to say to her then, which she will do well to hearken to. Thou art drunken, not as formerly with wine, not with the intoxicating cup of Babylon's whereabouts and idolatries, but with the cup of affliction. Know then,

4. That the Lord Jehovah is thy Lord and thy God, for all this. It is expressed emphatically, (v. 22.) Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord, and thy God; the Lord, who is able to help thee, and has wherewithal to relieve thee, thy Lord, who has an unexhaustible store of help to thee, and will not alienate it, thy God, in covenant with thee, and who has undertaken to aid thee happy. And let the distresses of God's people may be, he will not desert his relation to them, nor have they lost their interest in him and in his promise.

5. That he is the God who pleads the cause of his people, as their Patron and Protector; who takes what is done against them as done against himself.

The cause of God's people, and of that holy religion which is the root of it, is a righteous cause, otherwise the righteous God would not appear for it; yet it may for a time he run down, and seem as if it were lost; but God will plead it, either by convincing the consciences, or confounding the miscarious projects, of those that fight against it. He will plead it by clearing up the equity and excellence of it to the world, and by giving success to those that act in defence of it. It is his own cause, he has espoused it, and therefore will plead it with jealousy.

3. That they should shortly take leave of their troubles, and bid a final farewell to them: "I would take out of thy hand the cup of trembling, that bitter cup, it shall pass from thee." This wing expresses the cup of trembling will not be, nor will it be brought, but it is taken away; "We will not drink it," but if they voluntarily submit, he that put it into our hands will himself take it out of our hands. Nay, it is promised, "Thou shalt no more drink it against God" for he will sit in his controversy with thee, and will not revive the judgment.

4. That their persecutors and oppressors should be made to drink of that very cup which they had drunk so deep; (v. 23.) See here, (1.) How insolently they had abused, and trampled upon, the people of God; They have said to thy soul, to thee, to thy life, Bow down, that we may go over thee. Nay, they have said it to the conscience, taking pride and pleasure in forcing thee to worship idols. He ran the New Testament Babylon tracts in the steps of that old oppressor, tyrannizing over men's consciences, giving law to them, putting them upon the rack, and compelling them to sinful compliances. They that set up an infallible head and judge, requiring an implicit faith in his dictates, and obedience to his commands, do in effect say to men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over thee; and they say it with delight. How meanly the people of God (having no such head and judge, and no such power, and sense of honour) trampled upon them; Then had laid thy body as the ground. Observe, The oppressors required souls to be subjected to them, that every man should believe and worship just as they would have them. But all they could gain by their threats and violence, was, that people laid their body on the ground; they brought them to an extermination, and a being put in a condition of the same (or of the same sort of) tormentors (as the word is), to the people of God. No power can be forced, nor is it mentioned to their praise that they yielded thus far. But, (2.) Observe how justly God will reckon with those who have carried it so imperiously toward his people; the cup of trembling shall be put into their hand. Babylon's case shall be as bad as ever Jerusalem's was. Daniel's persecutors shall be thrown into Daniel's den; let them see how they like it. And the Lord is known by these judgments which he executes.

CHAP. LII.

The most part of this chapter is of the same subject with the chapter before, concerning the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, which yet is applicable to the great salvation of the Jews out of their many oppressions and afflictions; and these last three verses are of the same subject with the following chapter, concerning the persons of the Redeemer, his humiliation, and exaltation. Observe, I. The encouragement that is given to the Jews in captivity, to hope that God would deliver them in his own way and time, v. 1. 6. II. The great joy and rejoicing that shall be both with ministers and people upon that occasion, v. 7. 10. III. The very small part God will allow to them for their own enlargement when liberty was proclaimed, v. 11, 12. IV. A short idea given here of the Messiah, which is enlarged upon in the next chapter, v. 13. 15.

1. A WAKE, awake; put on thy strength. O Zion; put on thy beautiful garnments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. 2. Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. 3. For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought; and ye shall be redeemed without money. 4. For thus saith,
ISAIAH, LII.

There must be no pretense, as God has not promised to make them free, or to free them by any of the methods of the world, but to make them free in a manner altogether different from that of the world, and to do it by the power of his Spirit, which will be the true and only way of freedom. This is the only way in which they can be truly free, and it is the only way by which they can truly serve God, and be truly free from the power of sin. The Lord God, My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. Therefore, they shall know in that day that I am he that speaketh; behold, it is I.

Here,

I. God’s people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance. v. 1, 2. They had desired that God would awake, and put on his strength, ch. li. 9. Here he calls upon them to awake, and put on their strength, to bestir themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and pluck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succumb and sink under their burden. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the promises of God that were working for them, and let them have their expectations of great things from God. Let them awake from their dulness, sluggishness, and incogitancy, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him.

Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more holy we are, the more cause we have to rejoice. (2.) Let them appear for liberty. “Shake thyself from the dust in which thou hast lain, and into which thou proud oppressors have trodden thee, (ch. li. 23,) or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself.” Arise, and sit up; so it may be read. “O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to shift thy quarters; lose thyself from the bands of the neck, be set free, and be got out of the chains of thy tyrants.” The gospel proclaims liberty to those who were bound with cares, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavy-laden, under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and lose themselves from these bands; for if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

II. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers. That the Chaldeans who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people; any more than Sennacherib did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, &c. x. 6, 7. “Ye have sold yourselves for naught, you got nothing by it, nor did I.” v. 3. God considers that when they by sin had sold themselves, he himself, who had the prior, the sole title to them, did not increase his wealth by the price, Ps. xliii. 12. (They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) “And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; you shall be redeemed without price; this was promised, ch. xiv. 13. Those that give nothing, must expect to get nothing; however, God is a debtor to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their taskmasters, and therefore it was pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors. (v. 4.) My people went down into Egypt, in an amicable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigor. And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, and power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times, the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive to Babylon; and often, Sennacherib, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed, and made himself master of all, the defenced cities of Judah; the Babylonians might not unfily be called Assyrians, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrian: and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them, as they did; and God would not pretend to have given over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, Ps. viii. 5, 5, &c.

3. That God’s glory suffered by the injuries that
were done to his people; (v. 5.) What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people is taken away for naught? God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a Gainer in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so.

(1.) The captives are so dispirited, that they cannot praise him; instead of this, they are continually howling, which grieves him, and moves his pity.

The that rule over them make to howl, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, Exod. vi. 23.

So the Babylonians, now using them more hardly, exorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but bruitish rather; they howled, Hos. vii. 14.

However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Exod. iii. 7, 8.

(2.) The natives are so insolent, that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger.

They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people, and set him to make a show to do the same, and thus his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols, they lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven, Dan. v. 23.

Now, says God, this is not to be suffered, I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise, have I from the world, when my people, who should be made a name to me, are not wont to praise, or to cry for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it.

The apostle quotes this, with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

4. That his glory would be greatly manifested by their deliverance; (v. 6.) Therefore, because my name is thus blasphemed, I will arise, and my people shall know my name, my name, Jehovah. By this name he had made himself known, in delivering them out of Egypt, Exod. vi. 3.

God will do something to vindicate his own honour, something for his great name, and his people, who have almost lost the knowledge of it, shall know it to their comfort, and shall themselves be made a name to praise, and be a name to God for a reproach. For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it.

The apostle quotes this, with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

5. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

They watchmen shall lift up the voice, with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem: 10. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

11. Depart ye, depart ye go ye out from hence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; he ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, is here spoken of both as a mercy, and as a duty; and the application of v. 7. to the preaching of the gospel, (by the apostle, Rom. x. 13.) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

1. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness.

2. Those that bring the tidings of their release, shall be with acceptance; (v. 7.) How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!

It is not meant so much of the common pests, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being of the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there, that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published; they say unto Zion, Thy God reigns.

Those who bring the tidings of peace and salvation, that Cyrus has given orders for the release of the Jews, tidings which were so long expected by them that waited for the consolation of Israel, thse good tidings, (as the original reads it, without the tautology of our translation, good tidings of good,) they put this construction upon it, O Zion, thy God reigns. Some have understood it here, as in the 5th chapter, for good news, and when good news is abroad, this is the best news, that Zion's God reigns; that is, God is Zion's God in covenant with her, and as such he reigns, Ps. cxxxv. 10. Zech. ix. 9. The Lord has founded Zion, ch. xiv. 32. All events have their rise in the disposals of the kingdom of his providence, and their tendency to the advancement of self kingdom of his grace. This must be applied to the preaching of the gospel, which is a proclamation of peace and salvation; it is gospel indeed, good news, glad tidings, tidings of victory over our spiritual enemies, and liberty from our spiritual bondage. The good news is, that the Lord Jesus reigns, and all power is given to him. Christ himself brought these tidings first (Luke iv. 18. Heb. i. 3.) and the people text, these are your feet; these are thy feet; these are the feet of him that publisheth good tidings, that publisheth peace; this is the prophet, who is the last of the prophets; he was sent with a spirit and power upon him; he was to be a prophet, who should open the blind eyes of the people; this is the prophet, who should bring the tidings of peace and salvation.
the Lord God. My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause. 5. Now, therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord, and my name continually every day is blasphemed. 6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.

Here,

1. God's people are stirred up to appear vigorous for their own deliverance, ch. 1, 2. They had desired that God would awake, and put on his strength, ch. ii. 9. Here he calls upon them to awake, and put on their strength, to hasten themselves; let them awake from their despondency, and suck up their spirits, encourage themselves and one another with hope that all will be well yet, and no longer succeed and sink under their burden. Let them awake from their distrust, look above them, look about them, look into the promises, look into the providences of God that were working for them, and let their names awake great things from God. Let them awake from their dullness, sluggishness, and incogitariness, and raise up their endeavours, not to take any irregular courses for their own relief, contrary to the law of nations concerning captives, but to use all likely means to recommend themselves to the favour of the conqueror, and make an interest with him.

God here gives them an assurance. 1. That they shall be reformed by their captivity: There shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the uncircumcised, that idolatrous customs shall be no more introduced, or at least not harboured; for when by the marriage of strange wives, in Ezra's time and Nehemiah's, the uncircumcised went in, they were soon by the vigilance and zeal of the magistrates expelled again; and care was taken that Jerusalem should be a holy city. Thus the gospel-Jerusalem is purified by the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and made indeed a holy city. 2. They shall be relieved, and rescued out of their captivity; that the bands of their necks should be loosed; that they should not now be any longer oppressed, nay, that they should not be any more invaded as they had been; There shall no more come against thee two or three bands, ch. 1, 1.) the uncircumcised and the uncircumcised. The heathen shall not again enter into God's sanctuary, and profane his temple, Ps. lxix. 1. This must be understood with a condition; if they keep close to God, and keep in with him, God will keep off, will keep out, the enemy; but if they again corrupt themselves, Antiochus will profane their temple, and the Romans destroy it. However, for some time after, when by this change, now approaching, they are here called to accommodate themselves. (1.) Let them prepare for joy: Put on thy beautiful garments, no longer to appear in mourning-weeds, and the habit of thy widowhood. Put on a new face, a smiling countenance, now that a new and pleasant scene begins to open. The beautiful garments were laid up them, when the harps had been put away after, this is now, and now there is occasion for both, let both be resumed together. "Put on thy strength, and in order to that, put on thy beautiful garments, in token of triumph and rejoicing." Note, The joy of the Lord will be our strength, (Neh. viii. 10.) and our beautiful garments will serve for armour of proof against the darts of temptation and trouble. And observe, Jerusalem must then put on her beautiful garments when she is become a holy city, for the beauty of holiness is the most amiable beauty, and the more commendable by that name, we are called the city of the Lord. (2.) Let them prepare for liberty:" Shake thyself from the dust in which thou hast lain, and into which thy proud oppressors have trodden thee, (ch. li. 23.) or into which thou hast in thy extreme sorrow rolled thyself." Arise, and set up; so it may be read. "O Jerusalem, prepare to get clear of all the marks of servitude thou hast been under, and to set up thy quarters: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, be armed with generous principles, and resolutions to assert thine own liberty." The gospel proclaims liberty to these who were bound with fears, and makes it their duty to take hold of their liberty. Let those who have been weary and heavy-laden, under the burden of sin, finding relief in Christ, shake themselves from the dust of their doubts and fears, and loose themselves from those bands; for if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

II. God stirs up himself to appear jealous for the deliverance of his people. He here pleads their cause with himself, and even stirs up himself to come and save them, for his reasons of mercy are fetched from himself. Divers things he here considers,

1. The case of great distress to which the Chaldeans who oppressed them, never acknowledged God in the power they gained over his people; any more than Semiramis did, who, when God made use of him as an instrument for the correction and reformation of his people, meant not so, c. x. 6, 7. "Ye have sold yourselves for naught, you got nothing by it, nor did I." ch. 3. God considers that when they by sin had invaded himself, he, who had the power, came to the scene, and took the title to them, did not increase his wealth by the price, Ps. xlv. 12. (They did not so much as pay their debts to him with it; the Babylonians gave him no thanks for them, but rather reproached and blasphemed his name upon that account.) And therefore they, having so long had you for nothing, shall at last restore you for nothing; you shall be redeemed without price; this was a mercy promised, ch. xlv. 13. Those that give nothing, must expect to get nothing; however, God is a Deboruer to no man.

2. That they had been often before in the like distress, had often smarted for a time under the tyranny of their taskmasters, and therefore it was pity that they should now be left always in the hand of these oppressors; (ch. 4.) and shall be carried into Egypt, in an amiable way to settle there; but they enslaved them, and ruled them with rigour. And then they were delivered, notwithstanding the pride, power, and policies of Pharaoh. And why may we not think God will deliver his people now? At other times, the Assyrian oppressed the people of God without cause, as when the ten tribes were carried away captive beyond the Euphrates, c. vii. 15: and this, another Assyrian, with a destroying army, oppressed, and made himself master of all, the defended cities of Judah; the Babylonians might not unfitly be called Assyrians, their monarchy being a branch of the Assyrian; and they now oppressed them without cause. Though God was righteous in delivering them into their hands, they were unrighteous in using them; for they did not pretend a dominion over them as their subjects, as Pharaoh might when they were settled in Goshen, a part of his kingdom. When we suffer by the hands of wicked and unreasonable men, it is some comfort to be able to say, that as to them it is without cause, that we have not given them any provocation, Ps. vii. 3, 5, &c.

3. That God's glory suffered by the injuries that
were done to his people; (v. 5.) What have I here, what do I get by it, that my people is taken away for naught? God is not worshipped as he used to be in Jerusalem, his altar there is gone, and his temple in ruins; but if, in lieu of that, he were more and better worshipped in Babylon, either by the captives, or by the natives, it were another matter, God might be looked upon as in some respect a Gainer in his honour by it; but alas, it is not so. (1.) The captives are so dispirited, that they cannot praise him; instead of this, they are continually howling, which gives him, as it were, his play. They that rule over them make them to howl, as the Egyptians of old made them to sigh, Exod. ii. 23. So the Babylonians, now using them more hardly, extorted from them louder complaints, and made them to howl. This gives us no pleasing idea of the temper the captives were now in; their complaints were not so rational and pious as they should have been, but brutish rather; they howled, Hos. vii. 14. However, God heard it, and came down to deliver them, as he did out of Egypt, Exod. iii. 7. 8. (2.) The natives are so insolent, that they will not praise him, but, instead of that, they are continually blaspheming, which affronts him, and moves his anger. They boasted that they were too hard for God, because they were too hard for his people, and set him before them as a theme to be ridiculed, and thus his name continually every day was blasphemed among them. When they praised their own idols, they lifted up themselves against the Lord of heaven, Dan. v. 23. "Now," says God, "this is not to be suffered, I will go down to deliver them; for what honour, what rent, what tribute of praise, have I from the world, when my people, who should be to me for a name and a praise, are doing for a reproach? For their oppressors will neither praise God themselves, nor let them do it." The apostle quotes this, with application to the wicked lives of the Jews, by which God was dishonoured among the Gentiles then, as much as now he was by their sufferings, Rom. ii. 23, 24.

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7. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! 8. Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. 9. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem: 10. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. 11. Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. 12. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward.

The removal of the Jews from Babylon to their own land again, is here spoken of both as a mercy, and as a duty; and the application of v. 7. to the preaching of the gospel, (by the apostle, Rom. x. 13.) plainly intimates that that deliverance was a type and figure of the redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ, to which what is here said of their redemption out of Babylon ought to be accommodated.

1. It is here spoken of as a great blessing, which ought to be welcomed with abundance of joy and thankfulness. 2. Those that bring the tidings of their release, shall be the more acceptable: (v. 7.) "How beautiful upon the mountains, the mountains round about Jerusalem, over which these messengers are seen coming at a distance, how beautiful are their feet, when it is known what tidings they bring!" It is not meant so much of the common posts, or the messengers sent express by the government to disperse the proclamation, but rather of some of the Jews themselves, who, being at the fountain-head of intelligence, had early notice of it, and immediately went themselves, or sent their own messengers, to all parts, to disperse the news, and even to Jerusalem itself, to tell the few who remained there, that their brethren would be with them shortly, for it is published not merely as matter of news, but as a proof that Zion's God reigns, for in that language it is published; they say unto Zion, Thy God reigns.

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at their feet, or rather at Christ's in them, to hear his word. They must be esteemed in love, for their work's sake, 1 Thess. v. 13. For their message-book, which is well worthy of all acceptance.

2. Those to whom the tidings are brought, shall be put thereby into a transport of joy.

(1.) Zion's watchmen shall then rejoice, because they are at length to be kissed by God. The watchmen on Jerusalem's walls shall lead the chorus in this triumph; who they were we are told, ch. ix. 6. They were such as God set on the walls of Jerusalem, to make mention of his name, and to continue instant in prayer to him, till he again make Jerusalem praise on the earth; these watchmen stand upon their watch-tower, waiting for an answer to their prayers. And the sooner these good news come they have it first, and the longer they have continued, and the more important they have been in praying for it, the more will they be elevated when it comes; they shall lift up the voice, with the voice together they shall sing in concert, to invite others to join with them in their praises. And that which above all things will transport them with pleasure is, that they shall see eye to eye, &c. (Isa. 2:2-3, 4-5) and concur in agreement and correspondence between the prophecy and the event, the promise and the performance; they shall see how they look one upon another eye to eye, and be satisfied that the same God spake the one, and did the other. When the Lord shall bring again Zion out of her captivity, the prophets shall then perceive and give fuller discoveries than ever of God's good-will to his people. Applying this also, as the foregoing verse, to gospel-times, it is a promise of the pouring out of the Spirit upon gospel ministers, as a spirit of wisdom and revelation, to lead them into all truth, so that they shall see eye to eye; shall see God's grace more clearly than the Old Testament saints should see it: and they shall herein be unanimous; in these great things concerning the common salvation, they shall concur in the most perfect accord and concord. And this, it seems to me, St. Paul seems to allude to this, when he makes it the privilege of our future state, that we shall see face to face.

(2.) Zion's waste places shall then rejoice, because they shall be surprisingly comforted; (v. 9.) Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; that is, all parts of Jerusalem, for it was all in ruins, and even those parts that seemed to lie most desolate, shall share in the joy; and they, having little expected it, shall break forth into joy, as men that dream, Ps. cxlii. 1, 2. Let them sing together. Note, Those that share in mercies, ought to join in praises. Here is matter for joy and praise.

[1.] God's people will have the comfort of this salvation, and what is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the palm of our hearts. He has redeemed Jerusalem, the inhabitation of Jerusalem, the olive-tree of Jerusalem, that were laid into the hands of their enemies, and thereby he has comforted his people that were in sorrow. The redemption of Jerusalem is the joy of all God's people, whose character it is, that they look for that redemption, Luke i. 38. [2.] God will have the glory of it, v. 16. He has made bare his holy arm, manifested and displayed his power, in the eyes of all the nations. God's arm is a holy arm, stretched out in purity and justice, in defence of holiness, and in pursuance of his promise. [3.]

All the world will have the benefit of it: the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus, the arm of the Lord was revealed, and all the eyes of the earth were made to see the great salvation, not as spectators of it only, as they saw the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, but as sharers in it; some of all nations, the most remote, shall partake of the benefits of the redemption. This is applied to our salvation, (Rev. v. 1.) "See the salvation of God, that great salvation."

II. It is here spoken of as a great business, which ought to be managed with abundance of care and circumspection. When the liberty is proclaimed,

1. Let the people of God hasten out of Babylon with all convenient speed; though they are ever so well settled there, let them not think of taking root and becoming Babylonian. And this is a heartening comfort to the prisoner of the Lord, chap. xlii. 14. Ye go out from the midst of her, not only those that are in the borders, but those that are in the midst, in the heart of the country, let them be gone. Babylon is no place for Israelites. As soon as they have leave to go, let them lose no time; with this word God stirred up the spirits of those that were moved to go up, Ezra i. 5. And it is a call to all those who love the church of Christ, to go out of the decay and corruption of the liberty which Christ has proclaimed to them. And if the Son make them free, they shall be free indeed.

2. Let them take heed of carrying away with them any of the pollutions of Babylon: Touch not unclean thing. Now that God makes bare his holy arm for you, be ye holy as he is, and keep yourselves free from every wicked thing. With both came out of Egypt, they brought with them the idolatrous customs of Egypt, (Ezek. xxiii. 3.) which were their ruin; let them take heed of doing so, now that they come out of Babylon. When we are receiving any special mercy from God, we ought more carefully than ever to watch against all impurity. But especially let them be clean, who bear the vessels of the Lord, the priests, when they change the vessels of the sanctuary, (when they were restored by a particular grant,) to carry them to Jerusalem, Ezr ii. 24. &c. Let them not only avoid touching any unclean thing, but be very careful to cleanse themselves according to the purification of the sanctuary. Christians are made to our God spiritual priests, Rev. i. 6. They are to bear the vessels of the Lord, are intrusted to keep the ordinances of God pure and entire; lest to do a good thing committed to them, and they ought to be clean, to wash their hands in innocency, and so to compass God's altars, and, to carry his vessels, and keep themselves pure.

3. Let them depend upon the presence of God with them, and his protection in their remove; (v. 12.) Ye shall not go out with haste.

They were to go with a design, not to lose time, no longer to stay than was necessary, as when they came out of Egypt, or of having the orders for their release recalled and countermanded: no, they shall find that, as for God, his work is perfect, and therefore they need not make haste but go more slowly than good speed. Cyrus shall give them an honor-haste, not to lose time, nor longer have an honor or more return, and not steal away, for the Lord will go before them as their General and Commander-in-chief. And the God of Israel will be their Rearward, or, he that will gather up them that are left behind. God will both lead their van, and bring up their rear; he will secure them from enemies that either meet them or follow them, with his favour will he compass them. He will be a cloud and fire, when they came out of Egypt, sometimes went behind them to secure their rear. Exod. xiv. 19. And God's presence with them
would now be that to them which that pillar was a visible token of. These that are in the way of their duty, are under God's special protection; and he that believes this, will not make haste.

13. Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. 14. As many were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;) 15. So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.

Here, as in other places, for the confirming of the faith of God's people, and the encouraging of their hope in the promise of temporal deliverances, the prophet passes from them, to speak of the great salvation which should in the fulness of time be wrought out by the Messiah. As the prophecy of Christ's incarnation was intended for the ratification of the promise of their deliverance from the Assyrian army, so this of Christ's death and resurrection is to confirm the promise of their return out of Babylon: for both these salvations were typical of the great redemption, and the prophecies of them had a reference to this. This prophecy, therefore, is continued to the end of the next chapter, points as plainly as can be at Jesus Christ; the ancient Jews understood it of the Messiah, though the modern Jews take a great deal of pains to pervert it: and some of ours (no friends therein to the Christian religion) will have it understood of Jeremiah; but Philip, who from hence preached Christ to the eunuch, has proved that dispute, that it was spoken of Christ, not of a prophet, nor of his prophet; of him, and of no other man, Acts viii. 33, 34. 35. Here, God owns Christ to be both commissioned and qualified for his undertaking. 1. He is appointed to it: "He is my Servant, whom I employ, and therefore will uphold." In his undertaking, he does his Father's will, seeks his Father's honour, and serves his Father's kingdom. 2. He is qualified for it; He shall deal prudently, for the spirit of wisdom and understanding shall rest upon him, ch. xi. 2. The word is used concerning David when he behaved himself wisely, 1 Sam. xviii. 14. Christ is Wisdom itself, and in the contriving and carrying on of the work of our redemption, there appeared much of the wisdom of God in a mystery, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Christ, when he was here upon earth, dealt very prudently, to the admiration of all. 11. He gives a short prospect both of his humiliation, and his exaltation. See here, 1. How he humbled himself; Many were astonished at him, as they were at David, when by reason of his sorrows and troubles he became a wonder unto many, Ps. lxxv. 7. Many were astonished to see what base use was made of, with how invertebrate people were against him, how inhuman, and what indignities were done him; His visage was marred more than any man's, when he was buffeted, smitten on the cheek, and crowned with thorns, and hid not his face from shame and spitting. His face was foul with weeping, for he was a Man of sorrows; he that really was fairer than the children of men, had his face spoiled with the abuses that were done him. Never was man used so barbarously; his form, when he took upon him the form of a servant, was more mean and abject than that of any of the sons of men. That they saw him, said, "Surely never man looked so miserably, a worm, and no man," Ps. xxxii. 6. The nation abhorred him, (ch. xlix. 7.) treated him as the offscouring of all things, Never was sorrow like unto his sorrow.

2. How highly God exalted him, and therefore exalted him, because he humbled himself. Three points are made use of. 1. He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high. God shall exalt him, men shall exalt him, and with both he shall be very high, higher than the highest, higher than the heavens. He shall prosper in his work, and succeed in it, and that shall raise him very high. (1.) Many nations shall be the better for him, for he shall sprinkle them, and not the Jews only; the blood of his sprinkling shall be applied to their trespass, and to purify them. He suffered and died, and so sprinkled many nations, for in his death there was a fountain opened, Zech. xiii. 1. He shall sprinkle many nations by his heavenly doctrine, which shall drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Moses's did so only on one nation, (Deut. xxxii. 2.) but Christ's on many nations. He shall do it by baptism, which is the washing of the body with pure water, Heb. xii. 22. So that this promise had its accomplishment when Christ sent his apostles to disciple all nations, by baptizing or sprinkling them. (2.) The great ones of the nations shall show him respect; Kings shall shut their mouths at him, they shall not open their mouths against him, as they have done, to contradict and blaspheme his sacred oracles; nay, they shall acquiesce in it, and be satisfied with the methods he takes of setting up his kingdom in the world; they shall with great humility and reverence receive his oracles and laws, as those who, when they heard Job's wisdom, after his speech spoke not again, Job xxxix. 9, 22. Kings shall see and arise, ch. xiii. 7. (3.) The mystery which was kept secret from the beginning of the world, shall by him be made known; nor can the obedience of faith, as the apostle speaks, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. That which has not been told them shall they see; the gospel brings to light things now hid and unheard of, which will waken the attention, and engage the reverence, of kings and kingdoms. This is applied to the preaching of the gospel in the Gentile world, Rom. xvi. 21. These words are there quoted according to the Septuagint translation; To whom he was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand. As the things revealed had long been kept secret, so the persons to whom they were revealed, had long been kept in the dark; but now they shall see and consider the glory of God shining in the face of Christ, which before they had not been told, nor had they heard. This shall be declared to them by the gospel of Christ, which could never be told them by all the learning of their philosophers, or the art of their diviners, or any of their pagan oracles. Much had been said in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, much had been told them, and they had heard it. But as the queen of Sheba found concerning Solomon, when she had seen the heart, she shall far exceed what had been told them. Christ disappointed the expectations of those who looked for a Messiah according to their fancies, as the carnal Jews, but outdid theirs who looked for such a Messiah as was promised. According to their faith, nay, and beyond it, it was to them. 

CHAP. LIII.

The two great things which the Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament prophets testified beforehand, were, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that shall follow, 1 Pet. i. 11. And the same which Christ himself, when he expounded Moses and all the prophets, showed to be the drift and scope of them all, was, that Christ ought to suffer, and then to enter into his glory, Luke xxii. 29, 37. But no where in all the Old Testament are they so plainly and fully prophesied of, as here in this chapter, out of which divers passages are quoted, with application to Christ, in the New Testament. This chapter is
so replenished with the unsearchable riches of Christ, that it may be called rather, The gospel of the evangelist Isaiah, than, The prophecy of the prophet Isaiah. We must now regard the dispensation of Christ's sufferings, the meanness of his appearance, the greatness of his grief, and the prejudices which many conceived from thence against his doctrine, v. 1. 3. The rolling away of this recompense, and the stamping of immortal honor upon it, and the overturning of the dishes of the disgrace and ignominy of them, by four considerations. 1. That therein he did his Father's will, v. 4, 6, 10. 2. That thereby he made atonement for the sin of man, v. 4, 6, 8, 11, 15. For it was not for any sin of his own that he sinned, v. 9. 3. That he bore his sufferings with an invincible and exemplary patience, v. 4. 5. That he should prosper in his undertaking, and his sufferings should end in success; and this is foretold, v. 10. Having mixed up with the prophecy of this chapter, we may improve our acquaintance with Jesus Christ, and him crucified, with Jesus Christ, and him glorified; dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.

1. Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? 2. For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

The prophet, in the close of the former chapter, had foreseen and foretold the kind reception which the gospel of Christ should find among the Gentiles, that nations and their kings should bid it welcome, that they who had not seen him should believe in him, and though they had not any prophecies among them of gospel-grace, which might raise their expectations, and dispose them to entertain it, yet upon their first notice of it they should give it its due weight and consideration; now, here he foretells, with wonder, the unbelief of the Jews, notwithstanding the previous notices they had of the coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and the opportunity they had of being personally acquainted with him. Observe here,

1. The contempt they put upon the gospel of Christ, v. 1. The unbelief of the Jews, in our Saviour's person, is thus summed up; the contempt this word, John xii. 38. And it is applied likewise to the little success which the apostle's preaching met with among Jews and Gentiles, Rom. x. 16. Note, 1. Of the many that hear the report of the gospel, there are few, very few, that believe it. It is reported openly and publicly, not whispered in a corner, or confined to the schools, but proclaimed to all; and it is so faithful a saying, and so well worthy of belief, that one that overhears it shall not only be universally received and believed; but it is quite otherwise; few believed the prophets who spake before of Christ, when he came himself, none of the rulers, or of the Pharisees followed him, and but here and there one of the common people; and when the apostles carried this report all the world over, some in each place believed, but, comparatively speaking, so few, that very many that profess to believe this report, there are few that cordially embrace it, and submit to the power of it. 2. Therefore people believe not the report of the gospel, because the arm of the Lord is not revealed to them; they do not discern, nor will be brought to acknowledge, that divine power which goes along with the word; the arm of the Lord is made bare (as was said ch. li. 10.) in the miracles that were wrought to confirm Christ's doctrine in the wonderful success of it, and its energy upon the conscience; though it is a still voice, it is a strong one; but they do not perceive this, nor do they consider the evidence of it. They consider and imagine themselves that working of the Spirit, which makes the word effectual. They believe not the gospel, because by rebelling against the light they had, they had forfeited the grace of God, which therefore he justly denied them, and withheld from them, and for want of that they believed not. 3. This is a reason why the gospel should be much preached with; it is to be wondered at, and greatly lamented, that we should not only cannot go to God, and complain of it to him, as the prophet here. What pity is it that such rich grace should be received in vain, that precious souls should perish at the pool's side, because they will not step in and be healed? 4. The contempt they put upon the person of Christ, because of the meanness of his appearance, v. 2, 3. This seems to come in as a reason why they rejected his doctrine—they were prejudiced against his person. When he was on earth, many that heard him preach, and could not but approve of what they heard, would not give it any regard or entertainment, because it came from one that made so small a figure, and had no external advantages to recommend him. Observe here,

1. The low condition he was in, and was acquainted to, and how he abased and emptied himself; the entry he made into the world, and the character he wore in it, were no way agreeable to the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah, and their expectations concerning him, but quite the reverse. 1. It was expected that his extraction should be very great and noble; he was to be the Son of David, of the family that had a name like to the names of the great men that are in the earth, 2 Sam. vii. 9. But he sprung out of this royal and illustrious family, when it was reduced and sunk, and Joseph, that son of David, who was his supposed father, was but a poor carpenter, perhaps a ship-carpen ter, for most of his relations were fishermen. This is here meant by his being a Root out of a dry ground, his being born of a mean and despis able family, in the north, in Galilee, of a family, out of which, like a dry and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great, was expected, in a country of such small repute, that it was thought no good thing could come out of it. His mother, being a virgin, was a dry ground, yet from her he sprang, who is not only Fruit, but Root. The seed on the stony ground had not met with any thing that did not quickly wither; but Christ grew out of a dry ground, he is both the Root and the Offspring of David, the Root of the good olive. 2. It was expected that he should make a public entry, and come in pomp, and with observation; but, instead of that, he grew up before God, not before men. God had his eye upon him, but men regarded him not; He grew up as a tender plant, slowly and insensibly, and without any noise, so the word, and without any notice that could be taken of it, Mark iv. 7. Christ rose as a tender plant, which, one would have thought, might easily have been crushed, which one frosty night might have nipped. The gospel of Christ, in its beginning, was as a grain of mustard seed, so inconsiderable did it seem, Matt. xiii. 31, 32. 3. It was expected that he should have some universal influence over all men, from his face and person, which should charm the eye, attract the heart, and raise the expectations, of all that saw him; but there was nothing of that in him; not that he was in the least deformed or misshapen, but he had no form nor comeliness, nothing extraordinary, which one might have thought to meet with in the countenance of an incarnate Deity; those who saw him could not have thought that there was any beauty in him, that they should desire him, nothing in him more than in another he
loved, Cant. v. 9. Moses, when he was born, was exceeding fair, to that degree, that he was looked upon as a happy prodigy, Acts vii. 20. Heb. xi. 23.

David, when he was anointed, was of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to, 1 Sam. vii. 12.

But our Lord Jesus had nothing of that to recommend him. Or, it may refer, not so much to his person, as to the manner of his appearing in the world, which had nothing in it of sensible glory. He governed his pretensions, and the notice of his wisdom, but with all plainness, agreeable to the subject.

(4.) It was expected that he should live a pleasant life, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the sons and daughters of men, which would have invited all sorts to him; but quite contrary, he was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; it was not only his last scene that was tragic, but his whole life was so, not only mean, but miserable;

but one continued chain
Of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain.—Sir. R. B.

Thus, being made Sin for us, he underwent the sentence sin had subjected to us, that we should eat in sorrow all the days of our life, (Gen. iii. 17.) and thereby relaxed much of the rigour and extremity of the sentence as to us. His condition was, upon many accounts, wonderful; he was unmeet, had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was opposed and menaced, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; his spirit was tender, and he admitted the impressions of sorrow; we never read that he laughed, but often that he wept. Lenticus, in his epistle to the Roman senate concerning Jesus, says, He was never seen to laugh; and so warm and incensed was he with continual grief, that, when he was but a little above thirty years of age, he was taken to be near fifty, John viii. 57. Grief was his intimate acquaintance; for he acquainted himself with the grievances of others, and sympathized with them, and he never set his own at a distance; for, in his transfiguration, he talked of his own decease; and, in his triumph, he wept over Jerusalem. Let us look unto him, and mourn.

2. The low opinion that men had of him, upon this account— they being generally apt to judge of persons and things by the sight of the eye, and according to outward appearance; they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him. There was a great deal of true beauty in him, the beauty of the inner man, more than the outer; but the simple and ignorant were so unacquainted with this; that it was not till thirty years, that men were ready to own him. Luke vi. 29. Aensus, that men were shy of keeping company with, and had not any esteem for; a Worm and no man. He was despised as a mean Man, rejected as a bad man; he was the Stone which the builders refused, they would not have him to reign over them; men, who should have had so much reason as any, to entertain better, so much goodness and kindness in him, not to trust upon a man in misery, men, whom he came to seek and save, they rejected him: "We hid as it were our faces from him, looked another way, and his sufferings were as nothing to us; though never sorrow was like unto his sorrow. Nay, we not only behaved as having no concern for him, but as loathing him, and having him in detestation." It may be read, He hid as it were his face from us, concealed the glory of his majesty, and drew a veil over it, and therefore he was despised, and we esteemed him not, because we could not see through that veil. Christ having undertaken to make satisfaction to the justice of God for the injury man had done him in his honour by sin, (and God cannot be injured except in his honour,) he did not only by divesting himself of the glories due to an immaculate Deity, but by submitting himself to the disgrace due to the worst of men and malefactors; and thus, by vilifying himself, glorified his Father: but this is a good reason why we should esteem him highly, and study to do him honour; let him be received by us, whom men rejected.

4. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

In these verses, we have,

1. A further account of the sufferings of Christ: much was said before, but more is said here, of the very low condition to which he was abused and humbled himself, to which he became obedient, even to the death of the cross.

2. He had griefs and sorrows; being acquainted with them, he kept up the acquaintance, and did not grow shy, no, not of such melancholy acquaintance. Were griefs and sorrows allotted him? He bore them, and blamed not his lot; he carried them, and did not shrink from them, nor sink under them. The load was heavy, and the way long, and yet he did not tire, but persevered to the end, till he said, It is finished.

3. He was despised and bruised; he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. His sorrows bruised him, and he felt pain and smart from them, they touched him in the most tender part, especially when God was dishonoured, and when he forsook him upon the cross. All along, he was smitten with the tongue, when he was envilled at and contradicted, put under the worst of characters, and had all manner of evil spoken against him, and when he was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow.

4. He had wounds and stripes; he was scourged, not under the merciful restriction of the Jewish law, which allowed not above forty stripes to be given to the worst of malefactors, but according to the usage of the Romans. And his scourging, doubtless, was the more severe, because Pilate intended it as an equivalent for his crucifixion, and yet it proved a preface to it. He was wounded in his hands, and
ISAIAH, LIII.

feet, and side; though it was so ordered, that not a bone of him should be broken, yet he had scarcely in any part a whole skin, (how fond soever we are to sleep in one, even when we are called out to suffer, for in the midst of sleep he was crowned with thorns, to the soles of his feet, which were nailed to the cross, nothing appeared but wounds and bruises.

4. He was wronged and abused; (v. 7.) he was oppressed, injuriously treated, and hardly dealt with. That was laid to his charge, which he was perfectly innocent of, that laid upon him, which he did not deserve, and both he was oppressed and injured; he was afflicted both in mind and body; being oppressed, he laid it to heart, and though he was patient, was not stupid under it, but he mingled his tears with those of the oppressed, that have no comforter, because on the side of the oppressors there is none, (Eccl. iv. 1.) Oppression is a sore affliction, it has made many a wise man mad. (Eccl. vii. 7.) but our Lord Jesus, though when he was oppressed, he was afflicted, kept possession of his own soul.

5. E. was judged and imprisoned; that is implied in his being taken from prison and judgment, (v. 8.) God having made him sin for us, he was proceeded against as a malefactor, he was apprehended and taken into custody, and made a Prisoner; he was judged, accused, tried, and condemned, according to the formal forms of law; God filed a proper accusation against him, judged him in pursuance of that process, and laid him in the prison of the grave, at the door of which a stone was rolled and sealed.

6. He was cut off by an untimely death from the fount of the living, though he lived a most useful life, did so many good works, and they were all such, that one would be apt to think it was for some of them that the stroke fell. He was smitten to death, to the grave which he made with the wicked, for he was crucified between two thieves, as if he had been the worst of the three; and yet with the rich, for he was buried in a sepulchre that belonged to Joseph, an honourable counsellor. Though he died with the wicked, and, according to the common course of dealing with criminals, should have been cast into the pit with them; yet he was not so treated, yet God foretold, and Providence so ordered it, that he should make his grave with the innocent, with the rich, as a mark of distinction put between him and those that really deserved to die, even in his sufferings.

II. A full account of the meaning of his sufferings. It was a very great mystery, that so excellent a person should suffer such hard things; and it is natural to ask with amazement, "How came it about? What evil has he done?" His enemies indeed looked upon him as suffering justly for his crimes; and though they could lay nothing to his charge, they esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, (v. 4.) Because they hated him, and persecuted him, they thought that God did, that he was his Enemy, and fought against him; and therefore they were more insinuating, saying, (Ps. Cxxvii. 11.) God has forsaken him; persecute and take him. Those that are justly smitten, are smitten of God, for by him princes decree justice, and so they looked upon him to be smitten, justly put to death as a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an enemy to Caesar. They that saw him hanging on the cross, inquired not into the merits of his cause, but took it for granted that all forms of guilt, every thing that was laid to his charge, and that therefore vengeance suffered him not to live. Thus Job's friends esteemed him smitten of God, because there was something uncommon in his sufferings. It is true, he was smitten of God, (v. 10.) (or, as some read it, he was God's smitten and afflicted, the Son of God, though smitten and afflicted,) but not in the sense in which they meant it; for though he suffered all these things, he never did any thing in the least to deserve this hard usage. Whereas he was charged with perverting the nation, and sowing sedition, it was utterly false, he had done no violence, but went about doing good. And whereas he was called that Deceiver, he never deserved that character, for there was no deceit in his mouth, (v. 9.) to which the apostle refers, (1 Pet. ii. 22.) He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; he never offered to be heard or dead, nor could any of his enemies take up that challenge of his, Which of you convinceth me of sin? The judge that condemned him, owned he found no fault in him; and the centurion that executed him, professed that certainly he was a righteous man.

2. He conducted himself under his suffering so as to make it appear that he did not suffer as an evildoer; for though he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; (v. 7.) no, not so much as to plead his own innocency, but freely offered himself to suffer and die for us, and objected nothing against it. This takes away the scandal of the cross, that he voluntarily submitted to it, for great and holy ends. By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution, but he voluntarily submitted himself to suffer; this commandment he received from his Father, and therefore he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without any difficulty or reluctance; he is the Lamb of God, and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, so, before the butchers, so he opened not his mouth; which denotes not only his exemplary patience under affliction, (Ps. xxxix. 9.) but alsohis meekness, (Ps. xxxvii. 13.) and his cheerful contentment in all the ways of the Lord, Not my will, but thine be done; lo, I come. By this will we are sanctified; his making his own soul, his own life, an offering for our sin.

3. It was for our good, and in our stead, that Jesus Christ suffered; this is asserted here plainly and fully, and in a very great variety of emphatical expressions. (1.) It is certain that we are all guilty before God; we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God; (v. 6.) All we like sheep have gone astray, one as well as another; the whole race of mankind lies under the stain of original corruption, and every particular person stands charged with many actual transgressions. We have all gone astray from God our rightfull Owner, alienated ourselves from him, from the ends he designed us to move towards, and the way he appointed us to move in. We have gone astray like sheep, which are apt to wander, and are unapt, when they are gone astray, to find the way home again. That is our true character; we are bent to backslide from God, but altogether unable of ourselves to return to him. This is mentioned not only as our infidelity, (that we go astray) but also as our sinfulness, and expose ourselves to the beasts of prey, but as our iniquity; we affront God, in going astray from him, for we turn aside every one to his own way, and thereby set up ourselves, and our own will, in competition with God and his will; which is the malignity of sin; instead of walking obediently in God's way, we have turned wilfully and stubbornly to our own way, the contrary way of our inclinations, and exposed our appetites and passions lead us to; we have set up for ourselves, to be our own masters, our own carvers, to do what we will, and have what we will; some think it intimates our own evil way, in distinction from the evil way of others. Sinners have their own iniquity, their beloved sin, which does most easily beset them; their own evil way, that they
some our sins and our griefs, v. 4.

Or, as it may be read, our sickness and our wounds: the LXX. read it, our sins; and so the apostle, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Our original corruptions are the sickness and diseases of the soul, an habitual indisposition; our actual transgressions are the wounds of the soul, which put conscience to pain, if it be not scared and senseless. Or, our sins and our griefs: our sickness and our wounds, because all our griefs and sorrows are owing to our sins; and our sins deserve all our griefs and sorrows, even those that are most extraneous and everlasting.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus was appointed, and did undertake, to make satisfaction for our sins, and to save us from the penal consequences of them.

[1.] He was appointed to do it, by the will of his Father, for the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. God chose him to be the Saviour of poor sinners, and would have him to save them in this way, by bearing their sins, and the punishment of them; not the idem, the same that we should have suffered, but the tantundem, that which was more than equivalent for the maintaining of the honour of the holiness and justice of God in the government of the world. Observe here,

First, In what way we are saved from the ruin to which sin we are become liable; by laying our sins on Christ, as the sins of the offender were laid upon the scape-goat, Lev. xvi. 22; and as upon the head of the scape-goat. Our sins were made to meet upon him; (so the margin reads it;) the sins of all that he was to save from every place and every age, met upon him, and he was met with for them. They were made to fall upon him, (so some read it,) as those rushed upon him, that came with swords and staves to take him. The laying of our sins upon him signifies the taking of them off from us; we shall not fall under the curse of the law, if we submit to the grace of the gospel: they were laid upon Christ when he was made Sin, a Sin-offering, for us, and redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a Curse for us; thus he put himself into a capacity to make those easy, that come to him heavy laden under the burden of sin. See Ps. xlv. 8, 9.

Secondly, By whom this was appointed; it was the Lord that laid our iniquities on Christ; he contrived this way of reconciliation and salvation, and he accepted of the vicarious satisfaction Christ was to make. Christ was delivered to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. None but God had power to lay our sins upon Christ, both because the sin was committed against him, and to him the satisfaction was to be made, and because Christ, on whom the iniquity was to be laid, was his own Son, the Son of his love, and his holy Child Jesus, who himself knew no sin.

Thirdly, For whom this atonement was to be made; it was the iniquity of us all, that was laid on Christ; for in Christ there is a sufficiency of merit for the sins of all; and as Jesus offers himself to that salvation to all, which excludes none that do not exclude themselves. It intimates, that this is the one only way of salvation: all that are justified are justified by having their sins laid on Jesus Christ, and, though they were ever so many, he is able to bear the weight of them all.

[2.] He undertook to do it; God laid upon him our sins, and made him to be sin; he bore our griefs, and was of our griefs. This is, by some, (v. 7.) is, It was exacted, and he answered: divine justice demanded satisfaction for our sins, and he engaged to make the satisfaction. He became our Surety, not as originally bound with us, but as Bail to the action: "Upon me be the curse, my Father." And therefore when he was seized, he indented with those into whose hands he surrendered himself, that that should be his disciples' discharge: If we seek me, let these go their way. John xviii. 8. By his own voluntary submission he made himself responsible for our debts, and it is well for us that he was responsible; thus he restored that which he took not away.

(4.) Having undertaken our debt, he underwent the penalty. Solomon says, He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it. Christ, being surety for us, did smart for it. [1.] He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows, v. 4. He not only submitted to the common infirmities of human nature on the common calamities of human life, which sin had introduced, but he underwent the extremities of grief, when he said, My soul is exceeding sorrowful. He made the sorrows of this present time heavy to himself, that he might make them light and easy for us. Sin is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery; Christ bore our sins, and so bore our griefs, bore them off us, that we should never be pressed above measure. This is quoted, Matt. viii. 17. with application to the compassion Christ had for the sick that came to him to be cured, and the power he put forth to cure them. [2.] He did this by suffering for our sins; (v. 3.) He was wounded for our transgressions; to make atonement for them, and to purchase for us the pardon of them. Our sins were the thorns in Christ's side, and his side was full of them; not one only, but many; not in his head, but in his side. Wounds and bruises were the consequences of sin, what we deserved and what we had brought upon ourselves, ch. i. 6. That these wounds and bruises, though they are painful, may not be mortal, Christ was wounded for our transgressions, was tormented, or prized, (the word is used for the pains of a woman in travail,) for our transgressions not for our sins; those were laid upon him; the one is for our iniquities; they were the procuring cause of his death. To the same purport, v. 8. For the transgression of my people was he smitten, was the stroke upon him, that should have been upon us; and so some read it, He was cut off for the iniquity of my people, unto whom the stroke belonged, or was due. He was delivered to death for our offences, v. 24. Hence it is said to be agreeable to the scriptures, according to this scripture, that Christ died for our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 3. Some read this, by the transgressions of my people; by the wicked hands of the Jews, who were, in profession, God's people, he was stricken, was crucified and slain, Acts ii. 23. But, doubtless, we are to take it in the former sense, which is abundantly confirmed by the angel's prediction of the Messiah's undertaking, solemnly delivered to Daniel, that he shall finish transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, Dan. ix. 24.

(5.) The consequence of this to us, is our peace and healing, v. 5. [1.] Hereby we have peace; The chastisement of our peace was upon him; he, by submitting to those chastishments, slew the enmity of sin, and made us peace; he was made peace for us by the blood of his cross. Whereas by sin we were become obnoxious to God's holiness, and obnoxious to his justice, through Christ God is reconciled to us, and not only forgives our sins, and saves us from ruin, but takes us into friendship and fellowship with himself, and thereby peace, all good, Rom. v. 10-11. Col. i. 20. He is our Peace, Eph. ii. 14. Christ was in the flesh, that in the flesh, he gave satisfaction to the justice of God, that we might have satisfaction in our own minds, might be of good cheer, knowing that through him our sins are forgiven us. [2.] Hereby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die, and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it
is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls, and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes, the sufferings he underwent, he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distemper of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God, and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine and Christ's curse, and the powerful arguments it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us, and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

(6.) The consequence of this to Christ was, his resurrection and advancement to perpetual honour. This makes the offence of the cross perfectly to cease; he yielded himself to die as a Sacrifice, as a Lamb, and, to make it evident that the sacrifice he offered of himself was accepted, we are told, v. 8. [1.] That he was discharged; He was taken from prison and from judgment; whereas he was imprisoned in the grave, under a judicial process, lay there under an arrest for our debt, and judgment seemed to be given against him; he was by an express order from heaven taken out of the prison of the grave, an angel was sent on purpose to roll away the stone that sealed his sepulchre (v. 19.), and his innocence was made so plain; as that he was not condemned, that he was not guilty, that he was not, and so again, for our justification. That discharge of the bail amounted to a release of the debt. [2.] That he was preferred; Who shall declare his generation? his age, or continuance, so the word signifies; the time of his life? He rose to die no more, death had no more dominion over him; he that was dead, is alive, and lives for evermore; and who can describe that immortality to which he rose, or number the years and ages of it? And therefore he is advanced to this eternal life, because for the transgression of his people he became obedient to death. We may take it as denoting the time of his usefulness; as David is said to serve his generation, and so to answer the end of living. Who can declare how great a blessing Christ by his death and resurrection will be to the world? Some by his generation understand his spiritual seed; Who can count the vast numbers of converts that shall by the gospel be begotten to him, like the dew of the morning?

When thus exalted, he shall live to see
A numberless believing progeny
Of men from every clime and every tribe,
Exceed the stars that heav'n's high arches grace.

Sir R. Blackmore.

of which generation of his let us pray, as Moses did for Israel, The Lord God of our fathers make them a thousand times as many more as they are, and bless them as he has promised them, Deut. i. 11.

10. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. 12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors: and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

In the foregoing verses, the prophet had testified very partially of the sufferings of Christ, yet mixing some hints of the happy issue of them; here he again mentions his sufferings, but largely foretells the glory that should follow. We may observe, in these verses,

1. The services and sufferings of Christ's state of humiliation. Come, and see how he loved us, see what he did for us.

2. He submitted to the frowns of Heaven (v. 10.) Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; to put him to pain, or torment, or grief. The scripture no where says, that Christ in his sufferings underwent the wrath of God; but it says here, (1.) That the Lord bruised him, not only permitted men to bruise him, but awakened his own sword against him, Zach. xiii. 7. They esteemed him smitten of God for some very great sin of his own; (v. 4.) now it was true that he was smitten of God, but it was for our sin; the Lord bruised him, for he did not spare him, but delivered him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32.

He it was that put the bitter cup into his hand, and obliged him to drink it, (John xviii. 11.) having laid upon him our iniquity. He it was that made him Sin and a Curse for us, and turned to ashes all his burnt-offering, in a ken of the acceptance of it, Ps. xxx. 3. (2.) That he bruised him so as to put him to grief. Christ accommodated himself to this dispensation, and received the impressions of grief from his Father's delivering him up; and he was troubled to that degree, that it put him into an agony, and he began to be amazed and very heavy. (3.) It pleased the Lord to do this; he determined to do it, it was the result of an eternal counsel; and the more lighted in the execution, for they had an interest in the salvation of men, and the securing and advancing of the honour of God.

2. He substituted himself in the room of sinners, as a Sacrifice. He made his soul an offering for sin; he himself explains this, (Matt. xx. 28.) that he came to give his life a ransom for many. When men brought bulls and goats as sacrifices for sin, they made them the offering, for they had an interest in them, God having put them under the feet of man; but Christ made himself an offering; it was his own act and deed; we could not put him in our stead, but he put himself, and said, Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit, in a higher sense than David said, or could say it; "Father, I commit my soul to thee, I depose it in thy hands, as the life of a sacrifice and the price of pardons." The Lord shall bear the iniquities of the many that he desig- ned to justify, (v. 11.) shall take away the sin of the world by taking it upon himself, John i. 29. This is mentioned again; (v. 12.) He bare the sin of many, who, if they had borne it themselves, would have been sunk by it to the lowest hell. See how this is dwelt upon; for whenever we think of the sufferings of Christ, we must see him in them, bearing our sin.

3. He subjected himself to that which toys is the wages of sin; (v. 12.) He has poured out his soul unto death, poured it out as water, so little account did he make of it, when the laying of it down was the appointed means of our redemption and salva- tion; he loved not his life unto the death, and his followers, the martyrs, did likewise, Rev. iii. 11. Our Bridegroom, he must be a sacrifice, he must make his sacrifice complete; poured it out as wine, that his blood might be drink indeed, as his flesh is meet indeed to all believers. There was not only a culligation of his body in his sufferings, (Ps. xxii. 14.) I am poured out like water, but a surrender of his spirit; he poured out that, even unto death, though he is the Lord of life.
4. He suffered himself to be ranked with sinners, and yet offered himself to be an intercessor for sinners. v. 12.

(1.) It was a great aggravation of his sufferings, that he was numbered with transgressors, that he was not only condemned as a malefactor, but executed in company with two notorious malefactors, and he in the midst, as if he had been the worst of the three; in which circumstance of his suffering, the evangelist tells us this prophecy was fulfilled, Mark xv. 27, 28. Nay, the vilest malefactor of all, Barabbas, who was a traitor, thief, and murderer, was put in election with him for the Favour of the people, and carried it; for they would not have Jesus, but Barabbas. In his body, he himself was numbered among the transgressors; for he was called and counted a sabbath-breaker, a drunkard, and a friend to publicans and sinners.

(2.) It was a great commendation of his sufferings, and redounded very much to his honour, that in his sufferings he made intercession for the transgressors, for those that reviled and crucified him; for he prayed, Father, forgive them, thereby showing not only that he forgave them, but that he was now doing that upon which their forgiveness, and the forgiveness of all other transgressors were to be founded. That prayer was the language of his blood, crying, not for vengeance, but for mercy, and therein it speaks better things than that of Abel, even for those who with wicked hands shed it. It was the language of his blood, and his blood was the word and the graces of his state of salvation; and the graces he confers on us are not the least of the graces conferred on him. These are secured to him by the covenant of redemption, which these verses give us some idea of. He promises to make his soul an offering for sin, consents that the Father shall deliver him up, and undertakes to make himself for sin the mercy-seat in which the Father promises to glorify him, not only with the glory he had, as God, before the world was, (John xvii. 5.) but with the glories of the Mediator.

1. He shall have the glory of an everlasting Father; under this title he was brought into the world, (ch. ix. vi.) and he shall not fail to answer the title with the glory out of the world. In his hands is the promise made to Abraham, (who herein was a type of Christ,) that he should be the father of many nations, and so be the heir of the world, Rom. iv. 13, 17. As he was the root of the Jewish church, and the covenant was made with him and his seed, so is Christ of the universal church, and with him and his spiritual seed is the covenant of grace made, which is grounded upon, and granted in, the covenants of redemption, which here we have some of the glorious promises of. It is promised,

(1.) That the Redeemer shall have a seed to serve him and to bear up his name, Ps. xcvii. 30. True believers are the seed of Christ; the Father gave them to him to be so, John xv. 6. He died to purchase and purify them to himself, fell to the ground in a certain way in his literal and spiritual death. He died, rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure them to the Spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons.

(2.) That he shall live to see his seed; Christ's children have a living Father, and because he lives they shall live also forever in their lives. He himself died, he rose again, and left not his children orphans, but took effectual care to secure them to the Spirit, the blessing, and the inheritance of sons. He shall see a great increase of them; the word is plural, He shall see his seeds, multitudes of them, so many that they cannot be numbered.

(3.) That he shall himself continue to take care of the affairs of this numerous family: He shall prolong his days. Many, when they see their seed, their seed's seed, have wished to depart in peace; but Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other, no, he shall himself live long, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, forever and ever. Some refer it to the Mediator: He shall see a seed that shall prolong its days, agreeing with Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36. His seed shall endure for ever. While the world stands, Christ will have a church in it, which he himself will be the Life of.
make us happy. (2.) Christ, who purchased our justification for us, applies it to us, by his intercession made for us, his gospel preached to us, and his Spirit witnessing in us. The Son of man had power even on earth to forgive sin. (3.) There are many whom Christ justifies, not all, multitudes perish in their sins, yet many, even as many as he gave his life for, are saved. He is the meek and lowly, as the prophet says, the meek Servant. He shall justify, not here and there one that is eminent and remarkable, but those of the many, the despised multitude. (4.) It is by faith that we are justified, by our consent to Christ and the covenant of grace; in this way we are saved, because thus God is most glorified, free grace most advanced, self most abused, and our happiness most actually secured. (5.) Faith is the knowledge of Christ, and without knowledge there can be no true faith. Christ's way of gaining the will and affections is by enlightening the understanding, and bringing that unfeignedly to assent to divine truths. (6.) That knowledge of Christ, and that faith in him, by which we are justified, have reference to him, both as a Servant to God, and as a Surety for us. [1.] As one that is employed for our sin, if he had had any such as his everlasting for, is made of God to us Righteousness, the Lord our Righteousness. [2.] As one that has undertaken for us. We must know him, and believe in him, as one that bore our iniquities—saved us from sinking under the load by taking it upon himself.

3. He shall have the glory of obtaining an incontestable victory, and universal dominion, v. 12. Because he has done all these good services, therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and, according to the will of the Father, he shall divide the spoil with the strong, as a great general, when he has driven the enemy out of the field, takes the plunder of it for himself and his army; which is both an unquestionable evidence of the victory, and a recompence for all the toils and perils of his holy warfare. He has exchanged to reward the services and sufferings of Christ with great glory; "I will set him among the great, highly exalt him, and give him a name above every name," great riches are also assigned him; He shall divide the spoil, shall have abundance of graces and comforts to bestow upon all his faithful soldiers. (3.) Christ comes at his glory by conquest; he has set upon the strong man arm; arm; has dispossessed him, and divided the spoil. He has vanquished principalities and powers, sin and Satan, death and hell, the world and the flesh; these are the strong that he has disarmed and taken the spoil of. (3.) Much of the glory with which Christ is recompensed, and the spoil which he has divided, consists in the vast multitudes of willing, faithful, loyal subjects that have been brought to Christ. I will give many to him, and he shall obtain many for a spoil. God will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, Ps. ii. 8. His dominion shall be from sea to sea. Many shall he wrath upon by the grace of God to give up themselves to him to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him; and hence he shall call to himself, and enrich, and abundantly recompensed for all he did and all he suffered. (4.) What God designed for the Redeemer he shall certainly gain the possession of; I will divide it to him, and immediately it follows, He shall divide it, notwithstanding the opposition as is given to him: for as Christ finished the work that was given him to do, so God completed the recompence that was promised him for it; for he is both able and faithful. (5.) The spoil which God divided to Christ, he divides, (it is the same word,) he distributes, among his own people; the Lord, as the prophet says, the rich captive; he received gifts for men, that he might give gifts to men; for he did himself reckon it more blessed and honourable to give than to receive, Acts xx. 33. Christ conquered for us, and through him we are more than conquerors; he has divided the spoils, the fruits of his conquest, to all that are his; let us therefore cast in our lot among them.

CHAP. LIV.

The death of Christ is the life of the Church, and of all that truly belong to it: and therefore, very fitting, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretells the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and this chapter is an explanation of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happen to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the church of God, through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel-church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the five words, the end of the chapter, is His name, Mark xvi. 20, "His name," is a New Testament Jerusalem, (Gal. iv. 26, 27,) may serve as a key to the whole chapter, and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church. (1.) That, though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to among the Gentiles, who had been wholly destitute of church-privileges, v. 1. - 5. (2.) That, though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, he would return in mercy, and would not return to contend with them any more, v. 6. - 10. (3.) That though for awhile she was in sorrow, and under oppression, she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendour than ever, v. 11. (4.) That knowledge, righteousness, and peace should flourish and prevail, v. 13, 14. V. That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secure from the malice of her enemies, v. 14 - 17.

1. SING, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. 2. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: 3. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5. For thy Maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase
of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife childless, or a desolate, solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished, and the country people again; that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides; and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations. Those that estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a Husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed, that by virtue of the ancient promise made to the birth of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came out of Babylon, were but 42,000, (Ezra ii. 64.) about a 15th part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterward, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet, above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule, (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty,) made the nation to be near three millions; Josephus says, seven and twenty thousand hundred and odd; De Bell. Jud. lib. 7. cap. 17. The first step next to the church of God in general; I mean, the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

I. The low and languishing estate of religion in the world, for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one barren, that did not bear, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost her children (the church) in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them; the rising generations were unprophesian, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the church which had lost her bread and children; the church was broken, reduced family, were scattered abroad, (John xi. 52.) did not appear, nor make any figure.

II. Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the gospel, and the planting of the Christian church.

1. Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God; those were the church's children, that were born again, were partakers of a new and divine nature, by the word: more were the children of the desolate than the married wife; there were more good people found in the Gentile church, (when that was set up,) that had been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's scattered ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered; (Rev. vii. 4.) and they are numbered in the church of thousands of Israel; but those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thick, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, v. 9. Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in these places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession, and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first.

Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends, and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has been desolate, the greater will the transports of its joy be, when it begins to recover the ground it has lost, and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repents; much more for a nation that does so. If the barren fig-tree at length bearing forth fruit, if it is well, it shall rejoice, and others with it.

2. The bounds of the church were extended much farther than ever before, v. 2, 3. (1.) It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle-state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old, (Heb. xi. 3.) its dwelling is mean and moveable, and of no strength against a people. The church in the time of the apostles was just like that for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church-privileges is soon removed out of its place, (Rev. vii. 15.) and, when God pleases, it is as soon fixed elsewhere. (2.) Though it be a tabernacle-state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it is the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel there where Christ had not yet been named, (Rom. x. 16.) to wander with the gospel those towns and countries that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed; which would make it necessary to stretch then the curtains proportionally, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows, the more cautions she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions, and to support her seven pillars, Prov. vi. 19., 20.

3. (3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel, which was thus operated in the church, (Ephes. vi. 10.) and preserved rightly, Acts xix. 24. It broke forth, as the breaking of both waters; on the right hand, and on the left, on all hands, the gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God, came to be inhabited, God had religion set up in them, and the names of Christ were confessed.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to them; that he might bring forth fruit unto God; (Rom. vii. 4.) so the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people; her Redeemer by whom she is brought out of bondage, her Benefactor by whom she is freemen, and she is brought out of the bond-age of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and, (1.) He is the Lord of hosts, who has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and an universal dominion! Kings, who are lords of some hosts, find there are others, who are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as
ISAIAH, LIV.

6. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. 7. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.

For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, are here foreshadowed, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general, and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

1. Look back to former troubles; in comparison with them, God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, v. 6, 8. Observe,

1. How sorrowful the church's condition had been; she had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was a wife of youth; upon which she could lament it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or, as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God, may yet seem to be refused and forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of it; those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair, may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is complete.

2. All that are forsaken and forsaking, and all that are grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of it, shall never be forsaken and left in despair, but shall be gathered, preserved, and comforted, in a little wrath I hid my face from thee. When God continues his people long in trouble, he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it, (Ps. lxxi. 11,) so they themselves misinterpret it, ch. xlix. 14. When they are comforted under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not, nor despised them any kindness. God owns that he had done this; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people, and though he never turned his face against them, (as against the wicked, Ps. xxxvi. 16,) he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure, it was in wrath that he forsook them, and hid his face from them; (ch. lii. 17,) yet it was but in a little wrath; not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of, (Who knows the power of his anger?) but little in comparison with what they had deserved, and what others had justly deserved. He did not put away the evidences of his wrath; he did not stir up all his wrath. But God's people, though they be sensible of ever so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. For the continuance of it, it was but for a moment, a small moment; for God does not keep his anger against his people for ever, nor is it soon over: as he alloweth to a little time, so, when the cry of justice is called, and the affections of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over.

2. How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them, when God should come and comfort them according to the time that he afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself, then when they were in mercy and prosperity, and after the end of their afflictions, then when they were most press- ing, v. 6. God's anger endures for a moment, but God will gather his people when they think themselves neglected; will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land; will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up; and will gather them at last to himself; will gather the wheat into his barn. He will have mercy on them; this supposes the turning away of his anger, and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering of his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of theirs; and it is with great mercies, (v. 7.) with everlasting kindness, v. 8. The wrath is little, but the mercies great; the wrath for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despise our afflictions, nor despair of relief.

II. Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them. God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a covenant of peace, because it is founded in reconciliation, and is inclusive of all good. Now,

1. This is as firm as the covenant of providence; it is as the waters of Noah, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge, that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, v. 9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was inviolable, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see Gen. vili. 21, 22—ix. 11. And God has ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is, is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace; I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, as I have as inviolably as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; and put their name for ever and ever, Ps. ix. 3.

2. It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation; (v. 10.) the mountains shall depart, which are called everlasting; the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, though they are called perpetual hills, Hab. iii. 6. Sooner shall they remove than
God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; and the people also were not saved by the shock of any event. The day will come when all the mountains shall depart, and all the hills be removed, not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up for the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall be made firm in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies, (as Atlas) and bear them up? They shall depart and be removed, creature-confidence shall fall; us in vain is salvation hoped for from those hills and mountains: but the firmament is firm, agreeably to its name; when those who seem to prop it are gone, when our friends fail us, our God does not, nor does his kindness depart. Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth, and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed; great mountains, that stand in the way of the salvation of the church, shall be made flat, (Zech. iv. 7.) but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves, he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that has mercy on his people, Therefore the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable uncertain thing; but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.


11. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colons, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. 14. In righteousness shall thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. 15. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. 16. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.


Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles, as before; but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than they had ever enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe, I. The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God; (v. 11.) O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and ingrafted, and ingrafted iniquity, that art tossed with tempests, like a ship driven before the anchors by a storm, and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition not comforted by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations, (Ecc. iv. 1.) not comforted by any ally against thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it. This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterward for a time, under Antichus; it is often the condition of Christian churches, and of particular believers; without are fightings, within are fears, they are like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish; and where is thy faith? II. The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the covenant of God. God takes notice of the afflicted, distressed state of his church, and comforts her, when she is most disconsolate, and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what terrors they are in, and what comforts their case calls for; when they beseech themselves, God hearkens them, and speaks to them with pity, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourages her with the assurance of great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity, and for the securing of that prosperity to her. 1. Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promises that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself, and admirable in the eyes of others. (1.) This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude, for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall be made beautiful, and be beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall be laid not only firm, but fine, laid with fair colours, they shall be glittering stones, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. The foundation shall be laid or garnished with sapphires, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ, the church's foundation, and the Foundation of the apostles and prophets, is the foundation, or the corner-stone of this house, or temple, shall be made of agates, the gates of carbuncles, and all the borders, the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the more stones shall be of pleasant stones, v. 12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates, [1.] That God having graciously undertaken to build his church, he gives respect to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon. [2.] That the glory of the New Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church; not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable: that which is more precious than rubies, (Prov. iii. 15.) than the precious stones, and the sapphire, and which the so-called city of Ephraim cannot equal, Job xxviii. 16, 19. [3.] That the
ISAIAH, LIV.

252

not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promises that which would be her protection and security. God engages here that though in the day of her distress without were fightings and within were fears, now she shall be safe from both.

(1.) There shall be no fears within; (v. 14.) "Thou shalt be far from oppression; those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear, but mayest look upon it as a thing at a distance, that thou art now in no danger.

Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee, so as to do thee any hurt, or to put thee in any fright." Note, Those are far from terror, that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as can fall on a people, to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression, because against this there is no fence, nor is there any flight from it.

(2.) There shall be no fightings without; though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, v. 15. It is granted, "They shall surely gather together against thee, thou must expect it, the confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assays."

As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor on earth, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, [1.] God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is not by me. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, to take the spoil, and take the prey, ch. x. 6. And therefore, [2.] Their attempts will end in their own ruin; "Whosoever shall gather together against thee, be they ever so many, so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee." God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church, and the care he has of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them.

"They shall fall, that thou mayest stand," Ps. xxxvii. 2.

Now, that we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

First, The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, v. 16. The truth is, they have no power but what is given them from above, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them; "Hitherto they shall go, and no further." They cannot carry on their design without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave them his skill to work in iron and brass, (Exod. xxxi. 3, 4.) and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if we did not know that God has created the smith, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry, (as many a project has done,) for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of

wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted 1st precious, shall be despised by all the twelve living members of the church, as having no value, no glory, in comparison with that which far excels. That which the children of this world lay up in their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of, and put under the feet, the fittest place for it.

(1.) It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God in which man was created, renewed, and restored. And these are the sapphires, and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, such as is the church, which shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apostle compares to gold, silver, and precious stones, that are to be built upon the foundation, 1 Cor. iii.

12. Then the church is all glorious.

[1.] When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here; (v. 13.) All the children shall be taught of the Lord. The church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised, (v. 1.) that the church's children shall be many; but lest we should think that, being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as they should, the word of the Lord is, They shall all be taught of God; and none teaches like him. First, It is a promise of the means of instruction, and those means authorized by a divine institution; They shall all be taught of God, they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint, and whose labours shall be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the means of instruction, and such persons as are to instruct; and he will diffuse a much greater light than the Old Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched with it, from the least even to the greatest. Secondly, It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it when he speaks of institutions; "These things will I give them in my own name, and will not lay upon them that which is heavy;" and it teaches us to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in him; (John vi. 45.) It is written in the prophet's, They shall all be taught of God; whence he infers, that these, and those only, come to him by faith, that he hath heard and learned of the Father, that are taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, to teach them all things, John xiv. 26.

[2.] When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves; Great shall be the peace of thy children. Peace may be taken here for all good. As where no knowledge of God is, no good can be expected; so those that are taught of God to know him, are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds, the church's peace being what they know and love God's law, Ps. cxix. 165. But it is often put for love and unity; and so we may take it. All that are taught of God, are taught to love one another, (1 Thess. iv. 9.) and that will keep peace among the church's children, and prevent their falling out by the way.

[3.] When holiness reigns; for that above any thing is the beauty of the church; (v. 14.) In righteousness shall thou be established; the reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing amongst men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the gospel of Christ, is
the war; these can do no more than God will let them. 2. They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is God that created the monster to destroy. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves gentlemen; but God calls them worms to destroy, for wasting and destruction are their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

Secondly, The promise of God concerning the earth, which was solemnly laid down, as the heritage of the servants of the Lord, (v. 17.) as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, That God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts.

1. From their field-adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword; “No weapon that is formed against thee,” (though ever so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, (v. 16.) though ever so skilfully managed by the waster that seeks to destroy,) “shall prosper; it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand, or perhaps recoil in the face of him that uses it against thee. It is the happiness of the church, that the instruments formed to destroy it shall not prosper long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves.

2. From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down, under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper, there are tongues that rise in judgment; both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church, for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church, are such as either demand a demission over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences; or they are such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slander and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did, to incense the kings of Persia against them; (Ezra iv. 12. Esth. iii. 8.) “But these insulting, threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. Thou shalt do it by well-doing, or, better, "by thy righteousness as the light," Ps. xxxvii. 6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the worldwide corruption which reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house, in contempt of their contempts." The day is coming when God will reckon with wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, Jude 15.

The last words refer not only to this promise, but to all that go before; This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, that will's servants and his, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible. God's promises are their heritage for ever; (Ps. cxxix. 110.) and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord. God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men; it is with him, for he knows it, it is with him for he will plead it.

Or, their reward for their righteousness, and f all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judges in the earth, and with whom verily there is a reward for the righteous.

Or, their righteousness itself, all that in them is good and right, is of God, who works it in them; it is of Christ who has made righteousness to them. Whenever God designs a heritage hereafter, in them he will work righteousness now.

CHAP. LV

As we have much of Christ in the 53d chapter, and much of the church of Christ in the 54th chapter, so in this chapter we have much of the covenant of grace, made with us in Christ. The sure mercies of David which are promised here, (v. 3.) are applied by the apostle to the benefits which flow to us from the resurrection of Christ, (Acts xxiv. 34.) which may serve as a key to this chapter; but that it was intended for the comfort of the people of God that lived then, especially of the captives in Babylon, and the other dispersed of Israel; but unto us was this gospel preached as well as unto them, and much more clearly and fully in the New Testament. Here is,

1. A free and gracious invitation to all, to come and take the benefit of gospel-grace, v. 1. II. Pressing arguments to enforce this invitation, v. 2. 3. 4. 5. III. A promise of the success of this invitation among the Gentiles, v. 6. 7. We are in the time of God's preparation and reformation, with great encouragement given to hope for pardon and justification thereupon, v. 6. 7. 8. The ratification of all this, with the certain efficacy of the word of God, which has been the power of God to salvation to all that believe, and a proof and instance of the accomplishment of it in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, which was intended for a sign of the accomplishment of all these other promises.

1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.

2. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3. Incline your ear, and *come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

5. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

Here,

1. We are all invited to come and take the benefit of that provision which the grace of God has made for poor souls in the new covenant of the gospel, which is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, (ch. lv. 17.) and not only their heritage hereafter, but their crown now, v. 1. Observe,

1. Who are invited; Ho, every one. Not the Jews only, to whom first the word of salvation was sent, but the Gentiles, the poor and the purchased, the halt and the blind, are called to this marriage supper. Christ has purchased all his sheep's inheritance, and for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible.

2. The invitation is most pressing. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.
to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him; Gen. xlii. 10, 12.

19 But Christ outdoes our expectations; we come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him; Gen. xlii. 10, 12.

covenant excludes none that do not exclude themselves. The invitation is published with an Oyez, Hark! take notice of it. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

Who is the qualification required in these that shall be welcome; they must thirst. All shall be welcome to gospel-grace, upon those terms only, that gospel-grace be welcome to them. Those that are satisfied with the world and its enjoyments for a portion, and seek not for happiness in the favour of God; those that depend upon the merit of their own works, or for righteousness, and see no need they have of Christ and his righteousness; these do not thirst, though they may hunger and be uneasy about their souls, and therefore will not condescend so far as to be beholden to Christ; but those that thirst, are invited to the waters, as those that labour, and are heavy-laden, are invited to Christ for rest. Note, Where God gives grace, he first gives to thirst after it; and where he has given to thirst after it, he will give it, Ps. lxxxi. 10.

3. Whether they are invited; Come ye to the waters. Come to the water-side, to the ports, and quays, and wharves, on the navigable rivers, into which goods are imported, thither come and buy, for that is the market-place of foreign commodities; and to us they would have been for ever foreign, if Christ had not brought in an everlasting righteousness. Come to Christ, for he is the Fountain opened, he is the Rock smitten. Come to holy ordinances, to the ordinances of the Law; for Christ is a living ordinance, and come to them, and though they may seem to you plain and common things, like waters, yet to those who believe in Christ, the things signified will be as wine and milk, abundantly refreshing. Come to the healing waters, come to the living waters; whoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life, Rev. xxi. 17. Our Saviour referred to it, John x. 38, 39. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

4. What are they invited to do; (1.) Come, and buy. Never did any tradesman court customers that he hoped to get by, so as Christ courts us to that which we only are to be gainers by; “Come and buy, and we can assure you, you shall have a good bargain, which you will never repent of or long for.” Or, that may make it your own by an application of the grace of the gospel to yourselves; make it your own upon Christ’s terms, may, your own upon any terms, and stand not hesitating about the terms, or deliberating whether you shall agree to them.” (2.) “Come, and eat; make it still more your own, as that which we eat is more our own than that which we only buy.” We must buy the truth, not that we may lay it by, to be looked at, but that we may feed and feast upon it, and that the spiritual life may be nourished and strengthened by it. We must buy necessary provisions for our souls, be willing to part with any thing, though ever so dear to us, so that we may but have Christ and his graces and comforts; we must part with sin, because it is an opposition to Christ; part with all opinion of our own righteousness, as standing in competition with Christ; and part with life itself, and its most necessary supports, rather than quit our interest in Christ. And when we have bought what we need, let us not deny ourselves the comfortable use of it, but enjoy it, and eat the labour of our hands; buy, and eat.

5. What is the provision they are invited to; “Come, and buy wine and milk, which will not only satiate the taste, but satisfy in the most essential point, that, “but nourish the body, and revive the spirits.” The world comes short of our expectations; we promise ourselves, at least, water in it, but we are disappointed of that, as the troops of Tarsa, Job vi. 19. But Christ outdoes our expectations; we come to the waters, and would be glad of them, but we find there wine and milk, which were the staple commodities of the tribe of Judah, and which the Shiloh of that tribe is furnished with to entertain the gathering of the people to him; Gen. xlii. 10, 12. His eyes shall be open to drink, and bread shall be teeth with milk. We must come to Christ to have milk for babes, to nourish and cherish them that are but lately born again; and with him strong men shall find that which will be a cordial to them; they shall have wine to make glad their hearts. We must part with our pottage-water, nay, with our poison, that we may procure this wine and milk.

The free communications of this provision; Buy it without money, and without price. As they were free of buying, not only without ready money, (that is common enough,) but without any money, or the promise of any; yet it seems not so strange to these who have observed Christ’s counsel to Laodicea, that was wretchedly poor, to come and buy, Rev. iii. 17, 18. Our buying without money, intimates, (1.) That the gifts offered us are invaluable, and such as no price can be set upon. Wisdom is that which cannot be gotten for gold. (2.) That he who offers them has no need of us, or of any returns we can make him. He makes us these proposals, not because he has occasion to sell, but because he has a disposition to give. (3.) That the things offered are already bought and paid for; Christ purchased them at the full value, with price, not with money; but with his own dear blood. (4.) The reason why we shall be welcome to the benefits of the promise, though we are utterly unworthy of them, and cannot make a tender of any thing that looks like a valuable consideration. We ourselves are act of any value, nor any thing we have, or can do, and we must own it, that if Christ and heaven be ours, we may see ourselves for ever indebted to free grace.

11. We are thereby persuaded (and O that we would be prevailed with) to accept this invitation, and make this good bargain for ourselves.

1. That which we are persuaded to, is, to hearken to God, and to his proposals; “Hearken diligently unto me, v. 2. Not only give me the hearing, but approve of what I say, and apply it to yourselves, v. 3. Incline your ear, as you do to that which you employ yourselves concerned in, and pleased with; bow the ear, and be willing to take in that which the gospel teaches you. The gospel is not to be sold, but is brought to us free of charge, that we might be persuaded to embrace it. Hence the promise, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.”

2. The arguments used to persuade us to this, are,

1. From the unspeakable wrong we do to ourselves if we neglect and refuse this invitation; “Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, which will not yield you, no, nor beggar’s food, dry bread, when with you me you may have wine and milk without money? Wherefore do you spend your labour, and tell for that which will not be so much as dry bread to you, for it satisfies not?”

See here, [1.] The vanity of the things of this world; they are not bread, not proper food for a soul, they afford no suitable nourishment or refreshment. Bread is the staff of the natural life, but it affords no support at all to the spiritual life. All the wealth and pleasure in the world will not make one morsel of meat for a soul. Eternal truth and eternal good are the only food for rational and immortal souls, the life of which consists in reconciliation and conformity to God, and in union and communion with him, which the things of the world will not at all befriend. They satisfy not, they yield not any solid comfort and content to the soul, nor enable it to say, “Now
I have what I would have." Nay, they do not satisfy even the appetites of the body; the more men have, the more they would have, Ecc. 1. 8. Man was unsatisfied in the midst of his abundance. They flatter, but they do not fill; they please for awhile, like the dream of a hungry man, who wakes and his soul is empty. They soon find, if they cannot satisfy; they cloy a man, but do not content him, or make him truly easy. It is all vanity and vexation.

(2.) The folly of the children of this world; they spend their money and labour for these uncertain, unsatisfying things. Rich people live by their money, poor people by their labour; but both mistake their state, and are thus deceived, and suffer, either toiling, for the world, both promising themselves satisfaction and happiness in it, but both miserably disappointed. God vouchsafes compassionately to reason with them; "Wherefore do you thus act against your own interest? Why do you suffer yourselves to be thus imposed upon?" Let us reason thus with ourselves, and let the result of these reasons be, a holy resolution not to labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, John vi. 27. Let all the disappointments we meet with in the world, help to drive us to Christ, and to seek for satisfaction in him only. This is the way to make that sure, which will be made sure.

(2.) From the unspeakable kindness we do to ourselves, if we accept this invitation, and comply with it.

[1.] Hence we secure to ourselves present pleasure and satisfaction; "If you hearken to Christ, you eat that which is good, which is both wholesome and pleasant, good in itself and good for you." God's word and promise, a good conscience, and the comforts of God's good Spirit, are a continual feast to those that hearken diligently and obediently to Christ. There would delights be unvext in heaven; in the richest and most grateful delights. Here the invitation is not, "Come, and buy;" lest that should discourage, but, "Come, and eat, come and entertain yourselves with that which will be abundantly pleasing; eat, O friends." It is sad to think that men should need to be courted thus to their own advantage.

[2.] Hence we secure to ourselves lasting happiness; "Hear and your soul shall live, you shall not only be saved from perishing eternally, but you shall be eternally blessed;" for less than that cannot be the life of an immortal soul. The words of Christ are spirit and life, to spirituals (John vi. 33, 63.) the words of this life, Acts v. 20. On what easy terms is happiness offered to us! It is but "Hear, and you shall live."

[3.] The great God graciously secures all this to us; "Come to me, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, will put myself into covenant- relations, and under covenant-engagements to you, and therewith settle upon you the sure mercies of David." Note, First, If we come to God to serve him, he will covenant with us; he does good, and make us happy, so that all have conscription and concurrence for us. Secondly, God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant; its continuance from everlasting, its continuance to everlasting. Thirdly, The benefits of this covenant are mercies suited to our case, who, being miserable, are the proper objects of mercy. They come from God's mercy, and are agreeable to us; in keeping with our cases. Fourthly, They are the mercies of David, such mercies as God promised to David, (Ps. Ixxxix. 28, 29, &c.) and are appealed to by Solomon, 2 Chron. vi. 42. It shall be a covenant as sure as that with David, Jer. xxxiii. 25, 26. The covenant of royalty was a figure of the covenant of grace, 2 Sam. xxvii. 5. Or, rather, by David here, we are to understand the Messiah. Covenant-matters are all his mercies; they are purchase by him, they are promised in him, they are treasured up in his hand, and out of his hand they are dispensed to us. He is the Mediator and Trustee of the covenant; to him this is applied, Acts xxii. 16. They are the riches of holy things of David; the word used there, and by the LXX. here; for they are confirmed by the holiness of God, (P's. xxxix. 53.) and are intended to advance holiness among men. Lastly, They are sure mercies; the covenant, being well-ordered in all things, is sure. It is sure in the general proposal of it; God is real and sincere, serious and in earnest, in the other matters. It is sure in the particular application of it to believers; God's gifts and callings are without repentance; they are the mercies of David, and therefore sure, for in Christ the promises are all yea and amen.

III. Jesus Christ is promised for the making good of all the other promises which we are here invited to accept of, v. 4. He is that David, whose sure mercies all the blessings and benefits of the covenant are. And God has given him in his purpose and promise, has constituted and appointed him; and in the fulness of time was to surely send him as if he were already come, to be all that to us, which is necessary to our having the benefits of these preparations. He has given him freely; for what more free than a gift? There was nothing in us to merit such a gift, but Christ has freely given us one that we did not want one. To attest the truth of the promises which we are invited to take the benefit of; and Christ is given for a Witness that God is willing to receive us into his favour upon gospel-terms, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, that we may venture our souls upon these promises with entire satisfaction. Christ is a faithful Witness, we may take his word a competent Vow; for he, having been in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and was perfectly apprised of the whole matter. Christ as a Prophet, testifies the will of God to the world; and to believe is to receive his testimony. 2. To assist us in closing with the invitation, and coming up to the terms of it; we know not how to find the way to the waters where we are to be supplied, but Christ is given us to show us the right way; to teach us, that we may be qualified for it, and become sharers in it, but he is given for a Commander, to show us what to do, and enable us to do it. Much difficulty and opposition lie in our way to Christ; we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, but, to animate us for the conflict, we have a good Captain, like Joshua; a Leader and Commander to tread our enemies under our feet, and to put us in possession of this land of promise. Christ is a Commander by his precept, and a Leader by his example; our business is to obey him, and follow him.

IV. The Master of the feast being fixed, it is, next, to be furnished with guests, for the provision shall not be lost, or made in vain, v. 5. 1. The Gentiles shall be called to this feast, shall be invited into all the provisions of it. They shall be called, that they may be acquainted with a nation that thou knowest not, that was not formerly called and owned as thy nation, that thou didst not send prophets to as to Israel, the people which God knew above all the families of the earth." The Gentiles shall now be favoured so as they never were before; their knowing God is said to be rather their being known of God, Gal. iv. 9. 2. They shall come out of all nations; Nations that knew not shall run unto thee; those that had long been far off from Christ, shall be made nigh, that had been running from him, shall run to him, with the greatest speed and alacrity imaginable. There shall be a concourse of believing Gentiles to Christ, who, being lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to His feet.
him. Now see the reason, (1.) Why the Gentiles will thou flock to Christ; it is because of the Lord his God, because he is the Son of God, and is declared to be so with power; because they now see his God is one with whom they have to do, and there is no coming to him as their God but by making an interest in his Son. Those that are brought to be acquainted with God, and understand how the covenant is to be established between God and himself, look to Jesus Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, and there is no coming to God but by him. (2.) Why God will bring them to him; because he is the Holy One of Israel, true to his promises, and he has promised to glorify him, by giving him the heathen for his inheritance. When Greeks began to inquire after Christ, he said, The hour is come, that the Son of man shall be glorified. John xvi. 22, 23. And his being glorified in his resurrection and ascension, was the great argument by which multitudes were wrought upon to run to him.

6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; 11. So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. 12. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.

We have here a further account of that covenant of grace which is made with us in Jesus Christ, both what is required, and what is promised, in the covenant, and those considerations that are sufficient abundantly to confirm our believing compliance with, and reliance on, that covenant. This gracious discovery of God's love to him and them, cannot be not to be confined either to the Jew or to the Gentile, to the Old Testament or to the New, much less to the captives in Babylon. No, both the precepts and the promises here are given to all, to every one that thirsts after happiness, v. 1. And who does not? Hear this and live.

1. Here is a gracious offer made of pardon, and peace, and all happiness, to poor sinners, upon gospel-terms, v. 6, 7. 1. Let them pray, and their prayers shall be heard and answered; (v. 6) "Seek the Lord while he may be found. Seek him whom you have left by revolting from your allegiance to him, and whom you have lost by provoking him to withdraw his favour from you. Call upon him now while he is near, and within call." Observe here, (1.) The duties required. [1.] "Seek the Lord; seek to him, and inquire of him, as your Oracle; ask the law at his mouth, as the prophet, 1 Kings ii. 1. And inquiri after him, as your Portion and Happiness; seek to be reconciled to him, and acquainted with him, and to be happy in his favour. Be sorry that you have lost him, be solicitous to find him; take the appointed method of finding him, making use of Christ as your Way, the Spirit as your Guide, and the word as your rule. [2.] "Call upon him; pray to him to be reconciled, and be reconciled, for every thing else you have need of." (2.) The motives made use of to press these duties upon us; While he may be found—while he is near. [1.] It is implied that now God is near, and will be found, so that it shall not be in vain to seek him, and to call upon him: now his patience is waiting on us, his word is calling to us, and his Spirit striving with us; let us now improve our advantages and opportunities, for he will not always be so near. [2.] There is a day coming when he will be afar off, and will not be found; when the day of his patience is over, and his Spirit will strive no more. There may come such a time in this life, when the heart is incurably hardened; it is certain that a death and judgment the door will be shut, Luke xvi. 25, 26. Mercy is now offered, but then judgment without mercy, will be taken to heart.

2. Let them repent and reform, and their sins shall be pardoned, v. 7. Here is a call to the unconverted, to the wicked and the unrighteous; to the wicked, who live in known gross sins, to the unrighteous, who live in the neglect of plain duties: to them is the word of this salvation sent, and all assurance given, that penitent sinners shall find God a pardoning God. Observe here, (1.) What it is to repent. There are two things in it; [1.] It is to turn from sin, it is to forsake it; it is to leave it, and to leave it with loathing and abhorrence, never to return to it again. The wicked must forsake his way, his evil way, as one would forsake a false way that will never bring us to the happiness we aim at, and a dangerous way, that leads to destruction. Let him not take it for a step, but a return; there must be not only a change of the way, but a change of the mind; the unrighteous must forsake his thoughts. Repentance, if it be true, strikes at the root, and washes the heart from wickedness. We must alter our judgments concerning persons and things, disdaze the corrupt imaginations, and quit the vain practices which an unsanctified heart shelters itself under. Note, It is not enough to break off evil practices, but we must enter a covenant against evil thoughts. Yet this is not all; [2.] To repent is to return to the Lord; to return to him as our God, our sovereign Lord, against whom we have rebelled, and to whom we are concerned to reconcile ourselves; it is to return to the Lord as the fountain of life and living waters, which we had forsaken for broken cisterns. (2.) The encourage-ment of this to repent. If we do so, [1.] God will have mercy; he will not deal with us as our sins have deserved, but will have compassion on us. Misery is the object of mercy. Now both the consequences of sin, by which we are become truly miserable, (Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.) and the nature of repentance, by whom we are made sensible of our misery, and are made heights, or our consciences, (Ezek. xxi. 18.) both these make us objects of pity, and with God there are tender mercies. [2.] He will abundantly pardon. He will multiply to pardon.
which I please"; (for it is the declaration of his will, according to the counsel of which he works all things), "and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." This assures us, [1.] That the promises of God shall all have their full accomplishment in due time, and not one iota or tittle of them shall fail, 1 Kings viii. 56. These promises of mercy and grace shall have as real an effect upon the souls of believers, for their sanctification and comfort, as upon the surface of the earth, and in its elements.

[2.] That according to the different errands on which the word is sent, it will have its different effects; if it be not a savour of life unto life, it will be a savour of death unto death; if it do not convince the conscience, and soften the heart, it will sour the conscience, and harden the heart; if it do not ripen for heaven, it will ripen for hell. See ch. vi. 9. One way or other, it will take effect. [3.] That God is coming into the world, as the dew from heaven, (Hos. xiv. 5.) will not be in vain. For if Israel be not gathered, he will be glorious in the conversion of the Gentiles; to them therefore tenders of grace must be made when the Jews refuse them, that the wedding may be furnished with guests, and the goel not return void.

3. If we look to the special view of the church, we shall find what great things God has done, and will do, for it; (v. 12, 13.) Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace. This refers, (1.) To the deliverance and return of the Jews out of Babylon. They shall go out of their captivity, and be led forth toward their own land again. God will go before them as surely, though not as sensibly, as before his fathers in the pillar of cloud and fire. They shall go out, not with trembling, but with triumph; not with any regret to part with Babylon, or any fear of being fetched back, but with joy and peace. Their journey home over the mountains shall be pleasant, and they shall have the good will and good wishes of all the countries they pass through. The hills and their inhabitants shall, as in a transport of joy, break forth into singing; and if the people should altogether hold their peace, even the trees of the field would attend them with their applause and acclamations. And when they come to their own land, it shall be ready to bid them welcome; for whereas they expected to find it all over grown with briars and thorns, it shall be set with fir-trees, and myrtle-trees; for though it lay desolate a long time, it refers on it, and when God shall have fertilized it, it will be as fertile as before. When that time was, God was with them, and when they were over, the land after the sabbatical year, it was the better for. And this shall redound much to the honour of God, and be to him for a name. But, (2.) Without doubt it looks further; this shall be for an everlasting sign. That is, [1.] The redemption of the Jews out of Babylon shall be a ratification of those promises that relate to the gospel-time. God shall ratify them all, and confirm his promises. [2.] It shall be a representation of the blessings promised, and a type and figure of them. First, Gospel-grace will set those at liberty, that were in bondage to sin and Satan. They shall be come out of Babylon, and shall make them free, and then they shall be free indeed. Secondly, It will fill those with joy, that were melancholy, Ps. xiv. 7. Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. The earth and the inferior part of the creation shall share in the joy of this salvation, Ps. xvi. 11, 12. Thirdly, It will make great changes in the characters. Those that were sons of thorns and briars, good for nothing, barren, hay, hurtful and vexations, shall become graceful and useful as the fir-tree and the myrtle-tree. Thorns and briars came in with sin, and were the
good people, which is a name better than that of sons and daughters. Our relation to God, our interest in Christ, our title to the blessings of the covenant, and our hopes of eternal life, are things that give us in God's house a blessed place and a blessed name. [3.] It shall be an everlasting name, that shall never be extinct, shall never be cut off; like the place and name of angels, who therefore marry not, because they die not. Spiritual blessings are everlasting, better than those for all and daughters; for children are a certain care, and may prove the greatest grief and shame of a man's life, but the blessings we partake of in God's house, are a sure and constant joy and honour, comforts which cannot be imprecated.

2. To those that are themselves the children of strangers,

(1.) It is here promised, that they shall now be welcome to the church, v. 6, 7. When God's Israel come out of Babylon, let them bring as many of their neighbours along with them as they can persuade to come, and God will find room enough for them all in his house.

And here (as before) we may observe,

[1.] Upon what terms they shall be welcome; for no one of the Gentiles shall come in, but shall be thrown open to them: My house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The temple was then God's house, and to that Christ applies these words; (Matth. xxi. 13.) but with an eye to it as a type of the gospel-church, Heb. x. 9, 10. For Christ calls it his house, Heb. iii. 6. Now concerning this house, it is promised,

[1.] That it shall not be a house of sacrifice, but a house of prayer. The religious meetings of God's people shall be meetings for prayer, in which they shall join together, as a token of their united faith and mutual love.

[2.] That it shall be a house of prayer, not for the people of the Jews only, but for all people. This was fulfilled when Peter was made, not only to perceive it himself, but to tell it to the world, that in every nation, he that fears God and works righteousness, is accepted of him, Acts x. 35. It had been declared again and again that the stranger that comes nigh shall be just to death, but Gentiles shall now be looked upon no longer as strangers and foreigners, Eph. ii. 19.

And it appears by Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, both that it was primarily intended for a house of prayer, and that strangers should be welcome, 1 Kings i. 44, 45.

And it is intimated here, (v. 8.) that when the Gentiles are called in, they shall be incorporated into one body with the Jews, that (as Christ says, John x. 16.) there may be one fold and one Shepherd; for, First, God will gather the outcasts of Israel; many of the Jews that had by their unbelief cast themselves out, shall by faith be brought in again; a remnant, says Jacob, shall be gathered. (Gen. xxxii. 15.) Christ came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, (Matth. xxi. 24.) to gather their outcasts, (Ps. cvii. 2.) to restore their preserved, (ch. xlix. 6.) and to be their Glory, Luke ii. 32.

Secondly, He will gather others also to him, beside his own outcasts that are gathered to him; or though some of the Gentiles have come over now and then into the church, the elector are said, as (as may think) to answer the exterm of these promises, no, there are still more and more to be brought in; I will gather others to him beside these; these are but the first-fruits, in comparison with the harvest that shall be gathered for Christ in the nations of the earth, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in. Note, The church is a growing body; when some are gathered to it, we may hope there shall be still more, till the mystical body be completed: 'Other sheep I have.'
9. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. 10. His watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter. 12. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant.

From words of comfort the prophet here, by a very sudden change of his style, passes to words of reproof and conviction, and goes on in that strain, for the most part, in the three following chapters; and therefore some here begin a new sermon. He had assured the people, that in due time God would deliver them out of captivity, which was designed for the comfort of those that should live when God would do this. Now here he shows what their sins and provocations were, for which God would send them into captivity, and this was designed for the conviction of those that lived in his own time, near a hundred years before, when came up taking up the measure of the nation's sin, and to justify God in what he brought upon them. God will lay them waste by the fierceness of their enemies, for the falseness of their friends.

I. Desolating judgments are here summoned, v. 9. The sheep of God's pasture are now to be made the sport of wild beasts, and their fall is in his service, and therefore the beasts of the field and the forest are called to come and devour. They are beasts of prey, and do it from their own ravenous disposition; but God permits them to do it, nay, he employs them as his servants in doing it, the ministers of his justice, though they mean not so, neither does their heart think so. If this refers primarily to the descent made upon them by the Babylonians, and their devouring of them, yet it may look further, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, after these outcasts of them (mentioned v. 8.) were gathered into the Christian church. The Roman armies came upon them as beasts of the forest to devour them, and they quite took away their place and nation. Note, When God has scattered the people of his church, he gives the beasts of prey within call, to be employed in doing it.

II. The reason of these judgments is here given. The shepherds who should have been the watchmen of the flock, to discover the approaches of the beasts of prey, to keep them off, and protect the sheep, were treacherous and careless, minded not their business, nor made any conscience of the trust reposed in them. Now here is given to the beasts of prey to the wild beasts. Now this may refer to the false prophets that lived in Isaiah's, Jeremiah's, and Ezekiel's time, that flattered the people in their wicked ways, and told them they should have peace, though they went on: it may also refer to the priests that bare rule by their means, or to the wise men of the nation, who were the mirrors of the sight of the Lord, and other wicked magistrates under them, that betrayed their trust, were vicious and profane, and, instead of making up the breach of which the judgments of God were breaking in upon them, made it wider, and augmented the fierce anger of the Lord instead of doing any thing to turn it away. They should have kept judgment and justice, (v. 1.) but they abandoned both, Jer. v. 1. Or, it may refer to those who were the nation's watchmen in our Saviour's time, the chief priests and the scribes who should have discerned the signs of the times, and have given notice to the people of the approach of the Messiah, but who, instead of that, opposed him, and did all they could to keep people from coming to the knowledge of him, and to prejudice them against him.

It is a very sad character that is here given of these watchmen; we unto thee, O land, when thy guides are such. 1. They had no sense or knowledge of their business; they were wretchedly ignorant of their work, and very unfit to teach, being so ill-taught themselves. His watchmen are blind, and therefore utterly unfit to be watchmen. If they do not see, who shall see for us? If the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness! Christ describes the Pharisees to be blind leaders of the blind, Matt. xv. 14. The beasts of the field come to devour, and the watchmen are blind, and are not aware of them. They are all ignorant, (v. 10.) shepherds that cannot understand, (v. 12.) that know not what is to be done about the sheep, nor can feed them with understanding, Jer. iii. 15.

2. What little knowledge they had, they made no use of it, no one was the better for it. As they were blind watchmen, that could not discern the danger, so they were dumb dogs, that would not be warned. And why are the dogs set to guard the sheep, if they will not be careful to stop the shepherd, and frighten the wolf? Such were these; they that had the charge of souls never reproved men for their faults, nor told them what would be in the end thereof, never gave them notice of the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them; they barked at God's prophets, and bit them too, and did the works of the wolf, and made no opposition to the wolf or thief.

3. They were very lazy, and would take no pains; they loved their ease, and hated business, were always sleeping, lying down, and loving to slumber. They were not overcome, and overpowered by sleep, as the disciples, through grief and fatigue, but they lay down on purpose to invite sleep; and said, Soul, take thine ease. Yet a little sleep. It is bad with a people when their shepherds slumber, (Nah. iii. 18.) and it is well for God's people, that their Shepherd, the Keeper of Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps.

4. They were very covetous and eager after the world, greedy dogs, that can never have enough; if they had ever so much, they would think it too little; they loved silver as never to be satisfied with silver, Eccl. v. 10. All their inquiry is, what they shall get, not what they shall do. Let them have the wages, and they care not whether the work be done or no; they feed not the flock, but fleece it. They are every one looking to his own way, minding his own private interests, and have no regard at all to the public welfare; it was St. Paul's complaint of the Corinthians: "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." Every one is for propagating his own opinion, advancing his own party, raising his own family, and having every thing to his own mind, while the common concerns of the public are wretchedly neglected and postponed. They look ever Jesus, his good gift from his quarter, for his hand or part of the work, they are for gain from every quarter, Rem. rem, quocunque modo rem—Money, money, by fair means, or by foul, we must have money, but especially from their own quarter, where they will be sure to take care that they lose nothing, nor miss any thing that is to be got. If any one put not into their mouths, they not only will do him no service, but they fire the war against him, Micah iii. 5.
5. They were perfect epicles, given to their pleasures, never so much in their element as in their drunken revels; (v. 12.) Come ye, (say they,) I will fetch wine; (they have that at command, their cellars are better furnished than their closets;) and we will fill ourselves, or be drunk with wine and drink. Say they, When they were drunk, not overseen, (as we say,) or overtaken, in drink, but designedly. The watchmen did thus invite and encourage one another to drink to excess, or they counted the people to sit and drink with them, and so confirmed them in their wicked ways, and hardened their hearts, whom they should have reproved. How could they think it any harm to be drunk, when the watchmen themselves joined with them, and led the way?

6. They were secure, and confident of the continuance of their prosperity and ease; they said, "To-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant; we shall have as much to spend upon our lusts to-morrow, as we have to-day." They had no thought at all of their own frailty and mortality, though they were shortening their days, and hastening their deaths, by their excesses. They had no dread of the judgments of God, though they were daily provoking him, and making themselves liable to his wrath and curse. They never considered the uncertainty of all the delights and enjoyments of sense, how they perish in the using, and pass away with the lusts of them. They resolved to continue in this wild course, whenever their consciences said to the contrary, to be as merry to-morrow as they are to-day. But boast not thyself of to-morrow, when perhaps this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

CHAP. LVII.

The prophet, in this chapter, makes his observations, I. Upon the death of good men, comforting those that were taken away in their integrity, and reprobating those that did not make a due improvement of such providences, v. 1, 2. II. Upon the gross idolatries and spiritual whoredoms which the Jews were guilty of, and the destroying judgments they were thereby bringing upon themselves, v. 3., 12. III. Upon the gracious returns of God to his people to put an end to their captivity, and re-establish their prosperity, v. 15., 21.

1. The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. 2. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.

The prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, had condemned the watchmen for their ignorance and scoffishness; here he shows the general stupidity and senselessness of the people likewise; no wonder they were inconsiderate, when their watchmen were so, who should have awakened their Master's servants. We may observe here,

1. The providence of God removing good men, apace out of this world. The righteous, as to this world, perish, they are gone, and their place knows them no more; piety exempted none from the arrests of death, may, in persecuting times, the most righteous are most exposed to the violences of bloody men, and their dominion. Righteousness delivers from the sting of death, but not from the stroke of it. They are said to perish, because they are utterly removed from us, and to express the great loss which this world sustains by the removal of them; not that their death is their undoing, but it often proves an undoing to the places where they lived, and were useful. Nay, even merciful men are taken away, those good men that are distinguished from the righteous for whom some would even dare to die, Rom. v. 7. Those are often removed, that could be worst spared; the fruitful trees are cut down by death, and the barren left toumber the ground. Merciful men are often taken away by the hand of men's malice; many good works they have done, and for some of them they are stoned. Before the captivity in Babylon perhaps there was a more than ordinary mortality of good men, so that there were scarcely any left, Jer. v. 1. The godly ceased, and the faithful failed, Ps. xii. 1.

2. The careless world slighting these providences, and disregarding them—so man lays it to heart, none considers it. There are very few that lament it as a public loss, very few that take notice of it as a public warning. The death of good men is a thing to be laid to heart, and considered, more than common deaths. Serious inquiries ought to be made! Wherefore does God content with us? What good lessons are to be learned by such providences? What may we do to help to make up the breach, and to fill up the room of those that are removed? God is justly displeased when such events are not laid to heart; when the voice of the rod is not heard, nor the intentions of it answered, much more when it is rejoiced in, as the slaying of the witnesses is, Rev. xi. 10. Some of God's choicest blessings to mankind, his most solemn warnings, are grossly undervalued; and it is an evidence of very great incogitancy; little children, when they are little, least lament the death of their parents, because they know not what a loss it is to them.

3. The happiness of the righteous in their removal. (2.) They are taken away from the evil to come, then when it is just coming. [1.] In compassion to them, that they may not see the evil, (2 Kings xxii. 20.) nor share in it, nor be in temptation by it. When the deluge is coming, they are called into the ark, and have a hiding-place and rest in heaven, when there was none for them under heaven. [2.] In wrath to the world, to punish them for all the injuries they have done to the righteous and merciful ones; these are taken away, that stood in the gap to turn away the judgments of God; and then what can be expected but a deluge of them? It is a sign that God intends war, when he calls home his ambassadors.

(2.) They go to be easy, out of the reach of that evil. The righteous man, who, while he lived, walked in his uprightness, enters, when he dies, into peace, and rests in his bed. Note, [1.] Death is gain, and rest, and bliss, to those only who walked in their uprightness, and who, when they die, can appeal to God concerning it, as Hezekiah, (2 Kings xx. 3.) Now, Lord, remember it. [2.] They that practised uprightness and persevered in it to the end, shall find it well with them when they die. Their souls then enter into peace, into the world of peace, where all wills are confirmed, and where there is no trouble; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Their bodies rest in their beds. Note, The grave is a bed of rest to all the Lord's people; there they rest from all their labours, Rev. xiv. 13. And the more weary they were, the more welcome will that rest be to them, Job iii. 17. This bed is made in the darkness, but that makes it the more quiet; it is a bed out of which they shall rise refreshed in the morning of the resurrection.

3. But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. 4. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide
mouth, and draw out the tongue! are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood, 5. Inflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree, slaying the children in the valleys under the clifts of the rocks! 6. Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion; they, they are thy lot; even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these? 7. Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed: even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice.

8. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance; for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up: thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made a covenant with them; thou lovest their bed where thou sawkest it. 9. And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell. 10. Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saith thou, thou not. There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thy hand; therefore thou wast not grieved. 11. And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast hasted, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? 12. I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.

We have here a high charge, but a just one, no doubt, drawn up against that wicked generation, out of which God's righteous ones were removed, because the world was not worthy of them. Observe, I. The general character here given of them, or the name and title by which they stand indicted, v. 3. They are bid to draw near, and hear the charge, are set to the bar and arraigned there as sons of the sorceress, or of a witch, the seed of an adulterer and an whore. (2.) They, in short, are but a generation of sinners, strongly inclined to be such, and their ancestors were such before them. Sin is sorcery and adultery, for it is departing from God, and dealing with the devil; and they were children of disobedience; 

"Come," says the prophet, "draw near hither, and I will read you your doom; to the righteous death will bring peace and rest, but to you, ye children of iniquity, a seed of falsehood, (v. 4.) that have it by kied, and have it woven into your very nature, to backward from God, and to deal treacherously with him," (ch. xlviii. 8.) II. The particular crimes laid to their charge. 1. Scoffing at God and his word. They were a generation of scorner; (v. 4.) Against whom do you sport yourselves? You think it is only against the poor prophets, whom you trample upon as contemptible men, but really it is against God himself, who sends them, and whose message they deliver. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, for what was done to them God took as done to himself. When they were reproved for their sins, and threatened with the judgments of God, they ridiculed the word of God with the rudest and most indecent gestures and expressions of disdain. They sported themselves and made themselves merry with that which should have made them serious, and under which they should have humbled themselves. They made万里 months at the prophets, and drew out the tongue, contrary to all the laws of good breeding; nor did they treat God's prophets with the common civility with which they would have treated a gentleman's servant that had been sent to them on an errand. Note, Those who mock at God, and bid defiance to his judgments, had best consider who it is toward whom they carry it so insolently.

2. Idolatry. This was that sin which the people of the Jews were most notoriously guilty of before the captivity; but that affliction cured them of it. In Isaiah's time it abounded, witness the abominable idolatries of Ahaz (which some think are particularly referred to here) and of Manasseh. (1.) They were doting fond of their idols, were inflamed with them, as those that burn in unlawful, unnatural lusts, Rom. 1. 27. They were mad upon their idols, Jer. 1. 38. They inflamed themselves with them by their violent passions in the worship of them, as those of Baal's prophets that leaped upon the altar, and cut themselves, 1 Kings xviii. 26, 28. Note, Vile corruptions, the more they are gratified, the more they are inflamed. They worshipped their idols under every green tree, in the open air, and in the shade; yet that did not cool the heat of their impiety. (2.) They were given to idolatrous lusts, and were charged with the charming beauty of the green trees made them the more fond of their idols which they worshipped there. Thus that in nature which is pleasing, instead of drawing them to the God of nature, drew them from him. The flame of their zeal in the worship of false gods, may shame us for our coldness and indifference in the worship of the true God. Our own hearts are more deceit and deaden ourselves. (2.) They were barbarous and unutterably cruel in the worship of their idols; they slew their children, and offered them in sacrifice to their idols, not only in the valley of the son of Hinnom, the head-quarters of that monstrous idolatry, but in other valleys, in imitation of that, and under the cliffs of the rock, in dark and solitary places, the fittest for such works of darkness, (3.) They were abundant and insatiable in their idolatries; they never thought they could have idols enough, nor could spend enough upon them, and do enough in their service. The Syrians had once a notion of the God of Israel, that he was a God of the hills, but not a God of the valleys; (1 Kings xx. 28.) but these idolaters, to make such work, had but one.

[1.] They had gods of the valleys, which they worshipped in the low places by the water side; (v. 6.) Among the smooth stones of the valley, or brook, is thy portion. If they saw a smooth carved stone, though set up but for a way-mark, or a mere stone, they were ready to worship it, as the papists do crosses. Or, in stony valleys they set up their gods, which they all collected to their Lot, and then were drawn into them, like the multitude of folly, who take the smooth stones of the stream for their portion, when they might have the precious stones of God's Jerusalem, and the High Priest's ephod, to portion themselves with. Having taken these idols for their lot and portion, they refuse no charge in doing honour to them; "To them hast thou pour'd a drink-offering, and offered a meat-offering, as if they had given thee thy meat"
ISAIAH, LVII.

and drink." They loved their idols better than their children, for their own tables must be robbed, to replenish the altars of their idols. Have we taken the true God for our Portion? Is he, even I, our Lot? Let us then serve him with our meat and drink, not as they did, by depriving ourselves of the use of them, but by eating and drinking to his glory. Here, in a parenthesis, comes in an expression of God's just resentment of this wickedness of theirs. Shall He, who brought such people as this, Can they expect that God would take any pleasure in them, or accept their devotions at his altar, who thus serve Baal with the gifts of his providence? God takes comfort in his people, while they are faithful to him; but what comfort can he take in them, when they should be his witnesses against the idolatries of the world, do themselves in with them? Should I have compassion on these? (so some:) Should I requite them for these? (so others.) "How can they expect that I should spare them, and either adjourn or abate their punishment, when they are so very provoking? Shall I not visit for these things?" 

2. They had gods of the hills too; (v. 7.) "Upon a lofty and high mountain (as if thou wouldest vie with the high places of Baal.) One himself, v. 15.) hast thou set Baal, the highest of the idola ries of the north, the altar, the bed of thine uncleaness, where thou com mitted spiritual whoredom, with all the wantonness of an idolatrous fancy, and in direct violation of the covenant of thy God. Thither wonesth thou up readily enough, though it was up-hill, to offer sacrifice." Some think this bespeaks the impudence they arrived at in their idolatries; at first they had a sense of shame, when they worshipped idols in the valleys, in obscure places; but they soon conquered that, and came to do it upon the lofty, high mountains; they were not ashamed, neither could they blush.

3. As if these were not enough, they had household-gods too, their larses and penates. Behind the doors and the posts, (v. 8.) where the law of God should be written for a memorial and to them of their duty, they set up the remembrance of their idols, not so much to keep up their own remembrance of them, (they were so fond of them, that they could not forget them,) but to show to others how mindful they were of them, and to put their children in mind of them, and possess them betimes with a veneration for these dunghill-deities.

4. As they were passionate in their idolatries, so they were obstinate in their free-will; they were hardened in their wickedness, they worshipped their idols openly and in public view, as being neither ashamed of the sin, nor afraid of the punishment; theywent as publicly, and in as great crowds, to the idol-temples, as ever they had gone to God's house. This was like an impudent harlot, discovering themselves to another, and not to God, making a profession of faith and high-sounding professions of love, and not of the true. They took a pride in making prosyletes to their idolatries, and not only went up themselves to their high places, but enlarged their bed, their idol-temples, and (as the margin reads the following words) thou heuest it for thyself larger than theirs, than theirs from whom thou copiest it, and tookest the platform of it, as Ahaz of his altar from that which he saw at Damascus. Yet the gifts of God, as the honor of God, is put up to the highest degree, and sink themselves to the lowest, that forsokk the Fountain of life for broken cisterns, and the Rock of ages for broken reeds. Note, Sinners disparage and debase themselves; the service of sin is an ignominious slavery; and they who thus debase themselves to hell, will justly have their portion there. 11. The correction of their sin:

1. They had been tired with disappointments in their wicked courses, and yet they would not be convinced of the folly of them; (v. 10.) "Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; thou hast undertaken a mighty task, to find out true satisfaction and happiness in that which is vanity and a lie." Those that set up idols, instead of God, for the object of their hope and confidence, and think thus to better themselves, and make themselves easy, go a great way about, and will never come to their journey's end; Thou art wearied in the multitude, or multiplicity, of thy ways; so read it; those that forsake the only right way, wander end- lessly in a thousand by-paths, and lose themselves in the many inventions, which they have sought out; they weary themselves with fresh chases, and fiv...
one s, but never gain their point, like the Sodemites, that wearied themselves to find the door, (Gen. xix. 11;) and could not find it at last. The pleasures of sin will soon surfeit, but never satisfy; a man may quickly tire himself in the pursuit of them, but can never repose himself in the enjoyment of them. They found this by experience; the idols they had often worshipped never did them any kindness, the kings they courted distressed them, and helped them not; they were necessarily set on, that they could not say, "There is no hope; it is in vain any longer to expect that satisfaction in creature-confidences, and in the worship of idols, which we have so often looked for, and never met with."

Note. Despair of happiness in the creature, and of satisfaction in the service of sin, is the first step towards a sullen-witted hope of happiness in God, and a well-fixed resolution to keep to his service; and those are inexcusable, who have had a sensible conviction of the vanity of the creature, and yet will not be brought to say, "There is no hope to be happy short of the Creator."

2. Though they were convinced that the way they were in was a sinful way, yet, because they had found no happiness in the works of sin, and no profit by it, they could not persuade themselves to be sorry for it; "Thou hast found the life of thy hand," (or, the living of it,) "thou hastest how fortune smiles upon thee, and therefore thou art not grieved, any more than Ephraim, when he said, (Hos. xii. 8,) I am become rich, I have found me out substance." Note. Prosperity in sin is a great barrier to conviction. Those are soonest in the sad state of sinners, in their sinful pleasures, and raise estates by their sinful projects, are tempted to think God favours them, and therefore they have nothing to repent of. Some read it ironically, or by way of question, "Thou hast found the life of thy hand, hast found true satisfaction and happiness, no doubt, thou hast; hast thou not? And therefore thou art so far from being grieved, that thou blestest thyself in thy own evil way; but review thy gains once more, and come to a balance of profit and loss, and then say, What fruit hast thou of those things whereof thou art ashamed, and for which God shall bring thee into judgment?" Rom. vi. 21.

3. They had dealt very unworthily with God by their sin; for, (1.) It should seem they pretended that they did God wrong, because he was too terrible a majesty for them to deal with; they must have gods that they could be more free and familiar with; "But," says God, "of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied; that thou hast dealt falsely and treacherously with me, and dissembled in thy covenants with me and prayers to me! What did I ever do to frighten thee from me? What occasion have I given them to stand in dread of me, that thou hast gone to seek a kindler master?" (2.) However, it is certain that they had no true reverence of God, nor any awful regard to him. So that question is commonly understood. "Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared? Of none; for thou hast not feared me whom thou shouldst fear; for thou hast lied to me." Those that dissemble and pretend vices to those godly, who show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. And multitudes are ruined by fearlessness, forgetfulness, and mere carelessness; they do not aight, nor to good purpose fear any thing, remember any thing, or lay any thing to heart. Nay, (3.) They were hardened in their sin by the patience and forbearance of God; "Have not I held my peace of old, and for a long time? These things thou hast done, and I kept silence. And therefore, as it follows here, thou fearest me not;" as if because God had spared long, he would never punish, Eccl. viii. 11. Because he kept silence, the sinner thought him altogether such a one as himself, and stood in no awe of him.

Lastly, Here is God's resolution to call them to an account, though he had long borne with them; (v. 12.) I will declare; like that, (Ps. l. 21.) "but I will reprove thee, I will declare thy righteousness, which thou makest thy boast of, and let the world see, and thyself too, to thy confusion, that it is all a sham, all a cheat, it is not what it pretends to be. When the righteousness comes to be examined, it will be found unrighteousness; and that there is no sincerity in all thy pretensions. I will declare thy works, what they have been, and what the gain thou pretendest to have gotten by them, and it will appear that at long run they shall not profit thee, nor turn to any account." Note, Sinful works, as they are works of darkness, and there is no reaen or right- ness in them, to prove the rightness of them; there is nothing got by them; and however they look now, it will be made to appear so another day. Sin profits not, nay, it ruins and destroys.

13. When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; 14. And shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare, the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people. 15. For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place: with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. 16. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. Here,

I. God shows how insufficient idols and creatures were to relieve and succour those that worshipped them, and confided in them; (v. 13.) "When thou criest in thy distress and anguish, lamentest thy miseries, and callest for help, let thy companions deliver thee, thy idol-gods which thou hast heaped to thyself companies of, the troops of the confederate forces which thou hast relied so much upon, let them deliver thee if they can; expect no other relief than what they can give." Thus God said to Israel, when in their trouble they called upon him, (Judg. x. 14.) "Go, and cry to the gods which you have chosen, let them deliver you in time of trouble." But in vain is such expectation; they shall carry them all away, the wind of God's wrath, the breath of his mouth, which shall slay the wicked; they have made themselves as chaff, and therefore the wind will of course hurry them away. Vanity they are, and vanity shall take them away, to vanity they shall be restored, and vanity shall be their reward. Both the idols and their worshippers shall come to nothing.

II. He shows that there was a sufficiency, an all-sufficiency, in him for the comfort and deliverance of all those that put their confidence in him, and
made their application to him. Their safety and satisfaction appear the more comfortable, because their hopes are crowned with fruition, when those that seek to other helpers have their hopes frustrated; "He that puts his trust in me, and in me only, he shall be happy, both for soul and body, for this is the Lord our God. 1. They that trust in God's providence take the best course to secure their secular interests; they shall possess the land, as much of it as is good for them, and what they have, shall they have it from a good hand, and hold it by a good title; (Ps. xxxvii. 3.) They shall dwell in the land, and verity they shall be fed. 2. They that trust in God's grace take the best course to secure their spiritual interests. They shall inherit my holy mountain. They shall enjoy the privileges of the church on earth, and be brought at length to the joys of heaven; and no wind shall carry them away. More particularly,

(1.) The captives that trust in God, shall be released; (v. 14.) They shall say, the messengers of his word, and all the ministers of his providence, in that great event shall say, cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, when God's time is come, their deliverance, the way of bringing it about shall be made plain and easy, obstacles shall be removed, difficulties that seemed insurmountable shall be speedily got over, and all things shall concur both to accelerate and facilitate their return. See ch. 3, 4. This refers to the provision which the gospel, and the grace of it, makes, that they shall find a passage that they may arrive at a greater world to a better. The way of return is now cast up, it is a highway; ministers' business is to direct people in it, and to help them over the discouragements they meet with, that nothing may offend them.

(2.) The contrite, that trust in God, shall be rev- ered, v. 15. They that trusted to idols and creatures for help, went with their sins and holy phantoms, v. 9. But here God shows that those who may expect help from him, are such as are destitute of, and set themselves at a distance from, the gaieties of the world, and the delights of sense. God's glory appears here very bright,

[1.] In his greatness and majesty; he is the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity. Let this possess us with very high and honourable thoughts of him, who dwells with immortality, and is exalted in his being and perfections are exalted infinitely above every creature, not only above what they have themselves, but above what they can conceive concerning him, far above all their blessing and praise, Neh. ix. 5. He is the high and lofty One, and there is no creature like him, nor any to be compared with him. It speaks likewise his sovereign dominion over all, and the incontestable right he has to give both law and judgment to all: he is higher than the highest, (Eccl. v. 8.) than the highest heavens, Ps. cxiii. 4. Secondly, That with him there is neither beginning of days, nor end of life, nor change of time; he is both immortal and immutate, he only has immortality, 1 Tim. vi. 16. He has it of himself, and he has it constantly, he inhabits it, and cannot be dispossessed of it. We must labor to remove into eternity, but God always inhabits it.

Thirdly, That there is an infinite rectitude in his nature, an exact conformity with himself, and a steady design of his own glory, in all that he does; and this appears in every thing by which he has made himself known, for his name is Holy, and all that desire to be acquainted with him, must know him as a holy God. Fourthly, That the peculiar residence and discovery of his glory are in the mansions of light and bliss above; "I dwell in the high and holy place, and will have all the world to know it." Whoever have any business with God must direct to him as their Father in heaven; for there he dwells. These great things are here said of God, to possess us with a holy reverence of him, to encourage our confidence in him, and to magnify his compassion and condescension to us; that though he is thus high, yet he has respect unto the lowly; he that rides on the heavens by his name J.H.I., stoops alone for poor widows and fatherless, Ps. Ixviii. 4, 5.

[2.] In his grace and mercy; he has a tender pity for the humble and contrite, for those that are so in respect of their state; if they, be his people, he will not overlook them, though they are poor and low in the world, and despised and trampled upon by men. But it refers to the temper of their mind; he must be humble, not only in respect of their outward estate, but in regard to their heart and spirit, being not penitent for sin, nor in secret for it, and have a dread of the wrath of God, which they have made themselves obnoxious to, and are submissive under all his rebukes. Now, First, With these God will dwell; he will visit them graciously, will converse familiarly with them by his word and spirit, as a man does with those of his own family; he will be always nigh to them, and present with them; he that dwells in the highest heavens, dwells in the lowest hearts, and inhabits sincerity as surely as he inhabits eternity; in these he delights. Secondly, He will revive their heart. His spirit will work in them, by the word and Spirit of his grace, which will be reviving to them, as a cordial to one that is ready to faint. He will give them reviving joys and hopes, sufficient to balance all the grieves and fears that break their spirits. He dwells with them, and his presence is reviving.

(5.) Those he contends with, if they trust in him, shall be received into favor. He will revive the heart of the contrite ones, for he will not contend for ever. Nothing makes a soul so contrite as God's contending, and therefore nothing revives it so as his ceasing his controversy. Here is, [1.] A gracious promise. It is not promised that he will never be angry with his people, for their sins are disapproving to him, or that he will never contend with them, or that they must expect the worst; but he will not contend for ever. As he is not soon angry, so he is not long angry; he will not always chide. Though he contend with them by convictions of sin, he will not contend for ever, but, instead of the spirit of bondage, they shall receive the Spirit of adoption; he has torn, but he will heal; though he contend with them by the rebukes of providence, yet the correction shall not last long, shall last no longer than there is need, (1 Pet. i. 6.) no longer than they can bear, and no longer than till it has done its work. Though their whole life be calamitous, yet their end will be peace, and so will their eternity be. [2.] A very compassionate consideration, upon which this promise is grounded; "If I should contend for ever, the spirit would fail before me, even the souls which I have made." Note, First, God is the Father of spirits; (Heb. xii. 9,) it is the soul that he has made, that he gave being to by creation, and a new being to by regeneration. Secondly, Though the Lord is for the body, yet he concerns himself chiefly for the souls of his people, that the spirit do not fail, and its graces and comforts. Thirdly, Though the spirit of man is satiated, yet the spirit even of good men is apt to fail; they are tooapt to entertain hard thoughts of God, to think it in vain to serve him; they are ready to put comfort away from them, and to despair of relief, and then the spirit fails. Fourthly, It is in consideration of this, that God will not contend for ever; for he will not
forsake the work of his own hands, nor defeat the purchase of his Son's blood. The reason is taken not from our merit, but from our weakness and iniquity; for he remembers that we are flesh, (Ps. lxxxviii. 39.) and the flesh is weak.

17. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. 18. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. 19. I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him. 20. But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

The body of the people of Israel, in this account of God's dealings with them, is spoken of as a particular person, (v. 17, 18) but divided into two sorts, differently dealt with; some who were sons of peace, to whom peace is spoken, (v. 19) and others who were not, who have nothing to do with peace, (v. 20, 21.) Observe here,

1. The just rebukes which that people were brought under for their sin; For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth with him. Covetousness was a sin that abounded very much among that people; (Jer. vi. 13.) From the least to the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness. Those that did not worship images, were yet carried away by this spiritual idolatry; for covetousness is such, it is making money the god, Col. iii. 5. No marvel that the people were covetous, when their covetousness themselves were notoriously so, ch. lvi. 11. Yet, covetous as they were, in the service of their idols they were prodigal, v. 6. And it is hard to say, whether their profuseness in that, or their covetousness in every thing else, was more provoking. But for this iniquity, among others, God was angry with them, and brought one judgment after another upon them, and their destruction at last by the Chaldeans; but he represented it, took it very ill, that a people who were devoted to himself, and portioned in himself, should be so entirely given up to the world, and choose that for their portion. Note, Covetousness is an iniquity that is very displeasing to the God of heaven. It is heart-sin, but he sees it, and therefore hates it, and looks upon it with jealousy, because it sets up a rival with him and his soul. In a word, which men bless themselves in, (Ps. lxxix. 18.) and in which their neighbours bless them; (Ps. x. 3.) but God abhors it. 2. He smote him, reproved him for it by his prophets, corrected him by his providence, punished him in those very things he so doted upon, and was covetous of. Note, Sinners shall be made to feel the rugged anger of God; whom he is wroth with he smites; and covetousness particularly lays men under the tokens of God's displeasure. They that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world are disappointed of it, or it is inebriated to them; it is either clogged with a cross, or turned into a curse. 3. God hid himself from him when he was under those rebukes; and continued wroth with him. When we are under the rod, if God manifest himself to us, we may hear it the better; but if he both smite us and hide himself from us, send us no prophets, speak to us no comfortable word, show us no token for good, if he tear and go away, (Hos. v. 14.) we are very miserable.

II. Their obstinacy and incorrigibility under these rebukes; He went on frowardly in the way of his heart, in his evil way. He was not sensible of the displeasure of God that he was under; he felt the smart of the rod, but had no regard at all to the hand; the more he was crossed in his worldly pursuits, the more eager he was in them. He either would not see his error, or, if he saw it, would not amend it. Covetousness was the way of his heart, it was what he was inclined to, and intent upon; and he would not be reclaimed, but in his distress he tresspassed yet more, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. See the strength of the corruption of men's hearts, and the sinfulness of sin; it will take its course, in despite of God himself and all the flames of his wrath. See also how insufficient affictions of themselves are to reform most obstinate and God's grace work with them.

III. God's wonderful return in mercy to them, notwithstanding the obstinacy of the generality of them. The greater part of them went on frowardly, but there were some among them that were mourners for the obstinacy of the rest; with an eye to them, or rather, for his own name's sake, God determined not to contend for ever with them. With the froward God will walk contrary to them, (Ps. xviii. 26.) and walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 24. When this sinner here went on frowardly in the way of his heart, one would think it should have followed, "I have seen his ways, and will destroy him, will abandon him, will never have anything more to do with him." But such are the riches of divine mercy and grace, that God can, and does so do. God has heard it, and it grieves him, like a father, when his poor child, it grieves him, like a father, when his poor child, when it goes amiss, provoking its parents, as he has done; it sets itself on a bad course, God knows how bad the people were, and yet would not cast them off. But observe the method; God will first give him grace, and then, and not till then, give him peace; "I have seen his ways, that he will never turn to me of himself, and therefore I will turn him." Those whom God has mercy in store for, he has grace in readiness for, to prepare and qualify them for the exercise of grace when he will bestow it, as fast as they could. 1. God will heal him of his corrupt and vicious disposition, will cure him of his covetousness, though it be ever so deeply rooted in him, and his heart have been long exercised to covetous practices. There is no spiritual disease so inveterate, but almighty grace can conquer it. 2. God will give him also; not only amend what was amiss in him, that he may cease to do evil, but direct him into the way of duty, that he may learn to do well. He goes on frowardly, as Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, but God will lead him into a better mind, a better path. And then, 3. He will restore those comforts to him, which he had forfeited and lost, and for the return of which he had thus prepared him. There was a wonderful reformation wrought upon them, which brought comfort to them, to their mourners, to those among them that mourned for their own sins, the sins of their people, and the desolations of the sanctuary. To those mourners the mercy would be most comfortable, and to those who had an evil heart working it out. Blessed are they that mourn, for to them comfort belongs, and they shall have it.

Now, as when that people went into captivity, some of them were good figs, very good, others of them bad figs, very bad, and, accordingly, their
capitvity was to them for their good or for their hurt, (Jer. xxxvii. 8, 9,) so when, they came out of captivity, still some of them were good, others bad, and the deliverance was to them accordingly.

(1.) To those among them that were good, their return out of captivity was peace, such peace as was a type and earnest of the peace which should be preached by Jesus Christ, (v. 19.) I create the fruit of the lips, peace, (Ps. xcii.) 2.] God had thought it to give them a promise, and thanksgiving for this is the fruit of the lips, (Heb. xiii. 15.) the calvses of the lips, (Hos. xiv. 2.) I create this. Creation is out of nothing, and this is surely out of worse than nothing, when God creates matter of praise for those that went on forwardly in the way of their heart. [2.] In order to this, peace shall be published, peace, peace, perfect peace, all kinds of peace, to him that is afar off from the general rendezvous, the head-quarters, as well as to him that is near. Peace with God; though he has contended with them, he will be reconciled, and let fall his controversy; peace of conscience, a holy security, and serenity of mind, after the many reproaches of conscience and toises of spirit they had been under in their captivity. Thus God creates the fruit of the lips, uniply, thanking for it, and speaks peace to us, we must speak praises to him. This peace is itself of God's creating, he, and he only, can work it; it is the fruit of the lips, of his lips, he commands it; of the minister's lips, he speaks it by them, ch. xl. 1. It is the fruit of preaching lips and praying lips; it is the fruit of Christ's lips, whose lips drop as a honey-comb, for to him this is second, (Eph. ii. 17.) He came, and preached peace to you who were afar off, you Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, who were nigh; to after ages, who were afar off in time, as well as to those of the present age.

(2.) To those among them that were wicked, though they might return with the rest, yet to them their return was no peace, v. 26. The wicked, wherever he is, in Babylon or in Jerusalem, carries about with him the principle of his own unceasing, and is like the troubled sea. God healed those to whom he spake peace; (v. 19.) I will heal them, he shall be well again and set to rights; but the wicked would not be healed by the grace of God, and therefore shall not be healed by his comforts. They are always like the sea in a storm, for they cannot be at peace with any; they are the apple of God's eye, never satisfying their expectations; these are not cured and conquered, and their ungodly lusts and passions make them like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, vexatious to all about them, and therefore uneasy to themselves; noisy and dangerous. When the intertemporal heats of the spirit break out in scurrilous and abusive language, then the troubled sea casts forth mine and dirty [3.] Unpeaceable consciences; they are under a frightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled, they are in a toss, when they seem merry, they are in heaviness; like Cain, who always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience disturb all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mine and dirty as make them a burthen to themselves. 'They will never comfort them, ch. xl.] They are under a frightful apprehension of guilt and wrath, that they cannot enjoy themselves; when they seem settled, they are in a toss, when they seem merry, they are in heaviness; like Cain, who always dwelt in the land of shaking. The terrors of conscience disturb all their enjoyments, and cast forth such mine and dirt as make them a burthen to themselves. 'They will never comfort them, ch. xl.] The word of God is said to be sweeter to him, and as one that is far off, and as one that is near, that his own mind, or is the fulness of the earth, that of the one and the other, and that there is no peace to those that allow themselves any sin. What have they to do with peace?

CHAP. LVIII.

The prophet, in this chapter, has his commission and charge renewed, to reform the sinner in Zion, particularly the hypocrites, to show them their transgressions, v. 1. It is intended for adornment and warning to all hypocrites, and is not to be confined to those of any one age, except in so far as it primarily respects at that time when Isaiah prophesied; see ch. xxxiii. 14.—xxix. 13. Others to the captives in Babylon, the wicked among them, to whom the prophet had declared there was no peace, ch. lv. 21. Against the terror of that word they thought to shelter themselves with their external performances, particularly their fastings, which they kept up in Babylon, and for some time after their return to their own city, v. 3. Against the terror of this word they here shows them that their devotions would not entitle them to peace, while their conversations were not all of a piece with them. Others think it is principally intended against the hypocrisy of the Jews, especially the Pharisees, before, and in, our Saviour's time; they boasted of their fastings, but Christ (as the prophet here) showed them their transgressions, (Matt. xxiii.) much the same with those they are here charged with. Observe, I. The plausible profession of religion which they made, v. 2. II. The boasts they made of that profession, and the blame they laid upon God for taking no more notice of their professions, v. 3, 7. III. The manifesting, which spoiled the acceptableness of their fasts, v. 4, 5. IV. Instructions given them how to keep fasts aright, v. 6, 7. V. Precious promises made to those who do so keep them, v. 8, 12, 16. The like precious promises made to those at sanctuary sabbaths aright, v. 13, 14.

1. CRY aloud, spare not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. 2. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.

When our Lord Jesus promised to send the Comforter, he added, When he is come, he shall convince; (John xvi. 7, 8.) for conviction must prepare for comfort, and must also separate between the precious and the vile, and mark out those to whom comfort does not belong. God had appointed this prophet to comfort his people; (ch. xl. 1.) here he directs how he will appoints him to convince them, and show them their sins.

I. He must tell them how very bad they really were, v. 1. 1. He must deal faithfully and plainly with them; "Though they are called the people of God, and the house of Jacob, though they wear an honourable title and character, by which they are interested in many glorious promises, yet do not better them, but show them their transgressions and their sins, be particular in telling them their faults, what sins are committed among them, which they do not know of, nay what sins are committed by them, which they do not acknowledge to be sins; though in some things they are reformed, let them know that in other things they are still as bad as ever. How shall we persuade you to shew yourselves better at the time, when they present their sins, their sins and all the aggravations of them," Lev. xvi. 21. Note, (1.) God sees sin in his people, in the house of Jacob, and is displeased with it. (2.) They are often unapt and unwilling to see their own sins, and need to have them shown them, and to be told, Thus and thus thou hast done.

2. He must be vehement and in good earnest, must cry aloud, and not spare; not spare them, nor touch them with their reproves, as if he were afraid of hurting them, but search the wound
to the bottom, lay it bare to the bone; not spare himself or his own pains, but cry as loud as he can; though he spend his strength, and waste his spirits, though he get their ill-will by it, and get himself into an ill name; yet he must not spare. He must lift up his voice like a trumpet, to make those hear of their faults, that were apt to be deaf, when admonition was addressed to them. He must give his reproofs in the most powerful and pressing manner possible, as one who desired to be heeded. The trumpet does not give an uncertain sound, but, though loud and shrill, is intelligible; so must his alarms be, giving them warning of the fatal consequences of sin, Ezek. xxxiii. 3.

11. He must accost them how very good they seemed to be, notwithstanding, (ver. 2.) Yet they seek me daily. When the prophet went about to show them their transgressions, they pleaded that they could see no transgressions which they were guilty of; for they were diligent and constant in attending on God's worship—and what more would he have of them? Now, I. He owns the matter of fact to be true; as far as hypocrites do that which is good, they shall not be denied the praise of it, let them make their best of it. It is owned that they have a form of godliness: (1.) They go to church, and observe their hours of prayer; They seek me daily; they are very constant in their devotions, and never omit them, nor suffer any thing to put them by. (2.) They love to hear good preaching; They delight in approaching to God, not for his sake to them, but to themselves: to make of their devotions a part of their religion, the church, or the festival. (4.) They are inquisitive concerning their duty, and seem desirous only to know it, making no question but that then they should do it: They ask of me the ordinances of justice, the rulers of piety in the worship of God, the rulers of equity in their dealings with men, both which are ordinances of God; and, in their own self-examination, as if they made conscience of doing their duty; They are as a nation that did righteousness, and forsak not the ordinances of their God; others took them for such, and they themselves took on them to be such; nothing lay open to view, that was a contradiction to their profession, but they seemed to be such as they should be. Note, Men may go a great way toward heaven, yet come short; may, go to hell with a good reputation. But, 2. He intimates that this was so far from being a cover, or excuse for their sin, that really it was an aggravation of it: "Show them their sins which they go on in, notwithstanding their knowledge of good and evil, sin and duty, and the convictions of their consciences concerning it.

3. Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we affected our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours. 1. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, to witnise with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. 5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? 6. Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? 7. Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Here we have,

1. The displeasure which these hypocrites conceived against God, for not accepting the services which they themselves had a mighty opinion of; (v. 3.) Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Thus they went in the way of Cain, who was angry at God, and resented it as a gross affront, that his offering was not accepted. Having gone about to put a cheat upon God by their external services, here they go about to pick a quarrel with God for not being pleased with their services, as if he had not done fairly or justly by them. Observe, 1. How they boast of themselves, and magnify their own performances; "We have fasted, and afflicted our souls; we have not only sought God daily, (v. 2.) but have kept some certain times of more solemn devotion." Some think it refers to the yearly fast, which was one of the arbitrary occasional fasts. Note, It is common for unhumbled hearts to be proud of their professions of humiliation, as the Pharisee, (Luke xviii. 12.) I fast twice in the week. 2. What they expected from their performances; they thought God should take great notice of them, and own himself a Debtor to them for their services. 3. That the common thing for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How honestly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately punished them, but did reserve them out of their common things for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How honestly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately punished them, but did reserve them out of their common things for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How honestly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately punished them, but did reserve them out of their common things for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How honestly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately punished them, but did reserve them out of their common things for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How honestly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately punished them, but did reserve them out of their common things for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment. 3. How honestly they take it, that God had not put some particular marks of his favour upon them, that he had not immediately punished them, but did reserve them out of their common things for hypocrites, while they perform the external services of religion, to promise themselves that acceptance with God, which he has promised only to the sincere; as if they must be accepted of course, or for a compliment.
8, 9. It was no less their fault after their captivity, not withstanding all their solemn fasts; (Neh. v. 2.) "Ye exact all your dues, your debts;" (so some read it) "ye are as rigorous and severe in extorting what you demand from those that are poor, as ever your were, though it was at the close of the yearly fast that the release was proclaimed."

[1.] They were contentious and sanguinary. (v. 4.) Behold, fast is stilled, and weeping and sighing is proclaimed; hang down your head, all ye that pass by. They were proud of the fast, and abhorred of their weakness. (Isa. lviii.) When they proclaimed a fast to deprecate God's judgments, they pretended to search for those sins which provoked God to threaten them with his judgments, and under that pretence perhaps particular persons were falsely accused, as Nahob in the day of Jezebel's fast, 1 Kings xxi. 12. Or, the contending parties among them were so provoked one against another, as the matter was lost, not only in their reflections one upon another, one side crying out, "It is owing to you," and the other, "It is owing to you, that our deliverance is not wrought." Thus, instead of judging themselves, which is the proper work of a fast-day, they condemned one another. They fasted for strife, with emulation which should make the most plausible appearance on a fast-day, and humour the matter best. Nor was it only the particulars that were fomented in the times of their fasting, but they came to blows too: Ye smite with the fast of wickedness. The cruel taskmasters beat their servants, and the creditors their insolvent debtors, whom they delivered to the tormentors; they abused poor innocents with wicked hands. Now while they thus continued in sin, they thought to haveFan their sins by fasting. They were not in the intention of a fasting day, (1.) God would not allow them the use of such solemnities; "Ye shall not fast at all, if ye fast as ye do this day, causing your voice to be heard on high, in the heat of your clamours one against another; or in your devotions, which you perform so as to make them to be taken notice of for ostentation. Bring me no more of these vain oblations," ch. i. 13. Note, Those are justly forbidden the honour of a profession of religion, that will not submit to the power of it. (2.) He would not accept of them in the use of them; "Ye shall not fast, it shall not be looked upon as a fast, nor shall the voice of your prayers on those days be heard on high in heaven." Note, Those that fast and pray, and yet go on in their wicked ways, do but mock God and deceive themselves.

III. Plain instructions given concerning the true nature of a religious fast. In general, a fast is intended, 1. For the honouring and pleasing of God; it must be such a performance as he has chosen; (v. 5.) it must be an acceptable day to the Lord, in the duties of which we must approve ourselves to him, and obtain his favour, else nor fast, else there is nothing done to any purpose. 2. For the humbling and abusing of ourselves. A fast is a day to afflict the soul; if it do not express a genuine sorrow for sin, and do not promote a real mortification of sin, it is not a fast; the law of the day of atonement was, that on that day they should afflict their souls, Lev. xvi. 29. That must be done on a fast-day, which is a real affliction to the soul, as far as it is yet unregenerated and unsanctified, though a real pleasure and advantage to the soul as far as it is itself.

It concerns us therefore to inquire, on a fast-day, what it is that will be acceptable to God, and afflicive to our corrupt nature, and tending to its mortification.

[1.] We are here told negatively what is not the fast that God has chosen, and which does not amount to the afflicting of the soul. [1.] It is not enough to look demure, to put on a grave and melancholy aspect, to bow down the head like a bulrush that is withered and broken; as the hypocrites, that were of a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might appear unto men to fast, Matt. vi. 16. Hanging down the head did indeed well enough become the publican, whose heart was truly humbled and broken for sin, and therefore in token of that, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; (Luke xviii. 13.) but when it was only mimicked, as here, it was justly ridiculed, it is but hanging down the head like a bulrush, which neither of its uses, or takes any notice of. As the hypocrites' humiliations are but like the hanging down of a bulrush, so his elevations in his hopes are but like the flourishing of a bulrush, (Job vili. 11, 12.) which, while it is yet in its greenness, withers before any other herb. [2.] It is not enough to do penance, to mortify the body a little, while the body of sin is untouched. It is not enough to wear some sackcloth and ashes under him, which does indeed give him some uncaseasiness for the present, but is soon forgotten when he returns to stretch himself upon his bed of ivory, Amos vi. 4. Will thou call this a fast? No, it is but the shadow and Carcase of a fast. Will thou call this an acceptable day to the Lord? No, it is so far from being so, that the hypocracy of it is a abomination to him. Note, The shows of religion, though they show ever so fair in the eyes of the world, will not be accepted of God without the substance of it.

[2.] We are here told positively what is the fast that God has chosen; what that is, which will recommend a fast-day to the divine acceptance, and which is indeed (v. 6.) to loose the bands of wickedness, the bands which we have wickedly tied, and by which others are bound out from their right, or bound down under severe usage. Those which perhaps were at first bands of justice, tying men to pay a due debt, become, when the debt is exacted with rigour from those whom Providence has reduced and emptied, bands of wickedness, and they must be loosed, or otherwise the loss and damage will be much more terrible. It is un thou Un the heavy burden laid on the back of the poor servant, under which he is ready to sink; it is to let the oppressed go free from the oppression which makes his life bitter to him. "Let the prisoner for debt, that has nothing to pay, be discharged, let the vexations action be quashed, let the servant that is forcibly detained beyond the time of his servitude, be released, and thus break every yoke; not only let go those that are wrongfully kept under the yoke, but break the yoke of slavery itself, that it may not serve again another time, nor any be made again to serve under it."

[2.] That we be charitable to those that stand in need of charity, v. 7. The particulars in the former verse may be taken as acts of charity, that we not only release those whom we have unjustly oppressed, that is justice, but what we contribute to the rescue and ransom of those that are oppressed by others, to the release of captives, and the payment of the debts of the poor; but these in this verse are plainly acts of charity. This then is the fast that God has chosen. First, To provide food for those that want it; that is put first as the most necessary, and which the poor can but a little while live without; it is to break thy bread to the hungry. Observe, "It must be thy bread, that which is honestly got, not that which thou hast robbed others of; the bread which thou thyself hast occasion for.
th; bread of thine allowance." We must deny ourselves, that we may have to give to him that needeth. Thy bread, which thou hast spared from thyself and thy family, on the fast-day, if that or the value of it be not given to the poor, it is the miser's fast, which he makes a show of, it is fasting for the world, not for God. This is the true fast, to break thy bread to the hungry, not only to give them that which is already broken meat, but to break bread on purpose for them; to give them leaves, and not to put them, as we commonly do, To provide gifts for those that want it; it is to take care of the poor that are cast out, that are forced from their dwelling, turned out of house and harbour; are cast out as rebels, (so some critics render it,) that are attainted, and whom therefore it is highly penal to protect; "If they suffer unjustly, make no difficulty of sheltering them; do not only find out quarters for them, and pay for their lodging elsewhere, but, which is a greater act of kindness, bring them thine own house, make them thine own guests. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for though thou mayest not, as some have done, thereby entertain angels, thou mayest entertain Christ himself, who will recompense it in the resurrection of the just. I was a stranger and lost in the desert, and thou didst not take care of those that want it; "When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, both to shelter him from the injuries of the weather, and to enable him to appear decently among his neighbours; give him clothes to come to church in, and in these and other instances hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Some understand it more strictly of a man's own kindred and relations; "If those of thy own house and family fall into decay, thou art worse than an infidel if thou dost not provide for them." 1 Tim. v. 8. Others understand it more generally; all that partake of the human nature are to be looked upon as our own flesh, for have we not all one Father? And for this reason we must not hide ourselves from them, not contrive to be out of the way when a poor petitioner inquires for us, not look another way when a moving object of charity and compassion presents itself; let us remember that they are flesh of our flesh, and therefore we ought to sympathize with them, and in doing good to them we really do good to our own flesh and spirit too in the issue; for this we lay up for ourselves a good foundation, a good bond, for the time to come.

3. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward. 9. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer: thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity: 10. And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day. 11. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. 12. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the breach, The Restorer of paths to dwell in.

Here are precious promises for those to feast freely and cheerfully upon by faith, who keep the fasts that God has chosen; let them know that God will make it up to them. Here is,

1. A further account of the duty to be done, in order to our interest in these promises; (v. 9, 10.) and here, in order that they may learn justly and love mercy, that we cease to do evil and learn to do well. 1. We must abstain from all acts of violence and fraud; "These must be taken away from the midst of thee, from the midst of thy person, out of thy heart;" (so some;) "thou must not only refrain from the practice of injury, but morify in thee all inclination and disposition towards it." Or, "from the midst of thy person; those in authority must not only not be oppressive themselves, but must do all they can to prevent and restrain it in all within their jurisdiction; they must not only break the yoke (v. 6.) but take away the yoke, that those who have been oppressed may never be reenslaved; (as they were, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11.) they must likewise forbear threatening; (Eph. vi. 12.) and take away the spear and the yoke; those that seem to have been then, as sometimes with us, a sign of displeasure, and the indication of a purpose to correct. Let not the finger be put forth, to point at those that are poor and in misery, and so to expose them to contempt: such expressions of contumely are as provoking and the products of ill nature, ought to be banished from all societies; and let them not speak vanity, flattery, or fraud, to one another, but let all conversation be governed by sincerity. Perhaps that dissimulation, which is the bane of friendship, is meant by the putting forth of the finger, by teaching with the finger; (as Prov. vi. 13.) or, it is putting forth the finger with the ring on it, which was the badge of authority, and which therefore they produced when they spoke iniquity, gave unrighteous sentences. 2. We must abound in all acts of charity and benevolence. We must not only give alms according as the necessities of the poor require, but (1.) We must give freely and cheerfully, and from a principle of charity; we must draw out our soul to the hungry, (v. 10.) not only draw out the money, and reach forth the hand, but do this from the heart, heartily, and without grudging; from a principle of compassion, and with a tender affection to such as we see to be in misery; let the heart go along with the gift, for God loves a cheerful giver, and so does a poor man too. When our Lord Jesus healed and fed the multitude, it was as having compassion on them. (2.) We must give plentifully and largely, so as not to taint, but to satisfy, the shamed soul. Do not only feed the hungry, but gratify the desire of the afflicted, and, if it lies in your power, make them easy. What are we born for, and what have we our abilities of body, mind, and estate for, but to do all the good we can in this world with them? And the poor we have always with us.

II. Here is a full account of the blessings and benefits which God will bestow in performance of this duty. If a person, a family, a people, be thus disposed to every thing that is good, let them know for their comfort that they shall find God their bountiful Re-warder, and what they lay out in works of charity shall be abundantly made up to them. 1. God will surprise them with the return of mercy after great affliction, which shall be as welcome as the light of the morning after a long, dark night: (v. 8.) "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and (v. 10.) thy light shall rise in obscurity." Though thou hast been long
buried alive, thou shalt recover thine eminency long overwhelmed with grief, thou shalt again look pleasant as the dawning day." Those that are cheerful in doing good, God will make cheerful in enjoying good; and this also is a special gift of God, Excl. ii. 24. They that have showed mercy shall find mercy. Job, who in his prosperity had done a great deal of good, had friends raised up for him by the Lord, which did render all the trouble and the present circumstance, so that his light rose in obscurity. "Not only thy light, which is sweet, but thy health too, or the healing of the wounds thou hast long complained of, shall spring forth speedily; all thy grievances shall be redressed, and thou shalt renew thy youth, and recover thy vigour." Those that have helped others out of trouble, God will help when they are in need. 

2. God will put honour upon them: good works shall be recompensed with a good name; this is included in that light which rises out of obscurity. Though a man's extraction be mean, his family obscure, and he has no external advantages to gain him honour, yet, if he do good in his place, that will procure him respect and veneration, and his darkness shall by this means become as the noon-day; he shall rise in a moment, and be as bright in his generation. See here, what is the surest way for a man to make himself illustrious; let him study to do good; he that would be the greatest of all, and best-beloved, let him by humility and industry make himself a servant of all. "Thy righteousness shall then go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward." (as Jacob says, Gen. xxx. 33.) It shall silence reproaches, nay, it shall hеспack thee more praises than thy humility can be pleased with. "He that has given to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever, that is the honour of it, Ps. cxii. 9.

3. They shall always be safe under the divine protection; "Thy righteousness shall go before thee as thy vanguard, to secure thee from enemies that charge thee in the front, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward, the gathering host, to bring up those of thee that are weary and are left behind, and to secure thee from the enemies that, like Amalek, fall upon thy rear." Observe, How good people are safe on all sides; let them look which way they will, behind them, or before them; let the Lord be their bannerward, or forswear them; he will make them secure; let him make them safe, and find themselves easy and quiet from the fear of evil; and observe what it is that is their defence, it is their righteousness, and the glory of the Lord; that is, as some suppose, Christ; for it is by him that we are justified, and God is glorified. He is that goes before us, and is the Captain of our salvation, as he is the Lord our Righteousness; he it is that is our Rearward, on whom alone we can then rely and trust, and are ready to take hold on us. Or, "God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy Guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy Rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall he be for the glory of the Lord as the Rewarder of it."

4. God will always be nigh unto them, to hear their prayer for safety when enemies pursue us, and are ready to take hold on us. Or, "God himself in his providence and grace shall both go before thee as thy Guide to conduct thee, and attend thee as thy Rearward to protect thee, and this shall be the reward of thy righteousness, and so shall he be for the glory of the Lord as the Rewarder of it."

5. God will direct them in all difficult and doubtful cases; (v. 11.), The Lord shall guide thee continually. While we are here in the wilderness of this world, we have need of continual direction from heaven, for if at any time we be left to ourselves, we shall certainly miss our way; and therefore it is to those who are good in God's sight, that he gives the wisdom which in all cases is profitable to direct, and conduct them to good; "The Lord will direct his providence will make their way plain to them, both what is their duty, and what will be most for their comfort.

6. God will give them abundance of satisfaction in their own minds. As the world is a wilderness in respect of wanderings, so that they need to be guided continually, so also is it in respect of wants, and is one of the ways in which God makes it necessary that they have continual supplies; as Israel in the wilderness had not only the pillar of cloud to guide them continually, but manna and water out of the rock, to satisfy their souls in drought, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, Ps. lxxxii. 1. To a good man God gives not only wisdom and knowledge, but joy; he is satisfied in himself with the testimony of his conscience, and the assurances of God's favour. "These will satisfy thy soul, will put gladness into thy heart, even in the drought of affliction; these will make fat the bones, and fill them with marrow; will give thee that pleasure which will be a support to thee, as the bones to the body, that joy of the Lord which will be thy strength. He shall give thy bones rest," (so some read it,) "rest from the pain and sickness with which they have laboured under, and been chastened with;" so it agrees with their promise made to the merciful, (Ps. xlii.) The Lord shall make all his bed in his sickness. "Thou shalt be like a watered garden, so flourishing and fruitful in graces and comforts, and like a spring of water, like a garden that has a spring of water in it, whose waters fail not either in droughts or in frosts. The principle of all joy is in those that are good shall be a well of living water, John iv. 14. As a spring of water, though it is continually sending forth its streams, is yet always full, so the charitable man abounds in good as he abounds in doing good, and is never the poorer for his liberality. He that waters shall himself be watered.

7. They and their families shall be public blessings. It is a great reward to those that are fruitful and useful, to be more so, and especially to have those who descend from them to be so too. This is here promised; (v. 12.) "They that now are of thee, thy princes, and nobles, and great men, shall have such authority and influence as they never had; or, "Those that hereafter shall be of thee, thy posterity, shall be serviceable to their generation, and shall be a blessing to the world, the satisfaction of a good man, as to this world, to think that those that come after him shall be doing good when he is gone. (1.) They shall re-edy cities
that have been long in ruins; shall build the old waste places, which had lain so long desolate, that they shallRepair the cities of Judah, and dwell in them, and many of those in Israel too, which had hithin ever since the carrying away of the ten tribes. (2.) They shall carry on and finish that good work which was begun long before, and shall be helped over the obstructions which had retarded the progress of it; they shall raise up to the top that building, the foundation of which was laid long since, and has been for many generations in the rearing. This was fulfilled when the building of the temple was revived after it had stood still for many years, Ezra v. 2. Or, they shall raise up foundations which shall continue for many generations yet to come; they shall do that good which shall be of lasting consequence. (3.) They shall have the blessing and praise of all about them; "Thou shalt be called, (and it shall be to thine honour,) the reparer of the breach, the breach made by the enemy in the wall of a besieged city, which whose has the courage and dexterity to make up, or make good, gains great appearance. Happily they who make up the breach and break through the wall, shall live going in, "Thou shalt be the restorer of paths, safe and quiet paths, not only to travel in, but to dwell in; so safe and quiet, that people shall make no difficulty of building their houses by the road-side." The sun is, That if they keep such fasts as God has chosen, he will settle them again in their former peace and prosperity, and there shall be no reason to make them afraid. See Zech. viii. 3. — 3. It teaches us, that those who do justly, and love mercy, shall have the comfort of it in this world.

13. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, Honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14. Then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

Great stress was always laid upon the due observation of the sabbath-day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captive in Babylon, because, by keeping that day in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heaven and the earth. See ch. iii. 1, 2, where keeping the sabbath is joined, as here, with keeping judgment and doing justice. Some, indeed, understand the sabbath of atonement, which they think is the first spoken of in the former part of the chapter, and which is called a sabbath of rest, Lev. xxviii. 32. But as the fasts before spoken of seem to be those that were occasional, so this sabbath is doubtless the weekly sabbath, that great sign between God and his professing people; his appointing it a sign of his favour to them; and their observing it, a sign of their obedience to him. Now observe here, 1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified; (v. 13.) and, there remaining still a sabbatism for the people of God, this law of the sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord's day. (1.) Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the sabbath-day, or looks like having mean thoughts of it, when God has so highly dignified it. We must turn away our foot from the sabbath, from trampling upon it, as profane, atheistical people do, from travelling on that day; so some: we must turn away our foot from doing our pleasure on that holy day, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please on sabbath-days, without the control and restraint of conscience; or from indulging ourselves in things of sense, in which the modern Jews wickedly place the sabbath, though it is as great a profanation of it as any thing. On sabbath-days we must not do our own ways, not follow our callings; not find our own pleasure, not follow our sports and recreations; nay, we must not speak our own words, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech on that day as on other days, for we must then consider God's ways, make religion the business of the day; we must choose the things that please him, and speak his words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house, and walk by the way; in all we say and do we must put a difference between this day and other days.

(2.) Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the day, or makes the sabbath holy; he has thoughts of it; we must call it a delight, not a task and a burden for then; we must delight ourselves in it, in the restraint it lays upon us, and the services it obliges us to; we must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him. How amiable are thy tabernacles, 0 Lord of hosts! We shall not only consider it a delight, but call it so, openly profess the completeness of what we do in the sabbath, and the duties of it; we must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it, and earnest desire of his grace, to enable us to do the work of the day in its day, because we delight in it; we must call it so to others, to invite them to come, and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thoughts of wishing the sabbath gone, that we may soon call. We must call it the Lord's holy day, and honourable; holy, separated from common use, and devoted to God and to his service; the holy of the Lord, the day which he has sanctified to himself. Even in Old Testament times the sabbath was called the Lord's day, and therefore is fully called so still, and for a better reason. See the Lord's Day, ch. xx. 10. It is holy, because it is the Lord's day. We shall call upon both accounts it is honourable; it is a beauty of holiness that is upon it, it is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; and we must make it appear that we look upon it as honourable by honouring him, that is, God, on that day. We then put honour upon the day, when we give honour to him that instituted it, and to whose honour it is dedicated.

2. What the reward of is sabbath-sanctification, v. 14. If we thus remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. (1.) We shall have the comfort of it; the work will be its own wages. If we call the sabbath a delight, shall we delight ourselves in the Lord; he will move and more manifest himself to us as the delightful Subject of our thoughts and meditations, and the delightful Object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction, and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God." (2.) We shall have the honour of it: I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, which denotes not only great security, (as that, ch. xxxvii. 41.) but great dignity and advancement; "Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours
shall be upon thee.” It was said of Israel, when God let them triumphantly out of Egypt, that he made them to ride on the high places of the earth, Deut. xxxii. 12, 13. Those that know God and his sabbath, he will thus honour. If God by his grace enable us to live above the world, and so to manage it, as not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey toward heaven, then he makes us to ride on the high places of the earth.

(3.) We shall have the profit of it. I will feed thee with the best meat of Jacob thy father, with all the blessings of the covenant, and all the precious products of Canaan, which was a type of heaven, and the heritage of Jacob. Observe, The heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now; fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered; fed with the earnest and forecasts of it; and they that are so fed, have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; you may take God’s word for it, for he cannot lie nor deceive; what his mouth has spoken his hand will give, his hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of his good promise shall fail to the ground.” Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that doeth this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the sabbath from polluting it.

CHAP. LIX.

In this chapter, we have sin appearing exceeding sinful, and grace appearing exceeding gracious; and as what is here said of Moses, (Deut. xxxi. 19.) is applied to the general corruption of mankind, (Rom. iii. 15.) so what is here said of a redeemer, (v. 20.) is applied to Christ, Rom. xi. 26. I. He is here charged upon this people, that they have themselves stepped out of the current of God’s favours to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept good things from them, v. 1–8. II. It is here charged upon them, that they had themselves pro cured the judgments of God upon them, and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads, (v. 9–11.) and what the sins were which provoked God to send those judgments, v. 12, 13. III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name’s sake, (v. 16–19.) and would reserve mercy in store for them, and entail it upon them, v. 20, 21.

1. Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. 3. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. 4. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. 5. They hatch cockatrices’ eggs, and weave the spider’s web: he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. 6. Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. 7. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. 8. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God, because they had not the deliverances wrought for them, which they had been often fasting and praying for. ch. iii. 8. Nor does he say he will not save them, but 1. That it was not owing to God; they had no reason to lay the fault upon him, that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies; for, 1. He was still as able to help as ever: His hand is not shortened, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged; whether we consider the extent of his power or the efficacy of it, God can reach as far as ever, and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church’s salvation comes from the hand of God, and that is not waxed weak, nor at all shortened. Is the Lord’s hand waxed short? (says God to Moses, Numb. xi. 23.) No, it is not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time, nor strength of enemies, nor weakness of instruments, can shortens the power of God, with which it is all one to save or to save many or few, 2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever, i.e. answer to prayer; his ear is not heavy, that it can not hear. Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever; the prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded, and put in suit, in prayer, are still yea and amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing, even before they call, he answers, ch. lxv. 24. If our prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying; not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us. II. That it was owing to themselves, they stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door; God was coming toward them in ways of mercy, and they hindered him; Your iniquities have kept good things from you, Jer. v. 25. See what mischief sin doth. It hinders the light of God coming down upon us; it is a partition-wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man, and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it separates between them and God. He is your God, yours in profession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between you and him.” Sin hides his face from us; (which denotes great displeasure, Deut. xxxi. 17.) it provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour, and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to see them. He seems to speak with sharpness, sin exceeding sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequences, sin exceeding hurtful, separating us from God, and so separating us not only from all good, but to all evil, (Deut. xxix. 21.) which is the very quintessence of the curse. 2. It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he has said, ch. i. 15. If we regard iniquity in our heart, if we indulge it, and allow ourselves in it,
God will not hear our prayers, Ps. lxvi. 18. We cannot expect that he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shows very largely, in the following verses, how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him, (ch. viii. 1.) To shew God’s people their transgressions; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

(1.) We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, v. 7. Their imaginations are so, only evil continually; their projects and designs are so; they are continually conspiring some mischief or other; and how to compass the gratification of some base lust, v. 4. They conceive mischief in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution; thus the embryo receives its shape and life; and then they bring forth iniquity, put it in execution when it is ripened for it; though it be in pain that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of Providence and the checks of their own consciences, yet, when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they take upon themselves pride and insolence; as if it were a man-child born into the world; thus when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin, Jan. 1. 15. This is called, (v. 5.) hatching the cockatrice’ egg, and weaving the spider’s web. See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work. [1] At the best, it is that which is base and foolish; our thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider’s web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and when all is done, it is a weak, insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant; such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and in imagination fabricating actions like the spider, which takes hold with her hands very finely. (Prov. xxx. 28.) but cannot keep her hold. [2] Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful; they hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous, and produce venomous creatures; such are the thoughts of the wicked who delight in doing mischief. He that eats of their eggs, that has any dealings with them, dies, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him; and that which is crushed in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched, and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, breaks out into a viper, which you meddle with at your peril: happy they that have least to do with such men. Even the spider’s web which they work so nicely, and with such dexterity, catch flies in, and make a prey of them; for, rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

(2.) Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks, and yet it does not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectual compassing of the mischievous design, it is dissimulated, and covered with much fair show of the contrary. They speak again, (v. 4.) They speak lies, pretending kindness, where they intend the greatest mischief; or, by slanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to, and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows and coals of juniper, and every thing that is mischievous; Your tongue has uttered perverseness. When they could not, for shame, speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called whisperers. (3.) Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature: Your hands are defiled with blood; (v. 3.) for blood is defiling, it leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from; nor was this a case of mere impurity, or one that occurred when there was something of a fornication upon it; for they let their feet run to this evil, naturally and eagerly, and, hurried on by the impetuses of their malice and revenge, they make haste to shed innocent blood, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, Prov. i. 16. Jer. xxii. 17. Hasting and destruction are in their paths. Wherever they go, they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy; nor do they care what havoc they make; nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquity are their fingers defiled; (v. 3.) they wrong people in their estates, and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They trust in vanity; (v. 4.) they depend upon their arts of conjuration to cheat and deceive; they have a vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves; their works, which they take so much pains about, and have their hearts so much upon, are all works of iniquity; their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, and the act of violence is in their hands, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads, and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

(4.) No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses; (v. 4.) None calls for justice, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong, or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those laws which are the shame, and threaten to be a stumbling-block, or stumbling-stone, instead of a help to them. If you will not do what is done, there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it; private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it, that have it in the power of their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill, and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that pleads for it, nor any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. The way of peace is as little regarded as the way of truth; they know it not, they never study the things that make for peace; no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of peace, and the tumults that arise in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. There is no judgment in their goings; they have not any sense of justice in their dealings, it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can only break through all its fences, if they stand in the way of their mischiefs, covetous designs.

(5.) In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. They that practise iniquity trust in vanity, which will certainly deceive them, v. 4. Their webs, which they weave with so much art and industry, shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves, either for shelter or for
1. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.

10. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon-day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men.

11. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us.

12. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.

13. In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolting, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.

15. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to show that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that which keeps good things from us, so it is that which brings evil things upon us. But as there it is spoken by the prophet, in God's name, to the people, for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges; so here it seems to be spoken by the people of God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them, and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts seemed to be humbled in some measure, and they were brought to confess: the confession is at least entered from them, that God has justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him. They acknowledged that God had confounded them, with them, and had walked contrary to them.

Their case was very deplorable, v. 9, 10, 11. They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour; and God did not appear for them, to plead their just and injured cause; "Judgment is far from us, neither doth justice overtake us. Though we be no enemies, none of them, yet we have right on our side, and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted; we have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our right, and recovering our property again; oppression is near us, and judgment is far from us; our enemies are far from giving us its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and justice does not overtake our rescue as ought of right to do. If their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad; "We wait for light as they that wait for the morning, but behold obscurity; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance; we look for judgment, but there is none;" (v. 11.) neither God nor man appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has not disposed of us to it with fasting; we looked for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever, for aught we can perceive, and still we walk in darkness; and the higher our expectations have been raised, the sorrier is the disappointment." (3.) They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves, and were at their wit's end; (v. 10.) "We grope for the wall like the blind, we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way we are to expect help, even from God in it." If we shut our eyes against the light of divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and, if we use not our eyes as we should, to let us be as if we had no eyes; they that will not see their duty, shall not see their interest. Those whom God has given up to a judicial blindness, are strangely infatuated, the summing and running on of evil in them, not either those dangers, or those advantages, which all about them see: "Quas Deus velut perdere, eos dementat—God infatigates those whom he means to destroy. Those that love darkness rather than light, shall have their doom accordingly. (4.) They sunk into despair, and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the marks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, shunned conversation, and affected solitude; We are in desolate places as dead men. The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by dead and dry bones, (Ezek. xxxvi. 1.) and the explanation of the comparison there, (v. 11.) explains this text, Our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts. In this despair, the sorrow and anguish of some were loud and noisy. "We roar like bears, the sorrow of others was silent, and preyed upon their inward spirits; "We mourn sore like doves, like doves of the valleys; we mourn both for our iniquities, (Ezek. vii. 16.) and for our calamities." Thus they own that the hand of the Lord was gone out against them.

2. They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them, that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, v. 12—15. (1.) They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in a great trespass, as Ezra speaks, (ch. x. 10.) "Our transgressions are with us; the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us, we are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins, though they have done us so much mischief; nay, our transgressions are multiplied, they are more numerous and more heinous than they had been formerly; look, which way we will, we cannot look off them, all places, all orders and degrees of men are infected; the sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, My sin is ever before me; it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated. God is a Witness to them; They are multiplied before thee, in thy sight, underneath the eye. We are witnesses against ourselves, (as you may have foolishly endeavoured to cover them, nay, they themselves are witnesses, our sins stare us in the face, and testify against us, so many have they been, and so deeply aggravated." (2.) They own the great evil and malignity of sin, of their sin;
it is transgressing and lying against the Lord, v. 5. The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are, upon this account, worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they lie against the Lord, they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or, they perfidiously break covenant with him, and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, that is lying against it; its very seed, its very offspring, is so unprofitable to us, because we are bound as our God, and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellions subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God. (3.) They own that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that it should be, when they saw that we are bound as our God, and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellions subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth, and the covenant of her God.

16. And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. 17. For he put on righteousness as a breast plate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. 18. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense. 19. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. 20. And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. 21. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

How sin abounded, we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace does much more abound, we read in these verses. And as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceeding sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceeding gracious. Observe,

I. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people, notwithstanding their provocations; it was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them, no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory. 1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness; He saw that there was no man that could do anything for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among men, not a man that would execute judgment, (Jer. v. 1.) that would

own that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight; they knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it; though it was done secretly, and gilded over with spurious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye; all the wickedness that lies in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God. And as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes than to see with the least approbation or allowance; He saw it and it displeased him, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it; it was evil in his eyes, he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was, that there was no judgment, no reformation; had he seen any signs of that, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have received to the sinners, upon their repentance, from their evil way. Then the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgment, when it is not restrained by public justice.
suffer himself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the baseness of the times, had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal complacency in sinners, nor did they set up against the tide; most were wicked, and these that were not so, were yet weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. **There was no intercessor;** either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap, by prayer to turn away his wrath; (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he should have such a race of men for his support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon, and run down, (v. 14.) no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of, because they kept their integrity, v. 15. They complained that God did not appear for them; (ch. viii. 3.) but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good, if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation. 2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them; they shall be saved, for all this; and,

(1.) Because they have no strength of their own, not any active men that will set to it in good earnest, to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of the sins of their fathers. **That salvation is bought to him, to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to be the Deliverer, Christ, the Power of God, and Arm of the Lord, that Man of his right hand** whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation (that is the first and principal article of the salvation) shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates, and societies for reformation, fail of doing their part, one will not do justice, nor the other call for it, God will let them know that he can do it without them, when his time is come thus to prepare his people for mercy. And then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the Divine Providence on men's affections or affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, then his own arm brought salvation, which is never shortened.

(2.) Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore his own righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in it. Divines here think of the time of Cyrus and his enemies, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose, and promise, and covenant with his people: he will, in righteousness, punish the enemies of his people; see Deut. ix. 5. Not for the righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations, they are driven out. In our reformation, as by a breastplate, securing his own honour, as a breastplate doth the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put a *helmet of salvation upon his head*; so sure is he to effect the salvation he intends, that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs he impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious, and a member of the armament of his friends, and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find the *breastplate of righteousness,* and for a helmet, the *hope of salvation;* (Eph. vi. 17.) (see vii. v. 8.) and it is called the *armour of God,* because he wore it first, and so fitted it for us.

(3.) Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak; he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for their cause to appear among men, to appear evident and conspicuous, in the eye of the world; and in these he will show himself great, as a man shows himself in his rich attire, or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour, and his people's welfare; and this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin, and be revenged on it.

II. What the salvation is, that shall be wrought by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere, in distress and captivity. This is promised (v. 18, 19.) as a type of something further. When God's times were come, (v. 19.) and when the church's time of refreshing was come, (v. 18.) he will do these fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

(1.) That God will reck'on with his enemies, and will render to them according to their deeds; to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them; to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them; for they also are God's enemies; and when the day of vengeance comes, he will deal with both as they have deserved, according to retribution (so the word is,) the law of retributions; (Rev. xiii. 10.) or, according to former retributions, as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay, *fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies;* his fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly does. Even to the islands, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, he will repay recompense; for his hand shall find out all his enemies. (Ps. xxi. 8.) and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have behaved so ill, that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies behave so much worse, that they do deserve to be destroyed.

(2.) That, whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterward make upon them, to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled and brought to naught; *When the enemy shall come in like a flood,** like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threatens to bear down all before them without control, then the Spirit of the Lord by some secret, undiscovered power, shall lift up a standard against them, and so (as the margin reads it,) put him to flight. He that has delivered, will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will give a banner to them that fear him, (Ps. ix. 4.) will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, He shall come (the name of the Lord, and his glory, before long in the midst of his church,) and lift up the standard, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an Ensign. Christ by the preaching of his gospel shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the Spirit of the Lord setting up Christ as a Standard to the Gentiles, ch. xi. 10.

(3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God, and the advancement of religion in the world; (v. 19.) So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory, in all nations that lie eastward or westward.
ward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to inquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him, and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's appearance for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel-times, when many came from the east and west, to fill up the places of the children of the kingdom that shall be cast out when there were set up eastern and western churches, Matth. viii. 11. 2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which shall be visible, and shall be under the inspection of all. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation. (1.) That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer; (v. 20.) Thy Redeemer shall come; it is applied to Christ, (Rom. xi. 26.) There shall come the Deliverer. The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, Luke ii. 38. Christ is our God, our next Kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe, [1.] The place where this Redeemer shall appear; he shall come to Zion, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord would appear in his glory, as his Kingdom was the chief Corner-stone was to be laid, 1 Pet. ii. 6. He came to his temple there, (Mal. iii. 1.) there salvation was to be placed, (ch. xlv. i.) for thence the late was to go forth, ch. ii. 3. Zion was a type of the gospel-church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances; The Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion; so the LXX. read it. [2.] The person that shall come and have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh; he shall come to those that turn from ungodliness to Jacob, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgressions and iniquities, to the end, and to make them his sins, which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to Zion, if they go on still in their trespasses. (3.) That the Spirit of God shall come to us, to be our Saviour, v. 21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us, a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the Spirit to them that ask him, includes the giving of them all good things, Luke xi. 13. Matth. vii. 11. This covenant is here said to be made with them, with them that turn from transgressions, for thereby cause them to be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person, My Spirit that is upon thee, being directed, either, [1.] To Christ as the Head of the church, who received, that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious ointment descended to the skirts of his garments; and the word of the gospel was first spoken to his mouth; for it began to be spoken by the Lord. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, ch. iii. 10. Or, [2.] To the church; and so it is a promise of the continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to these promises, that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36—xxii. 30. Observe, First, How the church shall be kept up; in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed's seed; as one generation passes away, another generation shall come; instead of the fathers shall be the children. Secondly, How long it shall be kept up; from henceforth and for ever, always, even unto the end of the world. This prophecy has a double force. Of the side of the church, we may be sure that as long as it does stand, Christ will have a church in it, though not always visible. Thirdly, By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the Word and Spirit in it. 1. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall dwell, and amongst whom he shall be among the prophets. 2. The Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, John xiv. 16. 2. The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age, who, believing with the heart unto righteousness, shall with the tongue make confession unto salvation. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church, for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language, and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word, and in conjunction with the word. The Spirit is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firm, and shall stand for ever; Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone.

CHAP. LXX.

This whole chapter is all to the same purport, all in the same strain; it is a part of God's covenant with his church, which is spoken of in the last verse of the foregoing chapter, and the blessings here promised are the fruits of the word and Spirit there promised. The long continuance of the church, even unto the utmost ages of time, was there promised, and here the large extent of the church, and the universal diffusion of it, is spoken of. The church is spoken of in a larger sense, and in a more extensive manner, than it could be in the other prophecies. And the church is here spoken of as in one sense the church of the Messiah, the church of the Gentiles, and the church of the Messiah, as is evident by the expression, The Gentiles shall be the people of the Lord, which can only signify the Gentiles included in the church of the Messiah. This entire church was to be one body, to be filled up by the Gentiles, as the Jews were filled up by the Gentiles, to join them in the service of God, v. 3. But in the days of the Gentiles, it was to be filled up by the Gentiles, v. 4. And in the days of the Messiah, it was to be filled up by the Jews, v. 5. That the new converts should be greatly serviceable to the church, and to the interests of the world, v. 9—13. IV. That the church shall be a great light, and shall shine exceeding bright; v. 14—16. That it shall enjoy a profound peace and tranquillity, v. 17, 18. VI. That the members of it being all righteous, the glory and joy of it shall be everlasting, v. 19—22. Now this has some reference to the peaceable and prosperous condition which the Jews were sometimes in, after their return out of captivity into their own land; but it certainly looks further, and was to have its full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, the enlargement of that kingdom by the bringing in of the Gentiles into it, and the spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ Jesus, with which it should be enriched, and all these earnest of eternal joy and glory.

1. A RISE, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. 2. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. 3. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. 4. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. 5.
Then shall thou see, and flow together, and thy heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. 6. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. 7. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

3. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

It is here promised that the gospel-temple shall be very light, and very large. It shall be a light, Thy light is come. When the Jews returned out of captivity, they had light and gladness, and joy and honour; they then were made to know the Lord, and to rejoice in his great goodness; and upon both accounts their light came. When the Redeemer came to Zion, he brought light with him, he himself came to be a Light. Now observe, 1. What this light is, and whence it springs; The Lord shall be a light to his people, and to the Gentiles, (2.) that shall be seen upon thee. God is the Father and Fountain of lights, and it is in his light that we shall see light. As far as we have the knowledge of God in us, and the favour of God towards us, our light is come. When God appears to us and we have the comfort of his favour, then the glory of the Lord rises upon us as the morning-light; when he appears for us, and we have the credit of his favour, when he shows us some token for good, and proclaims his favour for us, then his glory is seen upon us, as it was upon Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire. When Christ arose as the Sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high visited us, then the glory of the Lord was seen upon us, the glory as of the Firstborn among the dead. For as the brightness of the Sun that lighteth every where, and the light of the world, so shall be to this light; Darkness shall cover the earth; but, though it be gross darkness, darkness that might be felt, like that of Egypt, that shall overspread the people, yet the church, like Goshen, shall have light at the same time. When the case of the nations that have not the gospel shall be very melancholy, those dark corners of the earth being full of the habitations of cruelty and poor souls, the quality of the Sun shall be very pleasant. 3. What is the duty which the rising of this light calls for; Arise, shine; not only receive this light, and, (as the margin reads it) be enlightened by it, but reflect this light; arise, and shine with rays borrowed from it. The children of light ought to shine as lights in the world: if God’s glory be seen upon us to our honour, we ought not only with our lips, but in our lives, with the praise of it to his honour, Matt. v. 16. Phil. ii. 15.

II. It shall be very large. When the Jews were settled again in their own land after their captivity, many of the people of the land joined themselves to them; but it does not appear that there ever was any such numerous accession to them as would amount to a king’s proclivity; therefore we must conclude that this looks further, to the bringing of the Gentiles into the gospel-church; not their flocking to one particular place, though under that type it is here described. There is no place now that is the centre of the church’s unity; but the promise respects their flocking to Christ, and coming by faith, and hope, and love, into that society, which is incorporated by the charter of his gospel, and of the unity of which he only is the Centre; that family which is named from him, Eph. iii. 15. The gospel-church is expressly called Zion and Jerusalem, and under that notion all believers are said to come to it; and this therefore is not the city, but the church, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; which serves for a key to this prophecy, Eph. ii. 19. Observe,

1. What shall invite such multitudes to the church;
   “They shall come to thy light, and to the brightness of thy rising,” v. 3. They shall be allure to join themselves to thee,” (1.) By the light that shines upon thee, the light of the glorious gospel, which the churches hold forth, in consequence of which they are called golden candlesticks; this light which discovers so much of God and his good will to man, by which light and immortality are brought to light, this shall invite all the serious, well-affect ed part of mankind to come, and join themselves to the church, that they may have the benefit of this light, to increase in wisdom and in favour, (2.) By the light with which they shine, the purity and love of the primitive Christians, their heavenly-mindedness, contempt of the world, and patient sufferings, were the brightness of the church’s rising, which drew many into it. The beauty of holiness was the powerful attractive by which Christ had a willing people brought to him to the day of his judgment, Ps. cx. 2.

2. What multitudes shall come to the church.
   Great numbers shall come, Gentiles, or nations, of them that are saved, as it is expressed with allusion to this, Rev. xxi. "Nations shall be disciplined; (Matth. xxviii.) and even kings, men of figure, power, and influence, shall be added to the church.

They come from all parts; (v. 4.) Lift up thine eyes round about, and see them coming; devout men out of every nation under heaven, Acts ii. 5. See how white the fields are already to the harvest, John iv. 35. See them coming in a body, as one man, and with one consent; they gather themselves together, that they may strengthen one another’s hands, and encourage one another; Come and let us go, ch. ii. 3. "They come from the remotest parts; they come from the ends of all the earth;” Ps. ii. 8, 9. As the queen of Sheba, or seen thy star in the east, as the wise men, and they will not be discouraged by the length of the journey from coming to thee. There shall come some of both sexes; sons and daughters shall come in the most dutiful manner, as the sons and thy daughters, resolved to be of thy family, to submit to the laws of thy family, and put themselves under the tuition of it. They shall come to be nursed at thy side; to have their education with thee from their cradle.” The church’s children must be nursed at her side, not sent out to be nursed among strangers; there, where alone the sincere milk of the word is to be had, must the church’s new-born babes be nursed, that they may grow thereby, 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. They that would enjoy the dignity of the privileges of Christ’s family, must submit to the discipline of it.

3. What they shall bring with them, and what advantage shall accrue to the church by the accession to it. They that are brought into the church by the grace of God, will be sure to bring all they are worth in with them, which with themselves they will devote to the honour and service of God, and do good with in their places. (v. 6.) The merchants shall write holiness to the Lord upon their merchandise and their hire, as ch. xxviii. 18. “The abundance of the sea, either the wealth that is fetched out of the sea, the fish, the pearls, or that which is im
ported by sea, it shall all be converted to thee and to thy use. (3.) The wealth of the rich merchants shall be laid out in works of piety and charity. (2.) The mighty men of the nations shall employ their night in the service of the church: "The forces, or troops, of the Gentiles shall come unto thee, to guard thy coasts, strengthen thine interests, and, if occasion be, to fight thy battles."

The forces of the Gentiles had often been against the church, but now they shall be brought to serve God. The Gentiles shall have brought their goods and their capital, and, when we please him, will, make even our enemies to be at peace with us, (Prov. xvi. 6.) so when Christ overcomes the strong man armed, he divides his spoils, and makes that to serve his interests, which had been used against them, Luke xi. 22.

(3.) The wealth imported by land-carriage, as well as that by sea, shall be made use of in the service of God and the church; (v. 6.) The camels and dromedaries that bring gold and incense, gold to make the golden altar of, and incense and sweet perfumes to burn upon it; they of Midian and Sheba shall bring the richest commodities of their country, not to trade with, but to honour God with, and not in small quantities, but camel-loads of them. This was in full part fulfilled when the wise men of the east, called the Magi, or wise men (as some understand,) drawn by the brightness of the star, came to Christ, and presented to him treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, Matt. ii. 11. (4.) Great numbers of sacrifices shall be brought to God's altar, acceptable sacrifices, and, though brought by Gentiles, they shall find acceptance, v. 7. Kedar was famous for flocks, and, probably, the fattest ram, were those of Medinah; they shall come as a sacrifice with acceptance on God's altar. God must be served and honoured with what we have, according as he has blessed us, and with the best we have. This was fulfilled when by the decree of Darius the governors beyond the rivers (perhaps of some of these countries) were ordered to furnish the temple at Jerusalem with bullocks, rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offering of the God of heaven, Ezra vi. 9. It had a further accomplishment, and we trust will have, in the bringing in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the church, which is called the sacrificing or offering up of the Gentiles unto God, Rom. xv. 16. The flocks and rams are precious souls; for they are sent to minister to the church, and to come up as living sacrifices, presenting themselves to God by a sacrifice of holiness, Rom. xii. 1. 4. How shall God be honourable by the increase of the church, and the accession of such numbers to it. (1.) They shall intend the honour of his name in it. When they bring their gold and incense, it shall not be to show the riches of their country, or to gain applause to themselves for piety and devotion, but to show forth the praises of the Lord, v. 6. Our priests shall serve, and gifts to the church are not acceptable, farther than we have an eye to the glory of God in them. And this must be our business in our attendance on public ordinances, to give unto the Lord the glory due to his name; for therefore, as these here, we are called out of darkness into light, that we should show forth the praises of him that called us, 1 Pet. ii. 9. (2.) God will advance his honour of his children as he said, (v. 7.) I will glorify the house of my glory. The Church is the house of God's glory, where he manifests his glory to his people, and receives that homage by which they do honour to him. And it is for the glory of this house, and of him that keeps it; there, both that the Gentiles shall bring their offerings to it, and that they shall be accepted therein.

5. How the church shall herself be affected with this increase of her numbers, v. 5. (1.) She shall be in a transport of joy upon this account; "Thou shalt see, and frown together," (or fly to and fro,) "in a pleasing agitation about it, surprised at it, but extremely rejoiced at it." (2.) The mixture of fear with this joy; "Thine heart shall fear, doubting whether it be lawful to go into the uncleaned, and eat with them." Peter was so possessed with this fear, that he needed a vision and voice from heaven to help him over it, Acts x. 28. But, (3.) When this fear is conquered, thy heart shall be set on fire, and be urged on to the service, that the shall have room in it for all the Gentile converts, thou shalt not have such a narrow soul as thou hast had, nor affections so confined within the Jewish pale. When God intends the beauty and prosperity of his church, he gives this largeness of heart, and an extensive charity. (4.) These converts flocking to the church shall be greatly admired; (v. 8.) Who are these that fly as a cloud? Others have

1. How the conversion of souls is here described; it is flying to Christ and to his church; for thither we are directed; it is flying like a cloud, though in great multitudes, so as to overspread the heavens, yet with great unanimity, as one cloud; they shall come with speed, as a cloud flying on the wings of the wind, and come openly, and in the view of all, their own beholding them, (Prov. xi. 12.) and yet not able to hinder them. They shall fly as doves to their windows, in great flights, many together; they fly on the wings of the harmless dove, which flies low, denoting their innocency and humility. They fly to Christ, to the church, to the word and ordinances, as doves, by instinct, to their own windows, to their own home; thither they fly as to a refuge; and they fly as doves to their windows, being pursued by the multitudes of the birds of prey; and thither they fly for rest when they have been wandering and are weary, as Noah's dove to the ark.

2. How the conversion of souls is here admired; it is spoken of with wonder and with pleasure; Who are these? We have reason to wonder that so many flock to Christ; when we see them altogether, we shall wonder whence all come; and we have reason to admire with pleasure and affection those that do flock to him; Who are these? How excellent, how amiable are they! What a pleasant sight is it to see poor souls hastening to Christ, with a full resolution to abide with him!

9. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. 10. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. 11. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. 12. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. 13. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. 14. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that de-
spised shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

The promises made to the church in the foregoing verses are here repeated, ratified, and enlarged upon; divided now into several parts, and each one of those parts applied to every part of the church as the Jews after their return out of captivity: but certainly looking further, to the enlargement and advancement of the gospel-church, and the abundance of spiritual blessings with which it shall be enriched.

1. God will be very gracious and propitious to them. We must begin with this promise, because the cause of all the rest take rise. The sanctuary that was desolate then begins to be repaired, when God causes his face to shine upon it, Dan. ix. 17. All the favour that the people of God find with men, is owing to the light of God’s countenance, and his favour to them; (v. 10.) “All shall now make court to thee, for in my wrath I smote thee, while thou wast in captivity.” (The sufferings of the church, especially to such as are sincere, shall be a shield against which these promises here will be its relief, are sad tokens of God’s displeasure.) “But now in my favour have I had mercy on thee, and therefore have all this mercy in store for thee.”

5. Many shall be brought into the church, even from far countries; (v. 9.) Surely the isles shall wait for me, shall welcome the gospel, and shall attend on the preaching of the word, and shall subject to it. The ships of Tarshish, transportations, shall be ready to carry members from far distant regions to the church, or (which is equivalent) to carry the ministers of the church to remote parts, to preach the gospel, and to bring in souls to join themselves to the Lord. Observe, (1.) Who are brought; thy sons, such as are designed to be so, those children of God that are scattered abroad, John xi. 42. (2.) What they shall bring with them; they live at such a distance, that they cannot bring their flocks and their rams; but, like those who lived remote from Jerusalem, who, when they came up to worship at the feast, because they could not bring their tithes in kind, turned it into money; they shall bring their silver and gold with them. Note, When we give up ourselves to God, we must with ourselves give up all we have to him. If we honour him with our spirits, we shall honour him with our substance. (3.) To whom they shall devote and dedicate themselves, and all they are worth; to the name of the Lord thy God, to God as the Lord of all, and the church’s God and King; even to the Holy One of Israel, whom Israel worships as a Holy One, in the beauty of holiness; he is glorified there. Note, The honour God puts upon his church and people, should not only engage us to honour them, but invite us to join ourselves to them; We will go with you, for God is with you, Zech. viii. 23.

3. Those that come into the church shall be welcome; for so spacious is the holy city, that though, Lord, one of his own household. God himself also has a place within him, there is room. “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, (v. 11.) not only because thou hast no reason to fear thy enemies, but because thou hast reason to expect thy friends.” It is usual with us to leave our doors open, or leave some to be ready to open them, all night, if we look for a child or a guest to come in late. Note, Christ is always ready to entertain us; shall come unto thee, he never wears out the way, nor can they ever come unseasonably; the gate of mercy is always open, night and day, or shall soon be opened, to them that knock. Ministers, the doorkeepers, must be always ready to admit those that offer themselves to the Lord. God not only keeps a good house in his church, but he keeps open house; that, at any time, by the preaching of the word, in season and out of season, the forces of the Gentiles, and the kings or commanders of those forces, may be brought into the church. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and let such welcome guests as these come in. All those that are concerned about the church shall be made some way or other serviceable to it. Though dominion is far from being founded in men’s grace, it is founded in God’s; and he that made the inferior creatures useful to man, will make the nations of men useful to the church; The earth helped the woman; All things are for your sakes. So here, (v. 16.) “Even the sons of strangers that have neither knowledge of thee, nor kindness for thee, that have always been aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, even they shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall in that and other things minister unto thee, and not think it any disparagement to them.” This was fulfilled when the king of Persia, and the governors of the provinces, by his order, were aiding and assisting Nehemiah in building the wall about Jerusalem. Rather than Jesus Christ, the king of the church, and serve him, they shall perish eternally, Ps. ii. 12. That they will not be subject to Christ’s golden sceptre, to the government of his word and Spirit, that will not be brought under, or kept in, by the discipline of his family, shall be broken in pieces by his iron rod; Bring them forth, and slay them before me, Luke ii. 34. 35. (13.) And so another timber shall be brought, proper for the carved work thereof, which the enemy had broken down, Ps. lxxiv. 5. 6. The temple, the place of God’s sanctuary, shall he not only rebuilt, but beautified. It is the place of his feet, where he rests and resides, Ezek. xxxvi. 7. The ark is called his footstool, because it was under the mercy-seat, Ps. cxxxvii. 7. This he will make glorious in the temple, and in their hands, and in their hearts, and in the city of Jerusalem, which shall be the place of his inhabitants. The glory of the latter house, to which this refers, though in many instances inferior, was yet really greater than the glory of the former, because Christ came to that temple, Mal. iii. 1. It was likewise adorned with goodly stones and gifts, (Luke xxii. 50.) to which this promise may have some reference; yet so slightly did Christ speak of them there, that we must suppose it to have its full accomplishment in the beauties of golden linens, and the graces and comforts of the Spirit, with which gospel-bridines are adorned and enriched. 6. The church shall appear truly great and
The people of the Jews, after their return out of captivity, by degrees became more considerable, and made a better figure, than one would have expected, after they had been so much reduced, and than any of the other nations recovered, that had been in like manner humbled by the Chaldeans. It is probable that many of those who had oppressed them in Babylon, when they were themselves driven out by the Persians, made their court to the Jews for safety so far as they could. And we may likewise suppose with convenience, that it is further fulfilled, when those that have been enemies to the church are wrought upon by the grace of God to see their error, and come, and join themselves to it; “The sons of them that afflicted thee, if not they themselves, yet their children, shall crouch to thee, shall beg pardon for their folly, and beg an interest in thy favour, and admission into thy family.” 1 Sam. ii. 36. A promise like this is made to the church of Philadelphia, Rev. iii. 9. And it is intended to be,(1.) A mortification to the proud oppressors of the church, that have afflicted her, and despised her, and taken a pleasure in doing it; they shall be brought down, their spirits shall be broken, and their condition shall be so low, that these shall be glad to be obliged to those whom they have most studied to disoblige. Note, Sooner or later God will pour contempt upon those that put contempt upon his people. (2.) An exaltation to the poor, oppressed ones of the church; and this is his honour that shall be done them, they shall have an opportunity of doing good to those who have done evil to them, and saving those that have despised and spised them. It is a pleasure to a good man, and he accounts it an honour, to show mercy to those with whom he has found no mercy. Yet this is not all; “They shall not only become suppliants to thee for their own interest, but they shall give honour to thee; they shall call thee, The city of the Lord; they shall at length be convinced that thou art a favourite of Heaven, and the particular care of the Divine Providence.” That city is truly great and honourable, it is strong, it is rich, it is safe; it is beautiful, it is the most desirable place that can be to live in, which is the city of the Lord, which he owns, in which he dwells, in which religion is uppermost; such a one is Zion, it is the place which God has chosen, to put his name there, it is the Zion of the Holy One, at whose presence we may be sure, a holy city, else the Holy One of Israel would never be called the Patron of it.

15. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. 16. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breasts of kings: and thou shalt know that I am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

17. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exectors righteousness. 18. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

19. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory;

20. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

21. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. 22. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time.

The happy and glorious state of the church is here further foretold, referring principally and ultimately to the Christian church, and the spiritual peace of that; but under the type of that little gleam of outward peace, which the Jews sometimes enjoyed after their return out of captivity. This is here spoken of,

1. As compared with what it had been; this made her peace and honour the more pleasant, that her condition had been much otherwise. 2. She had been despised; but now she should be honoured. 3. Jerusalem had been forsaken and hated, abandoned by her friends, abhorred by her enemies, no man went through that desolate city, but declined it as a ruinful spectacle; it was an astonishment and hissing. But now it shall be made an eternal excellency, being restored from idolatry, and having recovered the tokens of God’s favour; and it shall be the joy of good people for many generations. Yet considering how short Jerusalem’s excellency was, and how short it came of the vast compass of this promise, we must look for the full accomplishment of it in the perpetual excellencies of the gospel-church, far exceeding those of the Old Testament church, and the glorious privileges and advantages of the Christian religion, which are indeed the joy of many generations.

Two things are here spoken of as her excellency and joy, in opposition to her having been forsaken and hated. (1.) She shall find herself countenanced by her neighbours. The nations, and their kings, that are brought to embrace Christianity, shall lay themselves out for the good of the church, and maintain its interests, with the tenderness and affection that the nurse shows to the child at her breast; (v. 17.) “They shall suck the milk of Gentiles, and suck the breast of kings, that is, her that shall be to thee as nursing fathers.” (2.) She shall find herself countenanced by her God; “Thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer. shalt know it by experience: for such a salvation, such a redemption, shall be wrought out for thee, and shall be discovered itself to be the work of the Lord, the work of a mighty one, for it is a great salvation; of the Mighty One of Jacob, for it secures the welfare of all those that are Israelites indeed.” They before knew the Lord to be their God, now they know him to be their Saviour, their Redeemer. Their Holy One now appears their Mighty One.

2. She had been impoverished; but now she shall be enriched. “I will make thee a crown of glory fair upon thee, and I will make thee better with her, v. 17. When those who were raised out of the dust are set among princes, instead of brass, they have mercy in their purses, they have gold and silver vessels in their houses instead of iron ones, and other improvements agreeable: so much shall the spiritual glory of the New Testament church exceed the external pomp and splendour of the Jewish economy, which had no glory in comparison with that which quite excels it.”
When we had baptism in the room of circumcision, the Lord's supper in the room of the passover, and holy preaching in the place of idolatry, we inherited God's temple; and so it stood, until the apostles and preachers went into the world; for, as Ga. viii. 16. says, the Messiah, the Lord, doth bear the temple to the world, and then the temple shall be turned into gold, as it is written; for, as he saith, ‘He that believeth on me shall have the testimony of life in his soul.’

3. She had been oppressed by her own princes, which was so sadly complained of, not only as her sin, but for the sins of her people; but the Lord had mercy upon her, and she was made to hear the voice of the Highest, in her heart, which opened her understanding and eyes, and showed her the way of salvation, to her and to her children, and to all that were in her house, and to all people, and that she should be a flower, according as she was intended to be. In this sense, righteousness, as well as light, is a flower, which is always in season, before God's face, and does not pass by, but is always, and in due time, made to be made perfect and complete; and then the sun is as a river, and the moon as the fount of light, and the glory of God as eternal, which is always shining, and is always in season. And this is the case of all saints, who are the children of God, and who are given to him for his service, and who are intended to be made perfect, and to be glorified, as in the last verse of the chapter.

The truth of God's saying shall be perfect, and his word shall be established in season; and this is the case of all saints, who are given for the service of God, and are sanctified for his worshippers and servants. And this is the case of all saints, who are given to God, and who are intended to be made perfect, and to be glorified, as in the last verse of the chapter.

1. God shall be all in all in the happiness here promised; so he is always to true believers; (v. 19.)

4. The glory of the church shall redound to the honour of the church's God; They shall appear to be the branch of his planting, or of his territories, and will be made perfect; and they shall be all righteous; therefore they shall inherit the land for ever, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness.

The sun shall be no more thy light, God's people, when they enjoy his favour, and walk in the light of his countenance, make little account of sun and moon, and other lights of this world, but could walk comfortably in the light of the Lord, and draw the light of God's face. In heaven there shall be no occasion for sun or moon, for it is the inheritance of the saints in light, such light as will swallow up the light of the sun, as easily as the sun does that of a candle. "Idolaters worshipped the sun and moon; (some have thought the most ancient and plausible idolatry;) but those shall be no more thy light, shall no more be idolized; but the Lord shall lie to move a constant Light, both day and night, in the night of adversity, as well as in the day of prosperity."

Those that make God their only Light, shall have him their guide, and be his followers, and shall be as the children of the light, and not of the night; and shall shine as the children of the morning, and not of the evening, for they shall be made perfect and complete; and then the Lord shall be their constant Light, both day and night, in the night of adversity, as well as in the day of prosperity."

The sun shall not more go down, but it shall be eternal day, eternal sunshine, with thee; that shall not be thy sun, which is sometimes eclipsed, often clouded, and, though it shine ever so bright, ever so warm, will certainly set, and leave thee in the dark, in the cold, in a few hours; but he shall be a Sun, a Fountain of light to thee, who is himself the Father of all light, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning," James i. 17. We read of the sun's standing still once, and not hastening to go down, for the space of a day, and it was a glorious day, never was the like; but what was that to the day that shall never have a night? Or if it had, it should be a light night; for neither shall the moon withdraw itself, it shall never wax dark, but be always at the full. The comforts and joys that are in heaven, the glories provided for the soul, as the light of the sun, and those prepared for the glorified body too, as the light of the moon, shall never know the least cessation or interruption; how should they, when the Lord shall himself be thine everlasting light—a light which never wastes, nor can ever be extinguished. And the days of thy mourning shall be ended, so as never to return; for all tears shall be wiped away, and the fountains of them, sin and affliction, dried up, so that sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.

3. Those that are entitled to this happiness, being only prepared and qualified for it, shall never be put out of the possession of it; (v. 21.)

The people, that shall inherit this New Jerusalem, shall be all righteous, all justified by the righteousness of the Messiah, all sanctified by his Spirit; all that people, that Jerusalem, must be righteous, must have that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. They are all righteous, for we know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. There are no people on earth that are all righteous; no people that are above all that is human; and not societies on this side heaven; but there are no mixtures there. They shall be all righteous; they shall be entirely righteous; as there shall be none corrupt among them, so there shall be no corruption in them; the spirits of just men shall there be made perfect. And they shall be all the righteous together, that shall replenish the New Jerusalem; it is called the congregation of the righteous, Ps. i. And because they are all righteous, therefore they shall inherit the land for ever, for nothing but sin can turn them out of it. The perfection of the saints' holiness secures the perpetuity of their happiness."

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tor this happiness; they are the work of his hands, (Eph. ii. 10.) are wrought to the self-same thing, 2 Cor. iii. 10. It is a work of time, and, when it is finished, will appear a work of wonder; and God will be glorified, who began it, and carried it on; for the Lord Jesus will then be admired in all them that believe. God will glorify himself in glorifying his chosen.

3. They will appear the more glorious, and God will be the more glorified in them, if we compare what they are, with what they were. As they are arrived at the smallness of their beginning; (v. 22.) A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. The captives that returned out of Babylon strangely multiplied, and became a strong nation. The Christian church was a little one, a very small one at first, the number of their names was once but an hundred and twenty; yet it became a thousand; the stone cut out of the mountain without hands swelled so as to fill the earth. The triumphant church, and every glorified saint, will be a thousand out of a little one, a strong nation out of a small one. The grace and peace of the saints were at first like a grain of mustard seed, but they increase and multiply, and make a large tree, and a strong nation; to which Solomon, David; when they came to heaven, and look back upon the smallness of their beginning, they will wonder how they got thither. And so wonderful is all this promise, that it needed the ratification with which it is closed; If the Lord will hasten it in his time—ill—that is here said relating to the Jewish and Christian church, to the militant and triumphant church, and to every particular believer. (1.) It may seem too difficult to be brought about, and therefore may be despised of; but the God of almightie power has undertaken it; “I the Lord will do it, who can do it, and have determined to do it.” It will be done by him whose power is irresistible, and his purposes unalterable. (2.) It may seem to be delayed, and put off, so long, that we are out of hopes of it; but as the Lord will do it, so he will hasten it, will do it with all convenient speed; though much time may be passed before it is done, no time shall be lost; he will hasten it in its time, in the proper time, in the season wherein it will be beautiful; he will do it in the time appointed by his wisdom, though not in the time prescribed by our folly. (3.) It may seem to be a heavy and great burden; it does not tarry, it does not tarry if it come in God’s time; for we are sure that that is the best time, which he that believes will patiently wait for.

CHAP. LXI.

In this chapter, I. We are sure to find the grace of Christ, published by himself to a lost world in the everlasting gospel, under the type and figure of Isaiah’s province, which was to foretell the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon; 8. v. 2. We there find the glorious church of Christ, its spiritual glories, described under the type and figure of the Jews’ prosperity after their return out of their captivity. 1. It is promised that the dead he报复; 2. the dead be rewarded; 3. the church be raised. Those from without shall be made serviceable to the church, v. 5. 3. That the church shall be a royal priesthood, maintained by the riches of the Gentiles, v. 6. 4. That she shall have honour and joy in lieu of all her shame and sorrow, v. 7. 5. That her affairs shall prosper, v. 8. 6. That posterity shall enjoy these blessings, v. 9. 7. That righteousness and salvation shall be the children’s inheritance, v. 10. 8. That the Lord shall give the streets of Zion peace, v. 11. 9. That the blood of the covenant unfangled, and all the tabernacles of joy, shall be consecrated, v. 12. That the Lord shall be the absolute Lord of all, and the heavens be his throne, v. 13. 14. That his servants shall walk in the midst of the temple to the end of all generations, v. 15. That the Lord shall be the special object of the people’s joy, v. 16. That the Lord shall be the special object of the people’s joy, v. 16. Therefore shall the wilderness and dry land be glad, v. 17. 18. 19. That the Lord shall show his glory, his power, and his magnificence, v. 20. 21. 22. That the Lord shall be the especial object of all praise, v. 23. 24. That the Lord shall be the especial object of all praise, v. 23. 24.

1. THE Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3. To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of Righteousness, The Planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

He that is the best Expositor of scripture, has, no doubt, given us the best exposition of these verses, even our Lord Jesus himself, who read this in the synagogue of Nazareth, (perhaps it was the lesser for the day,) and applied it entirely to himself, saying, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears; (Luke iv. 17, 18, 21.) and the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth, in the opening of this text, was of very great use, and served them. As Isaiah was authorized and directed to proclaim liberty to the Jews in Babylon, so was Christ, God’s Messenger, to publish a more joyful jubilee to a lost world. And here we are told,

I. How he was fitted and qualified for this work; The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, v. 1. The prophets had the Spirit of God moving them at times, both instructing them what to say, and6 exciting them to say it; but Christ had the Spirit always resting on him without measure; but to the same intent that the prophets had, as a Spirit of counsel, and a Spirit of courage, ch. xi. 1.—5. When he entered upon the execution of his prophetic office, the Spirit, as a dove, descended upon him, Matt. iii. 16. This Spirit which was upon him, he communicated to those whom he sent to proclaim the same glad tidings, saying to them, when he gave them their commission, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, thereby ratifying it.

II. How he was appointed and ordained to it; The Spirit of God is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me. What service God called him to, he showed him; he would show him how to do it; how to be a prophet, a priest, a king; how to publish the gospel. As the Spirit of God showed him how to be a prophet, a priest, a king; so the Spirit of God showed him how to be a king, because he had by a sacred and solemn unction set him apart to this great office, as kings and priests were of old destined to their offices by anointing. Hence the Redeemer was called the Messiah, the Christ, because he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. He has sent me; our Lord Jesus did not go unsealed; he had a commission from him that is the Fountain of power; the Father sent him, and gave him commandment. This is a great satisfaction to us, that, whatever Christ said, he had a warrant from heaven for; his doctrine was not his, but his that sent him.

III. What the work was, to which he was appointed and ordained.

1. He was to be a Preacher, was to execute the office of a prophet. So well pleased was he with the good will God showed toward men through him, that he would himself be the Preacher of it; that an honour might thereby be put upon the ministry of the gospel, and the faith of the saints might be confirmed and encouraged. He must preach good tidings (so gospel signifies) to the meek, to the penitent and to the meek; and more than to them; the tidings of a Redeemer will be indeed good tidings, pure gospel, faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance. The poor are commonly best disposed to receive the gospel; (Lam. ii. 5.) and then it is likely to profit us, when it is received with meek
ness, as it ought to be; to such Christ preached good tidings, when he said, "Blessed are the meek."

2. He was called a Healer; he was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, as pained limbs are rolled to give them ease, as broken bones and bleeding wounds are bound up, that they may knit and close again. Those whose hearts are broken for sin, who are truly humbled under the sense of guilt and dread of wrath, are furnished in the gospel of Christ with that which will make them: can any one more than he? Can any one who has experienced the pains of a penitential contrition, may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations.

3. He was to be a Deliverer; he was sent as a Prophet to preach, as a Priest to heal, and as a King to issue out proclamations; and those of two kinds; (1.) Proclamations of peace to his friends; He shall fill al the captives, (as Cyrus did to the Jews in captivity,) and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. Whereas by the guilt of sin we are bound over to the justice of God, are his lawful captives, sold for sin till payment be made of that great debt, Christ lets us know that he has made satisfaction to divine justice for that debt, that his satisfaction is accepted, and if we will plead that, and depend upon it, and make over our souls, so to speak, into the hands of the kindness he has done us, we may by faith sue out our pardon, and take the comfort of it: there is, and shall be, no condemnation to us. And whereas by the dominion of sin in us we are bound under the power of Satan, sold under sin, Christ lets us know that he has conquered Satan, has destroyed him that had the power of death, and his works, and provided for us grace sufficient to enable us to shake off the yoke of sin, and to loose ourselves from those bands of our neck. The Son is ready by his Spirit to make us free; and we shall be free indeed, not only discharged from the miseries of captivity, but advanced to all the immunities and dignities of citizens. This is the gospel-proclamation, and it is like the blowing of the jubilee-trumpet, which proclaimed the great year of release, (Lev. xxv. 9, 40,) in allusion to which it is here called the acceptable year of the Lord, the time of our acceptance with God, which is the original of our liberties; or it is called the year of the Lord, because it publishes his free grace, to his own glory, and an acceptable year, because it brings glad tidings to us, and what cannot but be very acceptable to those who know the captivity and necessities of their own soul's condition.

(2.) Proclamations of war against his enemies. Christ proclaims the day of vengeance of our God; the vengeance he takes, [1.] On sin and Satan, death and hell, and all the powers of darkness, that were to be destroyed in order to our deliverance; these Christ triumphed over in his cross, having spoiled and weakened them, shamed them, and made a show of them openly, thereby taking out of God and man, Col. ii. 15. [2.] On those of the children of men, that stand it out against those fair offers; they shall not only be left, as they deserve, in their captivity, but be dealt with as enemies; we have the gospel summed up, Mark xvi. 16. Where that part of it, He that believe and is saved, proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that they may be saved, and acknowledged to be such; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, ch. xxi. 31. All that Christ does for us, is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him as olive-shoots, planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God; and all this, that he may be glorified; that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion and an exemplary conversation; for herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit; and that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in the tree to turn as olive-trees, planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God; and that he might be for ever glorified in his saints.

6. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. 5. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen, and your vine-dressers. 6. But

but he applies it to them; he does by his Spirit comfort them. There is enough in him to comfort all who mourn, whatever their sor or sorrow is; but this comfort is sure to them who mourn in Zion, who sorrow after a godly sort, according to God, for his residence is in Zion; who mourn because of Zion's calamities and desolations, and mingle their tears by a holy sympathy with those of all God's suffering people, though they themselves are not in such circumstances; such as those who have experienced the pains of a penitential contrition, may expect the pleasure of divine cordials and consolations. As blessings out of Zion are spiritual blessings, so mourners in Zion are holy mourners; such as carry their sorrows to the throne of grace, (for in Zion was the mercy-seat,) and pour them out as Hannah did before the Lord. To such as these Christ has appointed by his gospel, and will give by his Spirit, (ver. 3.) those consolations which will not support them under their sorrows, but turn them into songs of praise. He will give them, (1.) Beauty for ashes; whereas they lay in ashes, as was usual in times of great mourning, they shall not only be raised out of their dust, but made to look pleasant. Note, The holy cheerfulness of Christians is their beauty, and a great ornament to their profession. There is an ornament of beauty in the grace of the gospel. He will give them peace—beauty for ashes; he will turn their sorrow into joy, as quickly and as easily as you can translate a letter; for he speaks, and it is done. (2.) The oil of joy, which makes the face to shine, instead of mourning, which dishonours the countenance, and makes it ugly. This oil of joy the saints have from that oil of gladness in which Christ himself was anointed above his fellows, Heb. i. 9. (3.) The garments of praise, such beautiful garments as were worn on thanksgiving days, instead of the spirit of heaviness, dimness, or contractions; open joys for secret mournings. The spirit of heaviness they keep to themselves; (Zion's mourners weep in secret;) but the joy they are recompensed with, they are clothed with as with a garment in the eye of others. Observe, Where God gives the oil of joy, he gives the garment of praise. Those comforts which come from God, dispose the heart to, and enlarge the heart in, thanksgivings to God. Whatever we have the joy of, God must have the praise and glory of.

3. He was to be a Planter; for the church is Christ's husbandry. Therefore he will do all this for his people, will cure their wounds, release them from bondage, and make all things new, and declare, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that they may be such, and be acknowledged to be such; that they may be ornaments to God's vineyard, and may be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, as the branches of God's planting, ch. xxi. 31. All that Christ does for us, is to make us God's people, and some way serviceable to him as olive-shoots, planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God; and all this, that he may be glorified; that we may be brought to glorify him by a sincere devotion and an exemplary conversation; for herein is our Father glorified, that we bring forth much fruit; and that others also may take occasion from God's favour shining on his people, and his grace shining in the tree to turn as olive-trees, planted in the house of the Lord, and flourishing in the courts of our God; and that he might be for ever glorified in his saints.
ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; in a shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall you boast yourselves. 7. For your shame you shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double: everlasting joy shall be unto them. 8. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. 9. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offsprings among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.

Promises are here made to the Jews now returned out of captivity, and settled again in their own land, which they were not able to perform before, because all believers, who through grace are delivered out of spiritual thraldom; for they are capable of being spiritually applied.

1. It is promised that their houses shall be rebuilt, (v. 4.) that their cities shall be raised out of the ruins in which they had long lain, and be fitted up for their use again; They shall build the waste cities, and the desolations of many generations, which, it was feared, would never be repaired, shall be raised up. The setting up of Christianity in the world repaired the decays of natural religion, and raised up these desolations both of piety and honesty, which had been for many generations the reproach of mankind. An unseathed soul is like a city taken, broken down, and has no walls, like a house in ruins; but by the power of Christ's gospel and grace it is repaired, it is put in order again, and fitted to be an habitation of God through the Spirit. And they shall do this, they that are released out of captivity; for we are brought out of the house of bondage, that we may serve God, both in building up ourselves to his glory, and in helping to build up his church on earth.

2. They that were so lately servants themselves, working for their oppressors, and lying at their mercy, shall now have servants to do their work for them and be at their command; not of their brethren, (they are the Lord's freemen,) but of the strangers, and the sons of the alien, who shall keep their shearch, till their grandson and their daughter, the ancient emigrants of Abel, Cain, and Adam; Strangers shall feed your flocks, v. 5. When by the grace of God, we attain to a holy indwelling as to all the affairs of this world, buying as though they possessed not; when, though our hands are employed about them, our hearts are not entangled with them, but reserved entire for God and his service, then the sons of the alien are our ploughmen and vine-dressers.

3. They shall not only be released out of their captivity, but highly preferred, and honourably employed; (v. 6.) "While the strangers are keeping your flocks, you shall be keeping the charge of the sanctuary; instead of being slaves to your taskmasters, you shall be called the priests of the Lord, a high and holy calling." Priests were princes' peers, and in Hebrew were called by the same name. You shall be the ministers of our God, as the Levites were. Note, Those whom God sets at liberty, he sets to work: he delivers them out of the hands of their enemies, that they may serve him. Luke i. 74, 75. Ps. cxxvi. 16. But his service is perfect freedom, may, it is the greatest honour. When God brought Israel out of Egypt, he took them to be to him a kingdom of priests, Exod. xix. 6. And the gospel-Church is a royal priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 9. All believers are made to our God kings and priests; and they ought to conduct themselves as such in their devotions and in their whole conversation, with holiness to the Lord written upon their forehead, that men may call them the priests of the Lord.

4. The wealth and honour of the Gentile converts shall redound to the benefit and credit of the church, v. 6. The Gentiles shall be brought into the church, those that were strangers shall become fellow-citizens with the saints, and with themselves they shall bring all they have, to be devoted to the glory of God, and used in his service; and the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall have the advantage of it. It will be a great strengthening and quickening, as well as a comfort and encouragement, to all good Christians, to see the Gentiles serving the interest of God's kingdom. (1.) They shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, not which they have themselves received, but which are given, or all that shall be delivered to them, and honourably presented to them, as gifts brought to the altar, which the priests and their families lived comfortably upon. It is not said, "Ye shall hoard the riches of the Gentiles, and treasure it," but, "Ye shall eat it;" for there is nothing better in riches than to use them, and to do good with them. (2.) They shall boast themselves in their riches, which the Gentile converts before their conversion, their nobility, estates, learning, virtue, or places of trust and power, it shall all turn to the reputation of the church to which they were joined themselves; and whatever is their glory after their conversion, their holy zeal, and strictness of conversation, their usefulness, their patient suffering, and all the displays of that blessed grace which divine grace has made in them, shall be very much for the glory of God, and therefore all good men shall glory in it.

5. They shall have abundance of comfort and satisfaction in their own bosoms: (v. 7.) the Jews, no doubt, were thus privileged after their return; they were in a new world, and now knew how to value their liberty and property, the pleasures of which were continued to them, even so long as they continued to continue in Christ. They shall have joy in it, as long as they do all those rejoice, whom Christ has brought into the glorious liberty of God's children, especially when the privileges of their adoption shall be completed in the resurrection of the body. (1.) They shall rejoice in their portions; they shall not only have their own again, but which is a further gift of God they shall have the comfort of it, and a heart to rejoice in it, Eccl. iii. 12. Though we have reason to say that they have a worthy portion, and to rejoice in it. (2.) Everlasting joy shall be unto them, a joyful state of their people, which shall last long, much longer than the captivity had lasted. Yet that joy of the Jewish nation was so much allayed, so often interrupted, and so soon taken away, that we must look for the accomplishment of this promise in the spiritual joy which believers have in God, and the eternal joy they hope for in heaven. (3.) This shall be a double recompense to them, and more than double, for all the reproach and vexation they have lain under in
ISAIAH, LXI.

the land of their captivity: "For your shame you shall have double honour, and in your land you shall possess double wealth, to what you lost; the blessing of God upon it, and the comfort you shall have in it, shall make an abundant reparation for all the damages you have received. You shall be owned not only as God's sons, but as his first-born, (Exod. iv. 22.) and therefore entitled to a double portion. As the miseries of their captivity were great, the greater should be the blessedness of their recovery. They are said to have received double for all their sins, (ch. xii. 2.) so the joys of their return shall be so great, that in them they shall receive double for all their shame. The former is applicable to the fulness of Christ's satisfaction, in which God received double for all their sins; the latter to the fulness of heaven's joys, in which we shall receive more than double for our service and sufferings. Join together these two; when God turned again his captivity, he gave him twice as much as he had before.

6. God will be their faithful Guide, and a God in covenant with them; (v. 8.) I will direct their work in truth. God by his providence will order their affairs for the best, according to the word of his truth; he will guide them in their way, and in their work of true prosperity; he will guide them in grace direct the works of good people in the right way, the true way that leads to happiness; he will direct them to be done in sincerity, and then they are pleasing to him. God desires truth in the inward parts; and if we do our works in truth, he will make an everlasting covenant with us; for to those that walk before him and are upright, he will certainly be a God all-sufficient.

7. God will make them a new song, and a new dance, with all the instruments of his glory, and by giving them remarkable tokens of his favour, which shall make them eminent, and gain them respect from all about them. Let the children of godly parents love in such a manner that they may be known to be such, that all who observe them may see in them the fruits of a good education, and an answer to the prayers that were put up for them; and then may expect that God will make them known, by the fulfilling of that promise to them, that the generation of the upright shall be blessed. (2.) God shall have the glory of this, for every one shall attribute it to the blessing of God; all that see them shall see so much of the grace of God in them, and his favour toward them, that they shall acknowledge them to be the seed which the Lord has blessed, and doth bless, for it includes both. See what it is to be blessed of God. Whatever good appears in any, it must be taken notice of as the fruit of God's blessing, and he must be glorified in it.

10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. 11. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Some make this the song of joy and praise to be sung by the prophet in the name of Jerusalem, congratulating her on the happy change of her circumstances in the accomplishment of the foregoing promises; others make it to be spoken by Christ in the name of the New Testament church triumphant in gospel grace. We may take it both, the former a type of the latter. We are here taught to rejoice with holy joy, to God's honour.

1. In the beginning of this good work, the clothing of the church with righteousness and salvation; (v. 10.) Upon this account I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. These that rejoice in God have cause to rejoice greatly, and we need not fear running into an extreme in the greatness of our joy, when we make God the Gladness of our joy. The first gospel song begins like this, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced with exultation, Luke i. 46, 47. There is just matter for this joy, and all the reason in the world why it should terminate in God, for salvation and righteousness.
The type. The truly soon thee, this executing For the 3. the peace, published those tender yet it him it is for Jesus into have (God's) coming into the clothed av any a durable clothing, for are the church, that when clothed herself with the righteousness and salvation that Jesus Christ has clothed her with, rejoices to think that these inestimable blessings shall both spring for future ages, and spread to distant regions. (1.) They shall spring forth for ages to come, the fruits of the earth which are produced every year from generation to generation; as the earth, even that which lies common, brings forth her bud, the tender grass, at the return of the year, and as the garden enclosed causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth in their season, so duly, so constantly, so powerfully, and with such advantage to mankind, will the Lord God cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, by virtue of the covenant of grace, as, in the former case, by virtue of the covenant of probation, and the promised blessings are righteousness and praise; (for they that are clothed with righteousness show forth the praises of him that clothed them;) these shall spring forth under the influence of the dew of divine grace. Though it may sometimes be winter with the church, when those blessings seem to wither, and do not appear, yet the root of them is fixed, a spring-time will come, when through the reviving beams of the approaching Sun of righteousness they shall flourish again. (2.) They shall spread far, and spring forth, before all the nations; the great salvation shall be published and proclaimed to all the world, and the ends of the earth shall see it.

CHAP. LXII.

The business of prophets was both to preach and pray. In this chapter, 1. The prophet determines to apply himself closely and constantly to this business, v. 1. II. God appoints him and others of his prophets to continue to do so, for the enjoyment of the whole duration of theirFabric. v. 6, 7, 3. The promises are here repeated and ratified of the great things God would do for his church; for the Jews after their return out of captivity, and for the Christian church when those shall be set up in the world. 1. The church shall be made honourable in the eyes of the world, v. 2. 2. It shall appear to be very dear to God, precious and honourable in his sight, v. 3-5. 3. It shall enjoy great plenty, v. 8, 9. 4. It shall be released out of captivity, and grow up again into a considerable nation, particularly owned and favoured by Heaven, v. 10-12.

1. For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof, as a lamp that burneth. 2. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. 3. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. 4. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken: neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. 5. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.

The prophet here tells us,
1. What he will do for the church. A prophet, as he is a seer, so he is a spokesman. This prophet here resolves to perform that office faithfully, v. 1. He will not hold his peace, he will not rest; he will go on with his business, will take pains, and never desire to take his ease; and herein he was a type of Christ, who was indefatigable in executing the office of a prophet, and made it his meat and drink till he had finished his work. Observe here, 1. What the prophet's resolution is; He will not hold his peace, he will continue instant in preaching; not only faithfully deliver, but frequently repeat, the messages he has received from the Lord. If people receive not the precepts and promises at first, he will inculcate them, and give them line upon line; and he will continue instant in prayer, he will never hold his peace at the throne of grace, till he has prevailed with God for the mercies promised; he will give himself to prayer, and to the ministry of the word, as Christ's ministers must, (Acts vi. 4.) who must labour frequently in both, and never be weary of this work of doing. The business of ministers is to speak from God to his people, and to God for his people: and in neither of these must they be silent. 2. What is the principle of this resolution—for Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem's: not for the sake of any private interest of his own, but for the church's sake, because he has an affection and concern for Zion, and it lies near his heart: what he desired to do in the former family, he desires to see the good of Jerusalem, and resolves to seek it all the days of his life, Ps. cxxii. 8, 9.—cxxxviii. 5. It is God's Zion, and his Jerusalem, and it is therefore dear to him, because it is so to God, and because God's glory is interested in its prosperity. 3. How long he resolves to continue this importunity till the promise of the church's righteousness and salvation, declared in this last chapter, be accomplished. Isaiah will not himself live to see the release of the captives out of Babylon, much less the bringing in of the gospel, in which grace reigns through righteousness unto life and salvation, yet he will not hold his peace till these be accomplished, even the utmost of them, because his prophecies will continue speaking of these things, and there shall in every age be a remnant that shall continue to pray for them, as
successors to him, till the promises be performed, and so the prayers answered that were grounded upon them. Then the church’s righteousness and salvation will go forth as brightness, and as a lamp that burns; so plainly, that it will carry its own evidence along with it, it will bring honour and comfort to the church, which will hereupon both look pleasant and appear illustrious; and it will bring instruction and direction to the world, a light not only to the eyes but to the feet, and to the faithful of those who before sat in darkness and in the shadow of death.

II. What God will do for the church; the prophet can but pray and preach, but God will confirm the words, and answer the prayers.

1. The church shall be greatly admired; when that righteousness which is her salvation, her praise, and her delight; they shall see it. The tides of it shall be carried to the Gentiles, and a tender of it made them; they may so see this righteousness as to share in it, if it be not their own fault; “Even kings shall see and be in love with the glory of thy righteousness,”(v. 2.) shall overlook the glory of their own courts and kingdoms, and look at, and look after, the spiritual glory of the church that with them shall excel.

2. She shall be truly admirable. Great names make men considerable in the world, and great respect is paid them thereupon; now it is agreed, that Honour est in honorate—Honour is to be estimated by the character and condition of him who confers it. God is the Fountian of honour, and from him the church’s honour comes; Thou shalt be called a new name, a pleasant name, such as no man shall never called by before, no, not in the day of the greatest prosperity, and the reverse of that which thou wast called by in the day of thine affliction; thou shalt have a new character, be advanced to a new dignity, and those about thee shall have new thoughts of thee.” This seems to be alluded to in that promise (Rev. iii. 17.), of the white stone, and in the stone a new name, and that (Rev. iii. 12.) of the name of the city of my God, and my new name. It is a name which the mouth of the Lord shall name, who, we are sure, miscalls nothing, and who will oblige others to call her by the name he has given her; for his judgment is according to truth, and all shall concur with it sooner or later. Two names God shall give her. (1.) He shall call her His crown; (v. 3.) Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, not on his head, as adding any real honour or power to him, as crowns do to those that are crowned with them, but in his hand; he is pleased to account them, and show them forth, as a glory and beauty to him. When he took them to be his people, it was that they might be unto him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; (Jer. xxxii. 31.) “Thou shalt be a crown of glory and a royal diadem, through the hand, the good hand, of thy God upon thee; he shall make thee so, for he shall be to thee a Crown of glory, ch. xxviii. 5. Thou shalt be so in his hand, under his protection; he that shall put glory upon thee, shall create a defence upon all that glory, so that the flowers of thy crown shall never be withered, nor its jewels lost.”

(2.) He shall call her his spouse; (v. 4, 5.) this is a yet greater honour, especially considering what a forlorn condition she had been in. (1.) Her case had been very melancholy; she was called forsaken, and her land desolate, during the captivity, like a woman reproachfully divorced, or left a disorderly widow. Such was the state of religion in the world before the preaching of the gospel—it was in a manner forsaken and desolate, a thing that no man looked after, or had any real concern for.

[2.] It should now be very pleasant, for God would return in mercy to her. Instead of those two names of reproach, she shall be called by two honourable names. First, She shall be called Hezphzibah, which signifies, My delight is in her; it was the name of Hezekiah’s queen, Manasseh’s mother; (2 Kings xxii. 1.) a proper name for a wife, who ought to be her husband’s delight, Prov. v. 19. And here it is the church’s Maker, that is her Husband; The same that delighted in her, and made her his wife. By his grace he hath wrought that in his church, which makes her delightful, she being refined, and reformed, and brought home to him; and then by his providence he doth that for her, which makes it appear that she is his delight, and that he delights to do her good. Secondly, She shall be called Beulah, which signifies married, whereas she had been desolate, a condition opposed to that of the married wife; (ch. I.) “Thy land shall be married; it shall become fruitful again, and be replenished.” Though she has long been barren, she shall again be peopled, shall again be made to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children, Ps. cxviii. 9. She shall be married, For, 1. Her sons shall heartily espouse the land of their nativity and its interests, which they had for a time cast away, and to them was now renewed, and the comfortable enjoyment of it; Thy sons shall marry thee, they shall live with thee, and take delight in thee; when they were in Babylon, they seemed to have espoused that land, for they were appointed to settle, and to seek the peace of it, Jer. xxxix. 5—7. But now they shall again marry their own land, as a young man marries a virgin that he takes great pains to espouse; it is extremely fond of, and espouses many children by. It bodes well to a land, when its own natives and inhabitants are pleased with it, prefer it before other lands, when its princes marry their country, and resolve to take their lot with it. 2. Her God (this is much better) shall betroth her to himself in righteousness, Hosea ii. 19, 20. He will take pleasure in his church; As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, is pleased with his relation to her and her affection to him, so shall thy God rejoice over thee, he shall rest in his love to thee, (Zeph. iii. 17.) he shall take pleasure in thee, (Ps. cxlvii. 11.) and shall delight to do thee good with his whole heart and his whole soul, Jer. xxxii. 41. This is very applicable to the love Christ has for his church, and for the complacency he takes in it; which appears so bright in Solomon’s Song, and which will be complete in heaven.

6. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; 7. And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8. The Lord hath sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine for the which thou hast laboured: 9. But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord, and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.

Two things are here promised to Jerusalem.

1. Plenty of the means of grace—abundance of good preaching and good praying; (v. 6, 7) and this shows the method God takes when he designs mercy for a people; he first brings them to their duty, and
pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and then brings salvation to them. Provision is made, 1. That ministers may do their duty as watchmen; it is here spoken of as a toke for good, step toward further mercy, and an earnest of that, that in order to what he designed for them, he would set watchmen on their walls, who should never hold their peace. Note, (1.) Ministers are watchmen on the church's walls, for it is as a city besieged, whose concern it is to have sentinels on the walls, to take notice, and give notice, of the approach of danger. If watchmen be set, they must be comforted, but watchmen, be wakeful and faithful, and willing to endure hardness. (2.) They are concerned to stand upon their guard day and night; they must never be off their watch, as long as those for whose souls they watch, are not out of danger. (3.) They must never hold their peace, they must take all opportunities to give warning to sinners, in season, out of season, and must never be ignorant of the cause of Christ by a treacherous or cowardly silence; they must never hold their peace at the throne of grace, they must *pray and not faint*, as Moses lifted up his hands, and kept them steady, till Israel had got the victory over Amalek, Exod. xvii. 10, 12. 2. That people may do their duty. As those that make mention of the Lord, let not them keep silence. That is, they should not only declare their faith, but put to use their prayers in prayer. (1.) God's professing people must pray for them, but let them pray for themselves; all will be little enough to meet the approaching mercy with due solemnity. Note, (1.) It is the character of God's professing people, that they may make mention of the Lord, and continue to do so even in bad times, when the land is termed forsaken and desolate; they are the Lord's remembrancers; (so the margin reads it) they remember the Lord, themselves, and put one another in mind of him. (2.) God's professing people must be praying people, must be public-spirited in prayer, must wrestle with God in prayer, and continue to do so; *Keep not silence, never grow remiss in the duty, or weary of it,* *Give him no rest*—alluding to an importunate beggar, to the widow that with her continual coming wearied the judge into a compliance. God said to Moses, *Let me alone;* (Exod. xxxii. 10.) and Jacob to Christ, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me,* Gen. xxxii. 26. (3.) God is so far from being displeased with our pressing importunity, as men commonly are, that he invites and encourages it, he bids us cry after him; he is not like those disciples who discouraged a petition, *Lord, Lord, what shall we do more?* He beareth us up in our applications at the throne of grace, and *give him no rest,* Luke xi. 5, 6. He suffers himself not only to be reasoned with, but to be wrestled with. (4.) The public welfare and prosperity of God's Jerusalem is that which we should be most importunate for at the throne of grace; we should pray for the good of the church. [1.] That it may be safe, that he who is the city's arm, may be safe. He beareth us up in our prayers for the church may be firm, may be settled for the present, and secured to posterity. [2.] That it may be great, may be a praise in the earth; that it may be praised, and God may be praised for it. When gospel-truths are cleared and vindicated, when gospel-ordinances are duly administered in their due order and power, then the church becomes eminent for holiness and power. He beareth us up in our prayers in the earth, then it is in reputation. (5.) We must persevere in our prayers for mercy to the church, till the mercy comes; we must do as the prophet's servant did, go yet seven times, till the promising cloud appear, 1 Kings xviii. 44. (6.) It is a good sign that God is coming toward a people in ways of mercy, when he pours out a spirit of prayer upon them, and stirs them up to be fervent and constant in their intercessions.

II. Plenty of all other good things, v. 8. This follows upon the former; when the people praise God, when all the people praise him, then shall the earth yield her increase. (Ps. livii. 5, 6.) and outward prosperity, even the nations who are about Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Observe, 1. The great distress they had been in, and the losses they had sustained; their corn had been meat for themselves and their families; here was a double grievance, that they themselves wanted that which was necessary to the support of life, and were in danger of being starved up in it, that their enemies were strengthened by it, had the means to supply it, and so were the better able to do them a mischief. God is said to give their corn to their enemies, because he not only permitted it, but ordered it, to be the just punishment both of their abuse of plenty, and of their symbolizing with strangers, ch. 7. The wine which they had laboured for, and which in their affliction they needed, for the relief of those among them that were of a heavy heart, strangers drink it, to gratify their lusts with it; this sore judgment was threatened for their sins, Lev. xxvi. 16. Deut. xxviii. 33. See how uncertain our creature-comforts are, and how much it is our wisdom to labour for that meat which we can never be robbed of. 2. The great fulness and satisfaction which they should now enjoy, is from the Lord, because they have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord. See here, (1.) God's mercy in giving plenty, and peace to enjoy it; that the earth yields her increase, that there are hands to be employed in gathering it in, and that they are not taken off by plague and sickness, or otherwise employed in war; that strangers and enemies do not come, and gather it for themselves, or take it from us when we have gathered it, that we eat the labour of our hands and the bread is not eaten out of our mouths, and especially, that we have opportunity and a heart to honour God with it, and that his courts are open to us, and we are not restrained from attending on him in them. (2.) Our duty in the enjoyment of this mercy; we must gather what God gives, with care and industry, we must eat it freely and cheerfully, not buy the gifts of God's bounty, but make use of them; we must, when we have eaten and are full, *bless the Lord, and give him thanks for his bounty to us, and we must serve him with our abundance, use it in works of piety and charity, eat it and drink it in the courts of his holiness, where the altar, the priest, and the poor, must all have their part there. This is the heart of a godly man: he eats in his meat and drink is that it furnisheth him with a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the Lord his God; (Joel ii. 14.) the greatest comfort that he has in an estate is, that it gives him an opportunity of honouring God and doing good. This wine is to be drunk in the courts of God's holiness, and therefore moderately and with sobriety, as before the altar, Ps. xlv. 14. God is invited by his priests, *The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength, that he will do this for his people; God confirms it by an oath, that his people, who trust in him and his word, may have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. And since he can swear by no greater, he swears by himself; sometimes by his being, *As I live* (Ezek. xxxiii. 11.) sometimes by his holiness, *By the heavens,* Ps. cxix. 9, 10. By his right hand, (which was lifted up in swearing, Deut. xxxii. 40.) and his arm of power; for it is a great satisfaction to those who build their hopes on God's promise, to be sure that what he has promised he is able to perform, Rom. iv. 21. To assure us of this, he has sworn by his strength, paining the reputation of his omnipotence upon it; if he did not do it, let it be said, *It was because he could not, which the Egyptians shall never say,* (Sumb. xiv.
ISAIAH, LXIII.

16.) nor any other. It is the comfort of God's people, that his power is engaged for them; his right hand, where the Mediator sits.

10. Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. 11. Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. 12. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.

This, as many like passages before, refers to the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon, and, under the type and figure of that, to the great redemption wrought out by Jesus Christ, and the proclaiming of gospel salvation by him through him.

1. Way shall be made for this salvation; all difficulties shall be removed, and whatever might obstruct it shall be taken out of the way, v. 10. The gates of Babylon shall be thrown open, that they may with freedom go through them; the way from Babylon to the land of Israel shall be prepared, causeways shall be made and cast up through wet and wild places, stones gathered out of the places rough and rocky; in the convenient places appointed for their rendezvous, standards shall be set up for their direction and encouragement, that they may embody for their greater safety. Thus John Baptist was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, Mat. iii. 3. And before Christ by his graces and comforts comes to any for salvation, preparation is made for him by repentance, which is called the preparation of the gospel of grace (Eph. vi. 15.) here the way is levelled by it, there the feet are shod with it, which comes all to one, for both are in order to a journey.

2. Notice shall be given of this salvation, v. 11, 12. It shall be proclaimed to the captives, that they are set at liberty, and may go if they please; it shall be proclaimed to their neighbours, to all about them, to the end of the world, that God has pleaded Zion's just, injured, and despised cause. Let it be said to Zion, for her comfort, Behold, thy salvation comes, thy Saviour, who brings salvation; he will bring such a work, such a reward, in this salvation, as shall be admired by all; a reward of comfort and peace with him; but a work of humiliation and reformation before him, to prepare his people; and it shall be proclaimed to their suffering, and that by reference to each, it follows, they shall be called, The holy people, and, The redeemed of the Lord; the work before him, which shall be wrought in them and upon them, shall denominate them a holy people, cured of their inclination to idolatry, and consecrated to God only; and the reward with him, the deliverance wrought for them, shall deserve that the redeemed of the Lord, so redeemed as none but God could redeem them; and redeemed to be his, his bonds loosed, that they might be his servants. Jerusalem shall then be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken; she had been forsaken for many years, there were neither traders nor worshippers that inquired the way to Jerusalem as formerly, when it was frequented by both; but now God will again make it considerable; it shall be sought out, visited, resettled to, and court made to it, as much as ever. When it is called a holy city, then it is called sought out, for holiness puts an honour and beauty upon any place or person, which draws respect, and makes them to be admired, beloved, and inquired after.

But this, being proclaimed to the end of the world, must have a reference to the gospel of Christ, which was to be preached to every creature; and it speaks, (1.) The glory of Christ. It is published immediately to the church, but is thence echoed to every nation and tribe under heaven; the redeemed of the Lord is not only the Saviour, but the Salvation itself; for the happiness of believers is not only from him, but in him, ch. xii. 2. His salvation consists both in the work and in the reward which he brings with him; for those that are his shall neither be idle, nor lose their labour. (2.) The beauty of the church. Christians shall be called saints, (1 Cor. i. 2) the holy people, and righteous people; they are both made and called to salvation through sanctification; they shall be called the redeemed of the Lord, to him they owe their liberty, and therefore to him they owe their service, and they shall not be ashamed to own both. None are to be called the redeemed of the Lord, but those that are the holy people; the people of God's purchase is a holy nation. And they shall be called, Sought out; God will seek them out, and find them, wherever they are, despised and despised, and they shall seek them out, that they may join themselves to them, and not forsake them. It is good to associate with the holy people, that we may learn their ways, and with the redeemed of the Lord, that we may share in the blessings of the redemption.

CHAP. LXIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. God coming towards his people in ways of mercy and deliverance, and this is to be joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, where it was said to Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; and this is the way in which it comes, v. 1., 6. II. God's people meeting him with their devotions, and addressing themselves to him with suitable affections; and this part of the chapter is carried on to the close of the next. In this, we have, 1. A thankful acknowledgment of the great favours God had bestowed upon them, v. 7. 2. The magnifying of these favours, from the consideration of God's relation to them, (v. 8.) his compassionate concern for them, (v. 9.) their unworthiness, (v. 10.) and the occasion which it gave both him and them to call to mind former mercies, v. 11., 14. 3. A very humble and earnest prayer to God to appear for them in their present distress, pleading God's mercy, (v. 12.) their relation to him, (v. 16.) their desire toward him, (v. 17.) and the insolvency of their enemies, v. 18, 19. So that, upon the whole, we learn to embrace God's promises with an active faith, and then to exercise them, and make use of them, both in prayers and praises.

1. WHO is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fall? 3. I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury: and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. 4. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. 5. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury, it upheld me. 6. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and
make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.

It is a glorious victory that is here inquired into first, and then accounted for: 1. It is a victory obtained by the providence of God over the enemies of Israel; over the Babylonians, whose king Cyrus conquered, and God by him, and they will have the prophet to make the first discovery of him in his triumphant return, when he is in the country of Edom: but this can by no means be admitted, because the country of Babylon is always spoken of as the land of the north, whereas Edom lays south from Jerusalem, so that the conqueror over the Babylonians must be Edward himself. 2. It is a victory therefore is obtained over the Edomites themselves, who had triumphed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, (Ps. cxxvii. 7.) and cut off those who, making their way as far as they could from the enemy, escaped to the Edomites, (Obad. xii.) and were therefore reckoned with when Babylon was; for, no doubt, that prophecy was accomplished, though we do not meet in history with the accomplishment of it, (Jer. xlix. 13.) 

Huzrah shall become a desolation. Yet this victory over Edom is put as an instance or specimen of the like victories, obtained over other nations that had been enemies to Israel: this over the Edomites is named, for the sake of the old emnity against them, (Gen. xxxvii. 41.) and perhaps it has the same general application, as that over the Edomites, by which it should seem, more than by any of his other victories, he got him a name, Ps. ix. title, 2 Sam. viii. 13. 14. But this is not all; 2. It is a victory obtained by the grace of God in Christ over our spiritual enemies; we find the garments dipped in blood adorning him whose name is called The Word of God, Rev. xix. 13. 14. by which it is shown that he who is the Conqueror, whom we are more than conquerors over those principalities and powers which on the cross he spoiled and triumphed over.

In this representation of the victory, we have, 1. An admirable question put to the Conqueror, v. 1. 2. It is put by the church, or by the prophet in the name of the church. He sees a mighty Hero reclining in the wine-press, makes him an appeal, and makes bold to ask him two questions: 1. Who is he? He observes him to come from the country of Edom, to come in such apparel as was glorious to a soldier, not embroidered or laced, but besmeared with blood and dirt: he observes him to come as one either frightened or fatigued, but that he travels in the greatness of his strength, altogether unbroken. 

Triumphant and victorious he appears, And honour in his locks and habit wears: How strong he treads, how stately doth he go! Pompous and solemn is his pace, And full of majesty, his face: Who is this mighty hero—who? 

Mr. Nornie.

The question, Who is this? perhaps means the same with that which Joshua put to the same Person, when he appeared to him with his sword drawn! (Josh. v. 14.) Art thou for us or for our adversaries? Or rather, the same with that which Israel put in a way of adoration, (Exod. xvi. 11.) Who is a God like unto thee? 2. The other question is, Wherefore art thou red in thin apparel? What hard service hast thou been engaged in, that thou carriest with thee these marks of toil and danger? Is it possible that one who has such majesty and terror in Israel; over whom he should be employed in the mean and servile work of treading the wine-press? Surely it is not. That which is really the glory of the Redeemer seems prima facie—at first, a disparagement to him, as it would be to a mighty prince to do the work of the vine-dressers and husbandmen; for he took upon him the form of a servant, and carried with him the marks of servitude.

1. An admirable answer returned by him: 1. He tells who he is: I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. He is the Saviour. God was Israel's Saviour out of the hand of their oppressors; the Lord Jesus is ours; his name, Jesus, signifies a Saviour, for he saves his people from their sins. In the salvation of himself, he tells us to take notice, (1.) Of the truth of his promise, which is therein performed; he speaks in righteousness, and will therefore make good every word that he has spoken, with which he will have us to compare what he does; that, setting the word and the work the one over against the other, what he does may ratify what he has said, and fill up what he did. (2.) Of the efficacy of his power, which is therein exerted; he is mighty to save, able to bring about the promised redemption, whatever difficulties and oppositions may lie in the way of it. To I who to my promise faithful stand, I, who the powers of death, hell, and the grave, Have bold with this all-conquering hand, I, who most ready am, and mighty too, to save. 

Mr. Nornie.

2. He tells how he came to appear in this lude; (v. 5.) I have trodden the wine-press alone. Being compared to one that treads in the wine-fruit, such is his condensation, in the midst of his triumphs, that he does not seem the comparison, but admits it, and carries it on. He does indeed tread the wine-press, but it is the great wine-press of the salvation of God, (Rev. xiv. 19.) out of which we have just seen what wonders death, have been cast; but Christ was pleased to cast our enemies into it, and to destroy him that had the power of death, that he might deliver us. And of this, the bloody work which God sometimes made among the enemies of the Jews, and which is here foretold, was a type and figure. 

Observe the account the Conqueror gives of his victory. (1.) He gains the victory purely by his own strength; I have trodden the wine-press alone, v. 3. When God delivered his people, and destroyed their enemies, if he made use of instruments, he did not use them; but among his people, for whom the salvation was to be wrought, no assistance offered itself; they were weak, and helpless, and had no ability to do anything for themselves; they were desponding and listless, and had no heart to do any thing; they were not disposed to give the last stroke or struggle for liberty; neither the captives themselves, nor any of their friends for them; (v. 5.) I looked, and there was none to help, as one would have expected, nothing of a bold, active spirit appeared among them; nay, there were not only none to lead, but, which was more strange, there was none to uphold, none that would come in as a second, that had the courage to join with Cyrus against their oppressors; therefore mine arm brought about the salvation; not by created might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, my own arm. Note, God can help, when all other helpers fail; only, that is his time to help, and therefore for that very reason he will put forth his own strength, and triumph more gloriously. But this is most fully applicable to Christ's victories over our spiritual enemies, which he obtained by single combat. He trod the wine-press of his Father's wrath alone, and triumphed over principalities and powers in himself, Col. ii. 15. Of the people there was none with him; for when he had trodden the wine-press in the garment of his own darkness, all his disciples forsook him, and fled. There was none to help, none that could, none that durst; and he might well wonder not only that among the children of men, whose concern it was, there was not only none to uphold, but that there were so many to oppose and hinder it if they could. (2.) He undertakes the war purely out of his own
zeal; it is in his anger, it is in his fury, that he treads down his enemies, (v. 3) and that fury uphold him, and carries him on in this enterprise, v. 5.

God wrought salvation for the oppressed Jews, entirely because he was very angry with the oppressing Babylonians, angry at their idolatries and sorceries, their pride, avarice, and cruelty, and the injuries they did to his people; in which, as they increased and grew more insolent and outrageous, his anger increased to fury. Our Lord Jesus wrought out our redemption, in a holy zeal for the honour of his Father, the happiness of mankind, and a holy indignation at the daring attempts Satan had made upon both; this zeal and indignation upheld him throughout all his whole undertaking.

Two branches there were of this zeal, that animated him:

[1.] He had a zeal against his and his people's enemies; The day of vengeance is in my heart, (v. 4.) the day fixed in the eternal counsels for taking vengeance on them; this was written in his heart, so that he could not forget it, could not let it slip; his heart was full of it, and it lay as a charge, as a weight, upon him, which made him push on this holy war with so much vigour. Note, There is a day fixed for divine vengeance, which may be long deferred, but will come at last; and we may be content to wait for it, for the Redeemer himself does, though his heart is upon it.

[2.] He had a zeal for his people, and for all that he loved among men in the intended salvation; “The year of my redeemed is come, the year appointed for their redemption.” The year was fixed for the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, and God kept time to a day; (Exod. xxi. 4.) so there was for their release out of Babylon; (Dan. ix. 2.) so there was for Christ's coming to destroy the works of the devil; so there is for all the deliverances of the church; there is an eye to it. Observe, First, With what pleasure he speaks of his people; they are his redeemed; they are his own, dear to him. Though their redemption is not yet wrought out, yet he calls them his redeemed, because it shall as surely be done as if it were done already. Secondly, With what pleasure he speaks of his people's redemption; how glad he is that the time is come, though he is likely to meet with a sharp opposition. When the year of my redemption came, Lo, I come; delay shall be no longer. Now will I arise, saith the Lord. Now thou shalt see what I will do to Pharaoh. Note, The promised salvation must be patiently waited for, till the time appointed comes; yet we must attend the promises with our prayers. Does Christ say, Surely I come quickly; let our hearts reply, Even so, come; let the year of the redeemed come.

(3.) He will obtain a complete victory over them all.

[1.] Much is already done; for he now appears red in his apparel; such abundance of blood is shed, that the Conqueror's garments are all stained with it. This was predicted, long before, by dying Jacob, concerning Shiloh, that is, Christ, that he should wash his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of the grapes, which perhaps this alludes to, Gen. xlix. 11.

With ornamented drops here, I stood, And wet my vesture with my enemy's blood. Mr. Norris.

In the destruction of the antichristian powers we meet with abundance of bloodshed, (Rev. xiv. 20. —six. 13.) which yet, according to the dialect of prophecy, may be understood spiritually, and doubtless so may this here.

[2.] More shall yet be done; (v. 6.) I will tread down the people, that yet stand set against me, in my anger, for the victorious Redeemer, when the year of the Redeemer is come, will go on conquering and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2. When he begins, he will also make an end. Observe, How he will complete his victories over the enemies of his church First, He will infatuate them; he will make them drunk, so that there shall be neither sense nor steadiness in their counsels; they shall drink of the cup of his fury, and that shall intoxicate them; or, we will make them drunk with their own blood, Rev. xvii. 6. Let those that make themselves drunk with the cup of riot, (and then they are in their fury,) repent and reform, lest God make them drunk with the cup of his fury. Secondly, He will enfeebles them; he will bring down their strength, and so bring them down to the earth; for what strength can hold out against Omni power?

7. I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and accordingly to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses.

8. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. 9. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them: and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them. 11. Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him? 12. That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? 13. That led them through the deep, as a horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? 14. As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest; so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.

The prophet is here, in the name of the church, taking a review, and making a thankful recognition, of God's dealings with his church all along, ever since he founded it, before he comes, in the latter end of this chapter, and in the next, as a watchman upon the walls, earnestly to pray for God's compassion toward her in her present deplorable state; and it was usual for God's people, in their prayers, thus to look back.

I. Here is a general acknowledgment of God's goodness to them all along, v. 7. It was said, in general, of God's prophets and people, (ch. xxiii. 6.) that they make mention of the Lord; now here we are told what it is that God, that they do especially mention of, and that is, his goodness, which the prophet here so makes mention of, as if he thought he could never say enough of it.

He mentions the kindness of God, (which never appeared so evident, so eminent, as in his love to mankind in sending his Son to save us,) Tit. iii. 4.) his loving-kindness, kindness that shows itself -
ISAIAH, LXXXI.

The 295
of his loving-kindnesses, they are 2 more in number than the sand. With his loving-kindnesses he mentions his praises; the thankful acknowledgments which the saints make of his loving-kindness, and the angels too. It must be mentioned to the Lord, for a trial of his love is known by all his creatures in consideration of his loving-kindness. See how copiously he speaks, 1. Of the goodness that is from God, the gifts of his loving-kindness; all that the Lord has bestowed on us in particular, relating to life and godliness, in our personal and family capacity; let every man speak for himself, speak as he has found, and he must know that he has had a great deal bestowed upon him by the divine bounty. But we must also mention the favours bestowed upon his church, his great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he has bestowed on them. Note, We must bless God for the mercies enjoyed by others, as well as for those enjoyed by ourselves, and reckon that bestowed on ourselves, which is bestowed on the house of Israel. 2. Of the goodness that is in God. God does good because he is good; what he bestows upon us, must be run up to the original, it is according to his mercies, not according to our merits, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses, which can never be spent. Thus we should magnify God's goodness, and speak honourably of it, not only when we plead it, (as David, Ps. liii. 3.) but also when we are tried and afflicted, Ps. liii. 4.

II. Here is particular notice taken of the steps of God's mercy to Israel, ever since it was formed into a nation.

1. The expectations God had concerning them, that they would conduct themselves well, v. 8. When he brought them out of Egypt and took them into covenant with himself, he said, "Surely they are my people, I take them as such, and am willing to hope they will approve themselves so; children that will not lie;" that will not dissemble with God in their covenants with him, nor treacherously depart from him by breaking their covenant, and starting aside like a broken bow. They said, more than once, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient; and thereupon he took them to be his own people, saying, Surely they will not lie. God deals fairly and faithfully with them, and therefore expects they should deal so with him. They are children of the covenant, (Acts iii. 25.) children of those that clave unto the Lord, and therefore it may be hoped that they will tread in the steps of their father's constancy. Note, God's people are children that will not lie; for those that will, are not his children, but the devil's.

2. The favour he showed them, with an eye to these expectations; So was he their Saviour out of the bondage of Egypt, and all the calamities of their wilderness-state, and many a time since he had been their Saviour. See particularly, (v. 9.) what he did for them as their Saviour.

(1.) The principle that moved him to work salvation for them; it was in his love, and in his pity, out of mere compassion to them, and a tender affection for them, not because he either needed them, or could be benefited by them. This is strangely expressed here, In all their affliction he was afflicted; not that the Eternal Mind is capable of grieving, or God's infinite blessedness of suffering the least damage or diminution; (God cannot be afflicted.) but thus he is pleased to show forth the love and concern he has for his people in their affliction; thus far he sympathizes with them, that he takes what injury is done to them as done to himself, and will reckon for it accordingly. Their cries move him, (Exod. iii. 7.) and he appears for them as vigorously as if he were pained in their pain; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? This is a matter of great comfort to God's people in their affliction, that God is so far from afflicting willingly, (Lam. iii. 33.) that, if they humble themselves under his hand, he is afflicted in their affliction, as the tender parents are in the severe operations which the case of a sick child calls for. This is the sense of the words in the original; In all their affliction there was no affliction; though they were in great affliction, yet the property of it was so altered by the grace of God sanctifying it to them for their good, the rigour of it was so mitigated, and it was so alloyed and balanced with mercies, they were so wonderfully supported and comforted under it, and it proved so short, and ended so well, that it was in effect no affliction. The troubles of the saints are not that to them that they are to others, they are not afflictions, but medicines; saints are enabled to call them light, and but for a moment, and, with an eye to heaven as all in all, to make nothing of them.

(2.) The Person employed in their salvation; the angel of his face, or presence. Some understand it as the angel created angels; the highest angel in heaven, even the angel of his presence, that attends next the throne of his glory, is not thought too great, too good, to be sent on this errand. Thus the little ones' angels are said to be those that always behold the face of our Father, Matt. xviii. 10. But this is rather to be understood of Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, that Angel of whom God spake to Moses, (Exod. xxxii. 32.) Whose yoke Israel was to obey. He is called Jehovah, Exod. xiii. 21.—xiv. 21, 24. He is the Angel of the covenant, God's Messenger to the world, Mal. iii. 1. He is the Angel of God's face, for he is the express Image of his person; and the glory of God shines in the face of Christ. He that was to work out the external salvation, as an earnest of that, wrought out the temporal salvations that were typical of it.

(3.) The progress and perseverance of this favour. He not only redeemed them out of their bondage, but bare them, and carried them, all the days of old; they were weak, but he supported them by his power, sustained them by his bounty; when they were burdened, and ready to sink, he bore them up, and carried them through the wars they made upon the nations, he stood by them, and bore with them, and they are called the mild, peevish, sorely-thirsty, and weary, and bore with them, and suffered their manners, Acts xviii. 18. He carried them, as the nursing father does the child, though they would have tired any arms but his; he carried them as the eagle her young upon her wings, Deut. xxxiii. xi. And it was a long time that he was troubled with them, (if we may so speak,) it was all the days of old; his care of them was not at an end, even when they were grown up, and settled in Canaan. All this was in his love and pity, ex mero motu—of his mere good-will; he loved them because he would love them, as he says, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

3. Their disingenuous conduct toward him, and the trouble they thereby brought upon themselves; (v. 10.) But they rebelled. Things looked very hopeful and promising; one would have thought that they should have continued dutiful children to God, and then there was no doubt but he would have continued a gracious Father to them; but here is a sad change on both sides, and on them the breach.

(1.) They revolted from their allegiance to God, and took his arms against him; they rebelled, and were rebuked. Things looked very encouraging, beside the iniquity of the golden calf; and this had been their way and manner ever since. Though he was ready to say of them, They will not lie, though he had done so much for them, borne
ISAIAH, LXXXIII.

them and carried them, yet they thus ill requited
him, like foolish people and unwise, Deut. xxxii. 6.
This grieved him, Ps. xxxv. 10. The ungrateful
rebellions of God's children against him are a vexa-
tion to His Holy Spirit. (2.) Thereupon he justly and
done them out of their good place, and made
war upon them, as a prince justly warring upon
rebellions. He who had been so much their Friend,
was turned to be their Enemy, and fought against
them, by one judgment after another, both in the
wilderness, and after their settlement in Canaan.
See the malignity and mischiefness of sin; it
makes God an Enemy, even to those for whom he
had done them out of the good place, and makes
him angry, who was still love and pity. Sins like
consumers; they willfully leave him for a Friend, who is
the most desirable Friend, and make him their
Enemy, who is the most formidable Enemy. This
refers especially to those calamities that were of
late brought upon them by their captivity in Babylon,
for their idolatries, and other sins. That which is
both the original, and the great aggravation of their
troubles, was, that God was turned to be their
Enemy.

4. A particular reflection made, on this occasion,
upon what God did for them, when he first formed
them into a people; Then he remembered the days
of old, v. 11. This may be understood either, (1.)
Of the people. Israel then (spoken of as a single
person) remembered the days of old, looked into
this people, and resolved to do very well by them,
and considered it more closely than ever they did before, and reasoned upon it, as Gideon
did; (Judg. vi. 13.) "Where are all the wonders that
our fathers told us of? Where is he that brought
them up out of Egypt? Is he not as able to bring us
up out of Babylon! Where is the Lord God of
Eliah? Where is the Lord God of our fathers?"
This they consider as an inducement and an
encouragement to them to repent, and return to him:
their fathers were a provoking people, and yet found
him a pardoning God; and why not they find
him so, if they return to him? They also use it as a
plea with God in prayer for the turning again of their
captivity, like that ch. li. 9, 10. Note. When
the present days are dark and cloudy, it is good to
reflect on the days of old, to recollect our
ancestors' experiences of the divine power and good-
ness, and make use of them: to look back upon the
years of the right hand of the Most High, (Ps.
Ixxvii. 5, 10.) and remember that he is God, and
changes not. Or, (2.) We may understand it of
God; he put himself in mind of the days of old, of
his covenant with Abraham; ( Lev. xxvi. 42.) he said,
"Where is he that brought Israel up out of the
sea? Stirring up himself to come and save them,
with this consideration, "Why should not I appear
for them now as I did for their fathers, who were as
underserving, as ill-deserving, as they are?" See
how far off divine mercy will go, how far back it will
look, to find out a reason for doing good to his
people, when no present considerations appear but
what is adverse against them. Note, it makes that a
reason for redivating them, which might have been
used as a reason for abandoning them. He might
have said, "I have delivered them formerly, but
they have again brought trouble upon themselves,
(Prov. xix. 19.) therefore I will deliver them no
more," Judg. x. 13. But no; mercy rejoices against
government; and turns the argument the other way
they have formerly delivered them, and therefore
will now."" Which way soever we take it, whether the people
please it with God, or God with himself, let us view
the particulars; they agree very much with the
confession and prayer which the children of
captivity made upon a solemn fast-day, (N. xii. 5,
sec.) which may serve as a comment on these verses
here, which call to mind Moses and his people; that is,
what God did by Moses for his people, especially
in bringing them through the Red sea; for that is it
that is here most insisted on; for it was a work
which he much gloried in, and which his people
considered of great importance, naturally more
encourage themselves with the remembrance of it.

[1.] God led them by the right hand of Moses,
( v. 12.) and the wonder-working rod in his hand;
(Ps. lxxvii. 20.) Thou leddest they people like a flock
by the hand of Moses. It was not Moses that led
them, any more than it was Moses that fed them,
(John vi. 52.) but God led Moses; for it was he that
employed Moses, and Moses did not invent it, and
employed him, that great undertaking. Moses is
here called the shepherd of his flock; God was the
Owner of the flock, and the chief Shepherd of
Israel; (Ps. lxxx. 1.) but Moses was a shepherd
under him; and he was inured to labour and pa-
tience, and so fitted for this pastoral care, by his
being trained up to keep the flock of his father
Jethro. Herein he was a type of Christ the good
Shepherd, that lays down his life for the sheep;
which was more than Moses did for Israel, though
he did a great deal for them.

[2.] He put his holy Spirit within him; the Spirit
of God was among them, and not only his provi-
dence, but his grace, did work for them; (Neh. ix.
20.) Thou gavest thy good Spirit to instruct them.
This was the Spirit of prophecy, was put into Moses,
to qualify him for that service among them, to which he
was called; and some of his spirit was put upon
the seventy elders, Numb. xi. 17. This was a great
blessing to Israel, that they had among them not
only inspired writings, but inspired men.

[3.] He carried them safely through the Red sea,
and therefore saved them out of the hands of Egypt,
First, He divided the water before them, ( v. 12.)
so that it gave them not only passage, but protection,
not only opened them a lane, but erected them a
wall on either side. Secondly, He led them through
the deep as a horse in the wilderness, or in the plain;
(v. 13.) they and their wives and children, with all
their luggage, went as easily and readily through
the bottom of the sea, though we may suppose it
muddy or stony, or both, as a horse goes along upon
even ground; so that they did not stumble, though
it was an untridden path, which neither they nor any
one else ever went before. If God make us a way,
he will make it plain and level; the road he opens
to his people he will lead them in. Thirdly, To
complete the mercy, he brought them up out of the
sea, v. 11. Though the ascent, it is likely, was
very steep, dirty, slippery, and unapproachable, (at
least by the women and children, and the men, con-
 sidering how they were loaded, (Exod. xii. 34.)
how fatigued,) yet God by his power brought them
up from the depths of the earth; and it was a kind
of resurrection to them; it was as life from the
dead. [4.] He brought them safe to a place of rest; As
a beast goeth down into the cleft of the rock to
rest, and is safe, so the Spirit of the Lord caused him
to rest. Many a time in their march through the
wilderness they had resting-places provided for them, by
the direction of the Spirit of the Lord in Messes, v. 11.
And at length they were made to rest finally in Ca-
nan, and the Spirit of the Lord gave them that
rest according to the promise. It is by the Spirit
of the Lord that God's Israel are at length called to
return to God, and impose in him as their Rest.

[5.] All this he did for them by his own power,
for his own praise. First, It was by his own power,
as the God of nature, that has all the powers of
nature at his command: he did it with his glorious
arm; the arm of his gallantry, or bravery; so the
wield signifies. It was not Moses's rod, but God's glorious arm, that did it. Secondly, It was for his own praise; to make himself an everlasting name, (v. 12.) a glorious name, (v. 14.) that he might be glorified, everlastingly glorified, upon this account. This is that which God is doing in the world with his glorious arm, he is making to himself a glorious name, and it shall last to endless ages, when the most celebrated names of the great ones of the earth shall be written in the dust.

13. Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? are they restrained? 16 Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting. 17 O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear? Return for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. 18 The people of thy holiness have possessed it, but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. 19 We are thine: thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by thy name.

The foregoing praises were intended as an introduction to this prayer, which is continued to the end of the next chapter, and it is an affectionate, importunate, pleading prayer. It is calculated for the time of the captivity. As they had promises, so they had prayers, prepared for them against that time of need; that they might take with them words in turning to the Lord, and say unto him what he himself taught them to say, in which they might the better hope to prevail, the words being of God's own inventing. Some good interpreters think this prayer looks further, and that it speaks the complaints of the Jews under their last and final rejection from God, and destruction by the Romans; for the same prayer is fulminated by the Prophet, in which there is applied to the grace of the gospel by the apostle, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) that grace for the rejecting of which they were rejected. In these verses, we may observe,

I. The petitions they put up to God. 1. That he would take cognizance of their case, and of the desires of their souls toward him; Look down from heaven, and behold. They know very well that God sees all, but they pray that he would regard them, would condescend to favour them, would look upon them with an eye of compassion and concern, as he looked upon the affliction of his people in Egypt, when he was about to appear for their deliverance. In begging that he would only look down upon them and behold them, they do in effect appeal to his presence in a wilderness, and pray judgment against them, as Jehoshaphat; (2 Chron. xx. 11, 12.) Behold, how they reward us. Wilt thou not judge them? and they refer themselves to his mercy and wisdom, as to the way in which he will relieve them; (Ps. xxv. 18.) Look upon mine affliction and my pain. Look down from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory; for thy holiness is his glory. Heaven is his habitation, the throne of his glory, where he most manifests his glory, and whence he is said to look down upon this earth, Ps. xxxiii. 14. His holiness is in a special manner celebrated there by the blessed angels; (ch. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8.) there his holy ones attend him, and are continually about him; so that it is the habitation of his holiness, which is an everglorious temple to an ever-impressing people, (who desire to be holy as he is holy,) that he doth in all his holy place. 2. That he would take a course for their relief; (v. 17.) Return; change thy way towards us, and proceed not in thy controversy with us: return in mercy, and let us have not only a gracious look toward us, but thy gracious presence with us." God's people dread nothing more than his departures from them, and desire nothing more than his returns to them.

II. The complaints they made to God. Two things they complain of: 1. That they were given up to themselves, and God's grace did not recover them, v. 17. It is a strange expostulation, *Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways; many among us, the generality of us; and this complaint we have all of us some cause to make, that thou hast hardened our heart from thy fear." Some make it to be the language of those among them, that were impious and profane; when the prophets reproved them for the error of their ways, their hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments, they with a daring impudence, instead of coming and confessing their guilt before God, as the Author of it; and why doth he then find fault? Some are wicked indeed, that lay the blame of their wickedness upon God. But I rather take it to be the language of those among them, that lamented the unbelief and impenitence of their people, not accusing God of being the Author of them, but complaining of them to him. They own that they had erred from God's ways, and hardened their hearts; and from his fear, that they had not received the impressions which the fear of God ought to make upon them; and this was the cause of all their errors from their ways; or, from his fear; from the true worship of God; and that is a hard heart in deed, which is alienated from the service of a God so incontestably great and good. Now this they complained of as their great misery and burthen, that God had for their sins left them to this; had permitted them to err from his ways, and had justly withheld his grace, so that their hearts were hardened from his fear. When they ask, Why hast thou done this? it is not as charging him with wrong, but lamenting it as a sore judgment. God has put a mark upon his people, (by withdrawing his Spirit from them,) for it is not only by withdrawing his Spirit from them, because they had grieved, and vexed, and quenched him, (v. 10.) but by a judicial sentence upon them, (Go, make the heart of this people fat, ch. vi. 9, 16.) and by his providences concerning them, which had proved sad occasions of their departure from him. David complains of his banishment, that in it he was in effect driven to go serve other gods, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. Their troubles had alienated many of them from God, and prejudiced them against his service; and because the rod of the wicked had lain long on their lot, they were ready to put forth their hand unto iniquity, (Ps. cxv. 3.) and this was the thing they complained most of; their afflictions were their temptations, and to many of them invisible ones. So, Convinced by others complain most of spiritual judgments, and dread that most in affliction, which draws them from God and duty.

2. That they were given up to their enemies, and God's providence did not rescue and relieve them; (v. 18.) Our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary. As it was a grief to them, that in their captivity the generality of them had lost their relations to God's worship, and had their hearts hardened from it by their affliction; so it was a further grief, that they were deprived of their opportunities of worshipping God in solemn assemblies. They complained not so much of their adversaries.
treading down their houses and cities, as of their treading down God's sanctuary; because thereby God was immediately affronted, and they were robbed of the comforts they valued most, and took most pleasure in.

III. The pleas they urge with God for mercy and deliverance:

1. They plead the tender compassion God used to show to his people, and his ability and readiness to appear for them, v. 15. The most prevailing arguments in prayer are those that are taken from God himself; such these are: Where is thy zeal and thy strength? God has a zeal for his own glory, and for the comfort of his people; his name is Jealous, and he is a jealous God; and he has strength, proportionable, to secure his own glory, and the interests of his people, in defiance of all opposition. Now where are these? Have they not formerly appeared? Why do they not appear now? It cannot be, that divine zeal, which is infinitely wise and just, should be cooled; that divine strength, which is infinite, should be weakened. Nay, his people had experienced not only his zeal and his strength, but the sounding of his bowels, the yearning of his heart to such a degree of compassion to them as in men causes commotion and toss within them, as Hos. xi. 8. My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together; and Jer. xxxi. 20. My bowels are troubled, or sound, for him. Thus God is affected toward his people, thus he expresses a multitude of mercies toward them; but where are they now? Are they restrained? Ps. lxxvii. 9. Has God who in so often remembered to be gracious, now forgotten it? Has he begun to show himself too hard a Master toward his people? Can he grant his mercies? It can never be. Note, We may ground good expectations of further mercy upon our experiences of former mercy.

2. They plead God's relation to them as their Father; (v. 16.) "Thy tender mercies are not restrained, for they are the tender mercies of a father, who, though he may be for a time displeased with his child, will yet, through the force of natural affection, soon be reconciled. Doubtless thou art our Father, and therefore thy bowels will yearn toward us." Such good thoughts of God as these we should always keep up in our hearts. However it be, yet God is good; for he is our Father. (1.) They own themselves fatherless, if he be not their Father, and so cast themselves upon him with whom the Father is; and yet with them, as his children, he is the honour of their nation, that they had Abraham to their father, (Matth. iii. 9.) who was the friend of God, and Israel, who was a prince with God; but what the better were they for that, unless they had God himself for their Father? "Abraham and Israel cannot help us; they have not the power that God has, they are dead long since, and are ignorant of us, and acknowledge us not; they know not what our case is, nor what our wants are, and therefore know not which way to do us a kindness. If Abraham and Israel were alive with us, they would intercede for us, and advise us; but they are gone to the other world, and we know not that they have any communication at all with this world, and therefore they are not capable of doing us any kindness, any further than they have done their fathers in the olden time, for their children." When the father is dead, his sons come to honour, and he knows it not; (Job xiv. 21.) but thou, O Lord, art our Father still. The fathers of our flesh may call themselves ever-loving, but they are not ever-living; it is God only that is the immortal Father, that always knows us, and is not subject to forgetfulness. Our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name, the name by which we know and own thee; it is the name by which from old thou hast been known; thy people have always looked upon thee as the God to whom they might appeal to right them, and plead their cause. Nay, (according to the sense some give of this place,) "though Abraham and Israel not only cannot, but would not help us, thou wilt; they have not the pity thou hast. We are so degenerate, and corrupt, that Abraham and Israel would not own us for their children, yet we fly to thee as our Father. Abraham cast out his son Ishmael; Jacob disinherit his son Reuben, and cursed Simeon and Levi; but not so Father! When in pardoning sin, is God, and not man," Hos. xi. 9.

3. They plead God's interest in them, that he was their Lord, their Owner and Proprietor; "We are thy servants; what service we can do, thou art entitled to, and therefore we ought not to serve strange kings and strange gods; return for thy servants' sakes." As a father finds himself obliged by natural affection to relieve and protect his child, so a master thinks himself obliged in honour and respect to his Father, and therefore will protect his servant; "We are thine by the strongest engagements, as well as the highest endearments. Thou hast borne rule over us, therefore, Lord, assert thine own interest, maintain thine own right: for we are called by thy name, and therefore, whether shall we go but to thee, to be righted and protected?" (Ps. cxix. 9; Hos. xi. 11.) We are thine own, own us. We are the tribes of thine inheritance, not only thy servants, but thy tenants; we are thine, not only to do work for thee, but to pay rent to thee. The tribes of Israel are God's inheritance, whence issue the little praise and worship that he receives from this lower world, and wilt thou suffer thine own servants and tenants to be thus abused?" (Jer. xi. 20.)

4. They plead that they had had but a short enjoyment of the land of promise and the privileges of the sanctuary; (v. 18.) The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while. From Abraham to David were but fourteen generations, and from David to the captivity but fourteen more; (Matth. i. 17.) and that was but a little while in comparison with what might have been expected from the promise of the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, (Gen. xvii. 8.) and from the power that was put forth to bring them into that land, and settle them in it; "Though we are the people of thy holiness, distinguished from other people, and consecrated to thee, yet we are soon disdained." But this they might thank themselves for; they were, in profession, the people of God's holiness, but it was not their strength or ability that turned them out of the possession of that land.

5. They plead that those who had, and kept, possession of their land, were such as were strangers to God, such as he had no service or honour from; "Thou never barest rule over them, nor did they ever yield thee any obedience; they were not called by thy name, but professed relation to other gods, and were the worshippers of them that would sacrifice to them; they were forsaking thee, and after their fathers, ye said. "Will God suffer those that stand in no relation to him to trample upon those that do? Some give another reading of this; "We are become as those whom thou didst never hear rule over, nor were called by thy name; we are rejected and abandoned, despised and trampled upon, as if we never had been in thy service, nor had thy name called upon us." Thus the shield of Saul was crossed by his heart; God has been anointed with oil. But the covenant, that seems to be forgotten, shall be remembered again.

CHAP. LXIV.

This chapter goes on with that pathetic pleading prayer, which the church offered up to God in the latter part of the foregoing chapter. The righteousness, and the covenant relation to God and his interest and concern in them; now here, 1. They pray that God would appear in some remarkable and surprising manner for them against his and their enemies, v. 1, 2. Having used what God had formerly done, and was always ready to
do, for his people, v. 3-5. III. They confess themselves to be sinful, and unworthy of God's favour, and that they had deserved the judgments they were now under, v. 6, 7. IV. They refer themselves to the mercy of God as a Father, and commit themselves to his sovereign reigny, v. 8. V. They represent the very deplorable condition they were in, and earnestly pray for the pardon of sin, and the turning away of God's anger, v. 9-12. And this was not only intended for the use of the captive Jews, but may serve for direction to the church in other times of distress, what to ask of God, and how to plead with him. Are God's people at any time'afflicted, in great affliction? Let them pray, let them thus pray.

1. O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; 2. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence! 3. When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. 4. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. 5. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

Here,

1. The petition is, that God would appear wonderfully for them now, v. 1, 2. Their case was represented, in the close of the foregoing chapter, as very sad, and very hard, and in this case it was time to cry, "Help, Lord; O that God would manifest his zeal and his strength!" They had prayed, (ch. Ixiii. 15.) that God would "come down from heaven;" here they pray that he would come down to deliver them, as he had said, Exod. iii. 8.

1. They desire that God would in his providence manifest himself both to them and for them. When God works some extraordinary deliverance for his people, he is said to "shine forth," to show himself strong; so, here, they pray that he would "rend the heavens, and come down" as when he delivered David, he is said to "show the heavens," and come down, (Ps. xlviii. 9.) to display his power, and justice, and goodness, in an extraordinary manner, so that all may take notice of them, and acknowledge them. God's people desire and pray, that, they, themselves having the satisfaction of seeing him, though his way be in the sea, others may be made to see him with their eyes, (Isa. lxiv. 1.) and when God shall appear to the second coming of Christ, when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

2. They desire that he would vanquish all opposition, and that it might be made to give way before him; that the mountains might "flow down at thy presence," that the fire of thy wrath may burn so hot against thine enemies, as even to dissolve the rockiest mountains, and melt them down before it, as metal in the furnace, which is made liquid, and cast into what shape the operator pleases; so the melting fire burns, v. 2. Let things be put into a ferment, in order to a glorious revolution in favour of the church, as the fire causes the waters to boil. There is an allusion here, some think, to the voltae,

noes, or burning mountains, which sometimes send forth such sulphurous streams as make the adjacent rivers and seas to boil, which, perhaps, are left as sensible intimations of the power of God's wrath, and warning-pieces of the final conflagration. 3. They desire that this may tend very much to the glory and honour of God; and make it "thine own" (from, not only to his friends, as they knew it before, and trusted in his power,) but to his adversaries likewise, that they may know it, and tremble at his presence, and may say, with the men of Bethshean, "Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God? Who knows the power of his anger?" Note, Sooner or later, God will make his name known to his adversaries, and make these to "rend his heaven," but he would not come to worship in his presence. God's name, if it be not a strong hold for us, into which we may run and be safe, will be a strong hold against us, out of the reach of which we cannot run and be safe. The day is come, when nations shall be made to tremble at the presence of God, though they were ever so numerous and strong.

II. The plea is, that God had appeared wonderfully for his people formerly; and Thou hast, therefore, Thou wilt, is good arguing at the throne of grace, Ps. x. 17.

1. They plead what he had done for his people Israel in particular, when he brought them out of Egypt, v. 3. He then did terrible things in the plagues of Egypt, which they looked not for; they despaired of deliverance, so far were they from any thought of being delivered with such a high hand and outstretched arm. Then he came down upon mount Sinai in such terror, as made that and the adjacent mountains to "flow down at his presence," to "skit like rams," (Ps. cviii. 4.) to tremble, so that they were scattered, and the perpetual hills were made to be devouring flames. In the many great evolutions God wrought for that people, did he "terrible things which they looked not for," made great men, that seemed as stately and strong as mountains, to fall before him, and great opposition to give way. See Judg. v. 4. 5. Ps. lxviii. 7, 8. Some refer this to the defeat of Sennacherib's powerful army, which was as surprising an instance of the divine power as the melting fire was of God's advantage. In the seven mountains God's power was ravaged, the mountains were cut off, and they were made to flow down; and he that had formed them, in order to their being so cut off, saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."
understand, but God himself, what the provision is, that is made for the present and future felicity of holy souls. For, [1.] Much of it was concealed in former ages; they knew it not, because the unsearchable riches of Christ were hid in God, were hid from the very days and prudence; but in those latter ages, they were revealed by the gospel; so the apostle applies this, (1 Cor. ii. 9.) for it follows, (v. 10.) But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit; compare Rom. xvi. 25, 26, with Eph. iii. 9. That which men had not heard since the beginning of the world, they should hear before the end of it, and at the end of it should see, when the vail shall be rent in the light, that God himself knew what he had in store for believers, but none knew beside him. [2.] It cannot be fully comprehended by human understanding, no, not when it is revealed; it is spiritual, and refined from those ideas which our minds are most apt to receive in this world of sense; it is very great, and will far outdo the utmost of our expectations. Even the present peace of believers, much more their future bliss, is such as passes all conception and expression, Phil. iv. 7. None can comprehend it but God himself, whose understanding is infinite. Some give another reading of these words, referring their transcendency not so much to the work itself as to the Author of it; Neither has the eye seen a god beside Thee with which so, (or has done, or can do, compare Isa. xlii. 6, 7, with xliii. 13.) from the works of wondrous grace, as well as from his works of wondrous power, from the kind things, as well as from the great things, he does, that there is no god like unto him, nor any among the sons of the mighty to be compared with him. [2.] It is very ready; (v. 5.) Thou meetest him that rejoices, and works righteousness; meetest him with a favour full of joy and gladness, (v. 4,) and dost not forget those that remember thee in thy ways.” See here what communion there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul: [1.] What God expects from us, in order to our having communion with him. First, We must make conscience of doing our duty in every thing, we must work righteousness, must do that which is good, and which the Lord our God requires of us, and must do it well. Secondly, We must be cheerful in doing our duty; we must rejoice and work righteousness, must delight ourselves in God and in his law, must be pleasant in his service, and sing at our work. God loves a cheerful giver, a cheerful worshipper; we must serve the Lord with gladness. Thirdly, We must conform ourselves to all the methods of his providence concerning us, and be suitably affected with them; must remember him in his ways, in all the ways wherein he walks, whether he walks towards us, or walks contrary to us; we must mind him, and make mention of him, with thanksgiving, when his ways are ways of mercy, for in a day of prosperity we must be joyful, with patience and submission when he contends with us; In the midst of thine enemies we have triumphed for thee; and in a day of adversity we must consider. [2.] We are here told what we must expect from God, if we thus attend him in the way of duty; Thou meetest him. This speaks the friendship, fellowship, and familiarity, to which God admits them; he meets them to converse with them, to manifest himself to them, and to receive their addresses, Luke xvi. 24. This agrees with the tenor of God’s covenant, that if we forsake the law, he will chasten our transgression with a rod, but his loving-kindness he will not utterly take away, his covenant he will not break, (Ps. lxxix. 30, &c.) and by this his people have been many a time saved from ruin, when they were just upon the brink of it; see Ps. lxxix. 38. And by this continuance of the covenant we hope to be saved, for its being an everlasting covenant is all our salvation. Though God has been angry with us for our sins, and justly, yet his anger has endured but for a moment, and has been soon over; but in his favour is life, because in it is continuance; in the ways of his favour he proceeds and perseveres, and on that we depend for our salvation; see ch. lv. 7, 8. It is well for us, that our hopes of salvation are built not upon any merit or sufficiency of our own, (for in that there is no certainty, even Adam in innocency did not abide,) but upon God’s mercies and promises, for in those, we are sure, is continuance.

6. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. 7. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities. 8. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our Potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. 9. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. 10. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. 11. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. 12. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?

As we have the Lamentations of Jeremiah, so here we have the Lamentations of Isaiah; the subject of both is the same—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the sin of Israel that brought that destruction; only with this difference, Isaiah sees it at a distance, and laments it by the Spirit of prophecy, Jeremiah saw it accomplished. In these verses:

1. The people of God in their affliction confess and bewail their sins, thereby justifying God in their afflictions, owning themselves unworthy of his mercy, and thereby both improving their troubles, and preparing for deliverance. Now that they were under divine rebukes for sin, they had nothing to trust but the mere mercy of God and the continuance
of that, for amon, themselves there is none to help, none to uphold, none to stand in the gap and make intercession, for they are all polluted with sin, and their own thoughts are evil, their ways are mis in duty, and therefore unable and unfit to do it. 1. There was a general corruption of manners among them; (v. 6.) We are all as an unclean thing, or, as an unclean person, as one overspread with a leprosy, who was to be shut out of the camp. The body of the people were like one under a ceremonial pollution, who was not admitted into the courts of God's tabernacle; or, like one labouring under some leathsome disease, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, nothing but wounds and bruises, ch. 6. 6. We are all by sin become not only obnoxious to God's justice, but odious to his holiness; for sin is that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and cannot endure to look upon. Even all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; (1.) The best of our persons are so; we are all so corrupt and polluted, that even those among us who pass for righteous men, in comparison with what our fathers were, who rejoiced and wrought righteousness, (v. 5.) are but as filthy rags, fit to be cast to the dung-hill; The best of them is as a brier. (2.) The best of our performances are so; there is not only a general departure from the holiness of God's commandments, but a departure from a people in total neglect; There is none that calls on thy name, none that seeks to thee for grace to reform us, and take away sin, or for mercy to relieve us, and take away the judgments which our sins have brought upon us. Therefore people are so bad, because they do not pray; compare Ps. xiv. 3, 4. They are altogether become filthy, for they call not upon the Lord; (v. 7.) nor do they pray, and we strain among them. (2.) It was very neglectfully performed; if there was here and there one that called on God's name, it was with a great deal of indifference; There is none that stirs up himself to take hold of God. Note, [1.] To pray is to take hold of God, by faith to take hold of the promises, and the declarations God has made of his good-will to us, to precipitate a people to prayer is straining on him as of one who is about to depart from us, earnestly begging of him not to leave us; or of one that is departed, soliciting his return; to take hold of him, as he that wrestles takes hold of him he wrestles with, for the seed of Jacob wrestles with, and so prevail. But when we take hold of God, it is as the dreamer, with his book, took hold of the shore as if he would pull the shore to him, but really it is to pull himself to the shore; so we pray, not to bring God to our mind, but to bring ourselves to his. [2.] Those that would take hold of God in prayer so as to prevail with him, must stir up themselves to do it; all that is within us must be employed in the duty, (and all little enough) our thoughts, intentions, desires, hopes, and prayers. In order hereunto, all that is within us must be bound and summoned into the service; we must stir up the gift that is in us, by an actual consideration of the importance of the work that is before us, and a close application of mind to it; but how can we expect that God should come to us in ways of mercy, when we engage ourselves in nothing that is true, when those that profess to be intercessors are much more in need of them. 2. They acknowledge their afflictions to be the fruit and product of their own sins and God's wrath. 1. They brought their troubles upon themselves by their own folly; We are all as an unclean thing, and therefore we do all fade away as a leaf; (v. 6.) we not only wither and lose our beauty, but we had and did poll. (so the word signifies) as leaves in autumn; our profession of religion withers, and we grow dry and spoilless; our prosperity withers and comes to nothing; we fall to the ground, as despicable and contemptible; and then our iniquities like the wind have taken us away, and hurried us into captivity, as the winds in autumn blow off, and then blow away, the faded, withered leaves, Ps. ii. 3-6. They acknowledge that they are carried away, by the malignant and violent wind of their own iniquity; it withers them, and then removes them. 2. God brought their troubles upon us by his wrath, (v. 7.) Thou hast hid thy face from us; we were displeased with us, and refused to afford us any succour. When they made themselves as an unclean thing, no wonder that God turned his face away from them, as teaching them. Yet this was not all; Thou hast consumed us because of our iniquities. This is the same complaint with that, (Ps. xc. 7, 8.) We are consumed by thine anger; thou hast melted us, so the word is. God had them in the furnace, not to consume them as dross, but to melt them as gold, that they might be refined and new cast. 3. They claim relation to God as their God, and humbly plead it with him, and in consideration of it cheerfully refer themselves to him; (v. 8.) But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; though we have conducted ourselves very undutifully and ungratefully toward thee, yet still we have owned thee as our Father; and though thou hast corrected us, yet thou hast not cast us off foolish and careless ways, and despised and trampled upon us as we are worthy, as our enemies call us, and so as thy Father; to thee therefore we return in our repentance, as the prodigal arose, and came to his father; to thee we apply ourselves by prayer; from whom should we expect relief and succour but from our Father? It is the wrath of a Father that we are under, who will be reconciled, and not keep his anger for ever against us or their Father, 1. By creation, he gave them their being, formed them into a people, shaped them as he pleased; We are the clay; and thou our Potter, therefore we will not quarel with thee, however thou art pleased to deal with us, Jer. xvii. 3. Nay, therefore we will hope that thou wilt deal well with us, that then who madest us will make yourselves born, and formed ourselves. We are all as an unclean thing, but we are all the work of thy hands, therefore do away our uncleanness, that we may be fit for thy use, the use we were made for. We are the work of thy hands, therefore forsake us not, Ps. xxxvi. 8. 2. By covenant; this is pleaded, v. 9. Behold, see, we behoove thee, we are all thy people, all the people thou hast in the world that make open profession and are called thy people, our neighbours look upon us as such, and therefore we what we suffer reflects upon thee; and the relief that our case requires is ex-
ISAIAS, LXV.

We are thy people, and should not a people seek unto their God? ch. viii. 19. We are thine; save us," Ps. cxix. 94. Note, When we are under providential rebukes from God, it is good to keep fast hold of our covenant relation to him.

IV. They are iniquitous with God for the turning away of his anger, and the hardening of their sins; (v. 9.) "Be not wrath very sore, O Lord, though we have deserved that thou shouldst, neither remember iniquity for ever against us." They do not expressly pray for the removal of the judgment they were under, as to that, they refer themselves to God. But, 1. They pray that God would be reconciled to them, and then they can be easy, for "Alas! the quarrel is on our side only." "Be not wrath to extremity, but let thine anger be mitigated by the clemency and compassion of a father." They do not say, Lord rebuke us not, for that may be necessary, but, Not in thine anger, not in thy hot displeasure. It is but in a little wrath that God hides his face. 2. They pray that they may not be dealt with according to the desert of their sin, and that God would remember iniquity for ever against them. So, as they receive the evil of sin, that it deserves to be remembered for ever; and this is that which they deprecate, that consequence of sin, which is for ever.

These make it to appear that they are truly humbled under the hand of God, who are more afraid of the terror of God's wrath and the fatal consequences of their own sin, than of any judgment whatsoever, looking upon these as the sting of death. They lose the charm of heaven a very melancholy representation, or memorial of the melancholy condition they were in, and the ruins they were groaning under.

1. Their own houses were in ruins, v. 10. The cities of Judah were destroyed by the Chaldeans, and the inhabitants of them were carried away, so that there was none to repair them or take any notice of them; which would in a few years make them look like perfect deserts; They holy cities are a wilderness. The cities of Judah are called holy cities, for the people were unto God a kingdom of priests. The cities had synagogues in them, in which God was served; and therefore they lamented the ruins of them, and insisted upon this in pleading with God for them, not so much that they were stately cities, rich in furniture, but that they were holy cities, cities in which God's name was known, professed, and called upon; these cities are a wilderness, the beauty of them is sulldied, they are neither inhabited nor visited, as formerly; They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land, Ps. lxxiv. 8. Nor was it only the lesser cities that were thus left as a wilderness unrequited, but even Zion is a wilderness, the city of David itself lies in ruins, Jerusalem, that was beautiful for situation and the joy of the whole earth, is now deformed, and is become the scorn and scandal of the whole earth; that noble city is a desolation, a heap of rubbish. See what devastations sin brings upon a people; and an external profession of sanctity will be no fence against them; holy cities, if they become wicked cities, will be soonest of all turned into a wilderness.

2. God's house was in ruins, v. 11. This they lament most of all, that the temple was burned with fire; but, as soon as it was built, they were told what their sin would bring it to; (2 Chron. vii. 21.) This house which is high shall be an astonishment. Observe how pathetically they bewail the ruins of the temple; (1.) It was their house, holy house, it was the temple, and the temple was most sumptiously building, but the holiness of it was, in their eye, the greatest beauty of it, and, consequently, the profanation of it was he saddest part of its desolation, and that which grieved them most, that the sacred services which used to be performed there, were discontinued. (2.) It was the place where their fathers praised God with their sacrifices and songs; what pity is it that that should lie in ashes, which had been for so many ages the glory of their nation! It aggravated their iniquity, if the present ruin of the temple was the consequence of their fathers had so often praised God with them. They interest God in the cause, when they plead that it was the house where he had been praised, and put him in mind too of his covenant with their fathers, by taking notice of their fathers praising him. (3.) With it all their pleasant things were laid waste; all their desires and delights, all those things which were employed by them in the service of God, and which were the objects of their highest delight; not only the furniture of the temple, the altars and tables, but especially the sabbaths and new moons, and all their religious feasts, which they used to keep with gladness; their ministers and solemn assemblies, these were all a desolation. Note, God's people reckon their sacred things their most delectable things; rob them of holy ordinances and the means of grace, and you lay waste all their pleasant things.

What have they more? Observe here how God and his people have their interests twisted and interchanged; when they speak of the cities for their own habituation, they call them thy holy cities, for to God they were dedicated; when they speak of the temple wherein God dwelt, they call it our beautiful house, and its furniture our pleasant things, for they had heard too much of the interest of it. If thus we interest God in all our concerns by devoting them to his service, and interest ourselves in all his concerns by laying them near our hearts, we may with satisfaction leave both with him, for he will perfect both.

VI. They conclude with an affectionate expostulation, humbly arguing with God concerning their present desolations; (v. 12.) "Hast thou all these things? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Canst thou see thy temple ruined, and not resent it, not revenge it? Has the jealous God forgotten to be jealous, (Ps. lxxiv. 22.) Arise, O God, plead thine own cause. Lord, thou art insulted, thou art blasphemed; and wilt thou hold thy peace, and take no notice of it? Shall the highest affronts that can be done to heaven, pass thou for these things? Or, Canst thou contain thyself at these things? Hast thou not thine own peace, and will thou afflict us very sore, or afflicst us for ever? It is a sore affliction to good people, to see God's sanctuary laid waste, and nothing done toward the raising of it out of its ruins. But God has said that he will not contend for ever, and therefore his people may depend upon it, that their afflictions shall be neither to extremity, nor to eternity, but light, and for a moment.

CHAP. LXV.

We are now drawing toward the conclusion of this evangelical prophecy, the two last chapters of which direct us to look forward to the new earth, the new world which the gospel-dispensation should bring in, and the separation that should by it be made between the precious and the vile: For judgment saith God to me, I came into this world. And why should it seem absurd that the prophet here should speak of that to which all the prophets bare witness? 1 Pet. l.
The rejection of the Jews, and the calling in of the Gentiles, are often mentioned in the New Testament, as that which was foreseen and foretold by the prophets.

1. I AM sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.

2. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts.

3. A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick;

4. Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and broth of abominable things are in their vessels;

5. Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou.

6. Behold, it is written before me; I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom;

7. Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills: therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.

The apostle Paul (an expositor we may depend upon) has given us the true sense of these verses, and told us what was the event they pointed at, and were fulfilled in, namely, the calling in of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, by the preaching of the gospel, Rom. x. 20, 21. And he observes, that herein Esaias is very bold, not only in foretelling a thing so improbable ever to be brought about, but in foretelling it to the Jews, who would take it as a gross affront to their nation, and therein Moses's words would be made good. (Deut. xxxii.

1. I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are not a people.

2. It is here foretold that the Gentiles, who had been afar off, should be made nigh. read it thus, I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not for me. Observe what a wonderful and blessed change was made with them, and how they were surprised into it. 1. Those who had long been without God in the world, shall now be set a-seeking him; those who had not said, Where is God my Maker? shall now begin to inquire after him: neither they nor their fathers had called upon his name, but either lived without prayer, or prayed to stocks and stones, the work of men's hands. But now they shall be baptized, and call on the name of the Lord, Acts ii. 21. With what pleasure does the great God here speak of his being sought unto, and how does he glory in it; especially by those who in time past had not asked for him! For there is joy in heaven over greater sinners who repent.

2. God shall prevent their prayers with his blessings; I am found of them that sought me not. This happy acquaintance and correspondence between God and the Gentile world began on his side; they came to know God because they knew him, (Acts xiv. 16,) no sooner, but find him because they were first sought and found of him. Though in after-communion God is found of those that seek him, (Prov. vii. 17,) yet in the first conversion he is found of those that seek him not; for therefore we love him, because he first loved us.

The design of the bounty of common grace (or evidence to Jews, was not that they might seek the Lord, if haply they should find him, Acts xix. 27. But they sought him not, still he was to them an unknown God, and yet God was found of them. 3. God gave the advantages of a divine revelation to them who had never made a profession of religion; I said, Behold me, behold me, gave them a sight of me, and invited them to take the comfort and benefit of it, when they were not called by my name, as the Jews for many ages had not been.

When the apostles went about from place to place, preaching the gospel, this was the substance of what they preached: Behold God, behold him, turn toward him, fix the eyes of your minds upon him, acquaint yourselves with him, admire him, adore him; look off your idols that you have made, and look up to him. These things Christ in them said, Behold me, behold me with an eye of faith; look unto me and be ye saved. And this was said to those that had long been lo-ammi, and fo-ruhamah, (Hos. i. 8, 9,) not a people, and that had not obtained mercy, Rom. ix. 25, 26.

1. It is here foretold that the Jews, who had long been a people near to God, should be cast off and set at a distance from him. The Lord saith; it should be in the Jews in his time, as a seed of evil-doers; (Rom. xvi.) But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. Where observe, 1. How the Jews were contoured to the divine grace. God himself, by his prophets, by his Son, by his apostles, stretched forth his hand unto them, as Wisdom did, Prov. i. 24. God spredeth out his hands, spreading and expostulating with them; not only beckoning to them with the finger, but spreadeth out his hands, as being ready to embrace and entertain them; reaching forth the tokens of his favour to them, and importing them to accept of them. When Christ was crucified, his hands were spread forth and stretched forth, as if he were preparing to receive returning sinners into his bosom; and this all the day, all the gospel-day; he waited to be gracious, and was not weary of waiting; even those that came in at the eleventh hour of the day were not rejected.

2. How they contemned the invitation; it was given to a rebellious and gainsaying people; they were bidden to the wedding supper, and would not come, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Now observe, 1. The bad character of this people: the world shall see that it is not for nothing that they are rejected of God; no, it is for their whoredoms that they are put away. Their character in general is such as one would not expect them to deserve, who had been so much the favourites of Heaven. [1. They were very wifely; they did not do as they had a mind. "They generally walk on in a way that is not good, not the right way, not a safe way, for they walk after their own thoughts, their own devices and desires." If our guide be our own thoughts, our way is not likely to be good; for
every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil. God had told them his thoughts, what his mind and will were, but they would walk after their own thoughts, would do what they thought best. [2.] They were very provoking! this was God's complaint of them all along—they grieved him, they vexed him, and they contrived to make him their Enemy. They provoke me to anger continually to my face. They cared not what affliction they gave to God, though it were in his sight and presence, in a downright contempt of his authority, and defiance of his justice; and this continually; it had been their way and manner ever since they were a people; witness the day of temptation in the wilderness, and more particularly of their iniquities, and the iniquities of their fathers, as the ground of God's casting them off, v. 7. Now he gives instances of both.

First, The most provoking iniquity of their fathers was, idolatry; this, the prophet tells them, was provoking God to his face; and it is an iniquity which, as appears by the second commandment, God takes a particular notice of. 1. They forsook God's temple, and sacrificed in gardens or groves, that they might have the satisfaction of doing it in their own way, for they liked not God's institutions. 2. They forsook God's altar, and burned incense upon bricks, altars of their own contriving; they burned incense according to their own inventions, which were of no value, in comparison with God's institution, than an altar of bricks in comparison with the golden altar which God appointed them to burn incense on: or upon tiles, some read it; such as they covered their flat-roofed houses with, and on them sometimes they burned incense to their idols, as appears, 2 Kings xxi. 12, where we read of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Azaz, and Jer. xix. 13, of their burning incense to the god Molech. 3. They use necromancy, or consulting with the dead, and, in order to that, they remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, to seek for the living to the dead, (ch. viii. 19.) as the witch of Enaor. Or, They used to consult the evil spirits that haunted the sepulchres. 4. They violated the laws of God about their meat, and broke through the distinction between clean and unclean, before it was taken away by the gospel. They ate swine's flesh; some indeed chose rather to die than to do it, as Eleazer and the seven brethren in the story of the Maccabees. But it is probable that many ate of it, especially when it came to be a condition of life. In our Saviour's time, we read of a vast herd of swine among them, which gives us cause to suspect that there were many then who, as if they would continue the law as to eat, swine's flesh, for which they were justly punished in the destruction of the swine. And the broth, or pieces, of other forbidden meats, called here abominable things, was in their vessels, and made use of for food. The forbidden meat is called an abomination, and they that meddle with it are said to make themselves abominable, Lev. xi. 44. Those that durst not only to make use of it, but to meddle with it, they would come as near as might be to that which was forbidden, to show how they coveted the forbidden fruit. Perhaps this is here put figuratively for all forbidden pleasures and profits which are obtained by sin, that abominable thing which the Lord hates; they loved to be dallying with it, to be casting of its broth. But those who thus take a pride in venturing upon the borders of sin, and the brink of it, are in danger of falling into the depths of it. But

Secondly, The most provoking iniquity of the Jews in our Saviour's time, was, their pride and hypocrisy, that sin of the scribes and Pharisees, against which Christ denounced so many woes, v. 5. They say, "Stand by thyself, keep off," (get thee to thine, so the original is) * keep to thy own companions, but come near to me, lest thou contaminate me; touch me not, I will not have to do with thee." But I am holier than thou, therefore thou art not good enough to converse with me; I am not as other men are, nor even as this publican. This they were ready to say to every one they met with, so that, in saying, I am holier than thou, they thought themselves holier than any; not only very good, as good as they should be, as good as they needed to be, but better than any of their neighbours. They thought they were greater than the rest of mankind (says God,) such a smoke as comes not from a quick fire, which soon becomes glowing and pleasant, but from a fire of wet wood, which burns all the day, and is nothing but smoke. Note, Nothing in men is more odious and offensive to God than a proud conceit of themselves, and contempt of others; for commonly those are most unholy of all, that think themselves holier than others.

(2.) The controversy God had with them for this. The proof against them is plain; Behold, it is written before me, v. 6. It is written, to be remembered against them in time to come; for they may not perhaps be immediately reckoned with. The sins of sinners, and particularly the vainglorious boasts and scorns of hypocrites, are laid up in store with God, Deut xxxiii. 34. And what is written shall be read and proceed upon; "I will not keep silence always, though I may keep silence long." They shall not think him altogether such a one as themselves, as sometimes they have done; but he will recompense, even recompense into their bosom. These basely abuse religion, that honourable and sacred thing, which make their profession of it is but matter of their pride and conceit, and will renounce it for another; the profession they boast of shall but serve to aggravate their condemnation. [1.] The iniquity of their fathers shall come against them; not but that their own sin, deserved whatever judgments God brought upon them, and much heavier; and they owned it, Ezra ix. 13. But God would not have wrought so great a desolation upon them, if he had not therein had some special cause. Therefore in the last destruction of Jerusalem God is said to bring upon them the blood of the Old Testament martyrs, even that of Abel, Matth. xxiii. 35. God will reckon with them, not only for their fathers' idols but for their high places, their burning incense, upon the mountains and the hills, though perhaps it was to the true God only. This was blaspheming and reproaching God, for by the high places where he was worshipped he meant the place he had made the object of his worship, and the promise he had made, that there he would meet them, and bless them. [2.] Their own with that shall bring ruin upon them; Your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, the one aggravating the other, constitute the former work, which though it may seem to be over, the sin of their fathers, the breasts, warranted into their bosom. God will render into the bosom, not only of his open enemies, (Ps. lxix. 12.) but of his false and treacherous friends, the reproach wherewith they have reproached him.
8. Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. 9. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and none elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. 10. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.

This is expounded by St. Paul, Rom. xi. 1.—5, where, when upon occasion of the rejection of the Jews, it is asked, Hath God then cast away his people? he answers, No; for, at this time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. This prophecy has reference to that distinguished remnant. When that hypocritical nation is to be destroyed, God will separate and secure to himself some from among them; some of the Jews shall be brought to embrace the Christian faith, shall be added to the church, and so be saved. And our Saviour has told us, that for the sake of these elect, the days of the destruction of the Jews should be shortened, and a ray of light to the Gentiles, which otherwise would have proceeded to that degree, that no flesh should be saved, Math. xxiv. 22. Now, 1. This is illustrated here by a comparison, v. 8. When a vine is so blasted and withered, that there seems to be no sap or life in it, and therefore the dresser of the vineyard is inclined to pluck it up, or cut it down; yet, if ever so little of the juice of the grape fit to make new wine, be found, though but in one cluster, a stand-by interposes, and says, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; there is life in the root, and hope that yet it may become good for something. Good men are blessings to the places where they live; and sometimes God spares whole cities and nations for the sake of a few such in them. How ambitious should we be of this honour, not only to be distinguished from others, but serviceable to others!

2. Here is a description of those that shall make up this saved saving remnant; (1.) They are such as serve God; it is for my servant's sake, (v. 8.) and they are my servants that shall dwell there, v. 9. God's faithful servants, however they are looked upon, are the best friends their country has; and those who serve him, therein serve their generation. (2.) They are such as seek God; as make it the end of their lives to glorify God, and the business of their lives to call upon him. It is for my people that have sought me, They that seek God shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder.

3. Here is an account of the mercy God has in store for them. The remnant that shall return out of captivity shall have a happy settlement again in their own land, and that by an hereditary right, as a seed out of Jacob, in whom the family is kept up and the entail preserved; and from whom, as from the seed sown, shall spring a numerous increase; and these typify the remnant of Jacob that shall be incorporated into the gospel-church by faith. (1.) They shall have a good portion for themselves. They shall inherit my mountains, the holy mountains on which Jerusalem and the temple were built; or, the mountains of Canaan, the land of promise, typifying the covenant of grace, which all God's servants, his elect, both inhabit and inherit; they make it their refuge, their rest and residence, so they dwell in it, are at home in it; and they have taken it to be their heritage for ever, and it shall be to them an inheritance incorruptible. God's chosen, the spiritual seed of praying Jacob, shall be the inheritors of his mountains of bliss and joy, and shall be carried safe to them through the vale of tears. (2.) They shall have a gleaning of the whole land, that they shall have wherewith to stock it all, and that they shall peaceably enjoy it, and there be none to disturb them, or make them afraid. God's servants are the flocks and herds are the fields and valleys where the sheep of Christ shall go in and out, and find pasture, (John x. 9.) and where they are made to lie down, (Ps. xxiii. 2.) as Israel's herds in the valley of Achor, Hos. n. 15.

11. But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number. 12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear: but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: 14. Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. 15. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: 16. That he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the Lord of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the Lord of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

Here the different states of the godly and wicked, of the Jews that believed, and of those that still persisted in unbelief, are set the one over against the other, as life and death, good and evil, the blessing and the curse.

1. Here is the fearful doom of those that persisted in their idolatry after the deliverance out of Babylon, and in infidelity after the preaching of the gospel of Christ. The doom is the same upon both; (v. 12.) I will number you to the sword, as sheep for the slaughter, and there shall be no escaping, no standing out, ye shall all bow down to it. God's judgments come, 1. Regularly, and are executed according to the commission. Those fall by the sword, that are numbered or counted out to it, and none besides. Though the sword seems to devon promiscuously one as well as another, yet it is made to know its number, and shall not exceed. 2. Insolubly: the strongest and most stout-hearted sinners shall be forced to bow before them; for none ever hardened their hearts against God, and prospered. Now observe what the sins are, that number them to the sword.
1. Idolatry was the ancient sin; (v. 11) "Ye are they, who instead of seeking me, and serving me as my people, forsake the Lord, disown him, and cast off all under his name and worship others gods; who forsake the holy mountain, (the privileges it confers, and the obligations it lays you under,) to burn incense upon the mountains of your idols, (v. 7.) and have deserted the only living and true God." They prepared a table for that troth of deities, which the heathen worship, and poured out drink-offerings to that numberless number of them; for they that were deserting their own God, and forsaking his sacrifices, hundreds sufficient, were still adding to the number of them, till they had as many gods as cities, and their altars were as thick as heaps in the furrows of the field, Hos. xii. 11. Some take God and Meni, which we translate a troth and a number, to be the proper names of two of their idols, answering to Jupiter and Mercury; whatever they were, their worshippers spared no cost to do them honour; they prepared a table for them, and filled out mixed wine for drink-offerings to them; they would pinch their families rather than stint their devotions, which should shame the worshippers of the true God out of their niggardliness.

2. Infidelity was the sin of the latter Jews; (v. 12.) When I called ye did not answer; which refers not so much to their not answering when they were invited by the prophet to come to the Lord, and forsake their former ways, as to their not responding to the call of God; for if any will not hearken to the voice of God, the Lord is forced to say to them, I called them hearken not; and that is applied to those who rejected the gospel. Our Lord Jesus himself called, (He stood and cried, John vii. 37.) but they did not hear, they would not answer: they were not convinced by his reasonings, nor moved by his expostulations; both the fair warnings he gave them of death and ruin, and the fair offers he made them of life and happiness, were slighted, and made no impression upon them. Yet this was not all; Ye did evil before mine eyes, not by surprise, or through inadvertency, but with deliberation; Ye did choose that wherein I delighted not; he means, which he utterly detested and abhorred. It is not strange that those who will not be persuaded to choose that which is good, persist in their choice and pursuit of that which is evil. See the malignity of sin; it is evil in God's eyes, highly offensive to him, and yet it is committed before his eyes, in his sight and presence, and in contempt of him; it is likewise a contradiction to the will of God; it is doing that, of choice, which we know will displease him.

11. The aggravation of this doom, from the consideration of the happy state of those that were brought to repentance and faith. The blessedness of those that serve God, and the woful condition of those that rebel against him, are here set the one over against the other, that they may serve as a foil to each other, v. 13.—16. 1. God's servants may well think themselves happy, and for ever indebted to that free grace which made them so, when they consider their miserable state, had not been before, for want of that grace, who are hardened, and likely to perish for ever in unbelief, and what a narrow escape they had of being among them. See ch. xvi. 24. 2. It will add to the grief of those that perish, to see the happiness of God's servants, whom they had hated and vilified, and looked upon with the utmost disdain; and especially to think that they not only despised, but also their own happiness. It made the torment of the rich man in hell the more grievous, that he saw Abraham after off, and Lazarus in his bosom; (Luke xvi. 23.) see Luke xiii. 28. Sometimes the providence of God makes such a difference as this between good and bad in this world, and the prosperity of the righteous becomes a grievous eye-sore and vexation of heart to the wicked. Ps. cxii. 10. It will, however, be so in the great day. We fools counted his life madness, and his end without honour; but now, how is he numbered with the saints, and his lot is among the chosen?

12. The difference of their states here lies in two things.

1. In point of comfort and satisfaction. [1.] God's servants shall eat and drink; they shall have the bread of life to feed, to feast upon continually, shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of his house, and shall want nothing that is good for them. Heaven's happiness will be to them an everlasting feast and a banquet of love; and that which shall sustain their life, shall be abundance, want shall hunger and thirst after. But those who set their hearts upon the world, and place their happiness in that, shall be hungry and thirsty, always empty, always craving; for it is not bread, it surfeits, but it satisfies not. In communion with God, and dependence upon him, there is full satisfaction, but in sinful pursuits there is nothing but disappointment.

2. God's servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart; they have constant cause for joy, and there is nothing that may be an occasion of grief to them, but they have an allay sufficient for it. As far as faith is an act and exercise, they have a heart to rejoice, and their joy is their strength. They shall rejoice in their hope, because it shall not make them ashamed. Heaven will be a world of everlasting rejoicing and singing, and the joy shall be in their mouths continually. But on the other hand, they that forsake the Lord shut themselves out from all true joy, for they shall be ashamed of their vain confidence in themselves, and their own righteousness, and the hopes they had built thereon. When the expectations of bliss, wherewith they had flattered themselves, are frustrated, O what confusion will fill their faces! Then shall they cry for sorrow of heart, and be ashamed for vexation of spirit; perhaps in this world, when their laughter shall be turned into mourning and their joy into heaviness; at last, yet, in that world, where the torment will be endless, ceaseless, and remediless; nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, to eternity. Let these two be compared; Now he is comforted, and Thou art tormented; and which of the two will we choose to take our lot with?

2. In point of honour and reputation, v. 15, 16. The memory of the just is, and shall be, blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot. [1.] The name of the idolaters and unbelievers shall be left for a curse, shall be loaded with ignominy, and made for ever infamous. It shall be used in giving bad repute; where you meet one of them, say to him, You art an abomination—God make thee as miserable as a Jew. It shall be for a curse to God's chosen, for a warning to them; they shall be afraid of falling under the curse upon the Jewish nation; of perishing by the same example of unbelief. The curse of these whom God rejects, should make his chosen stand in awe. The Lord God shall slay thee; he shall quite destroy the name of all such, and make all such to be an abomination to them, as a people; they shall no longer live as a nation, nor ever be incorporated again. [2.] The name of God's chosen shall become a blessing; He shall call his servants by another name. The children of the covenant shall no longer be called Jews, but Christians; and to them, under that name, all the promises and privileges of the new covenant shall be theirs. They shall have a more honourable name; it shall not be confined to one nation, but with it men shall bless themselves in the earth, all the world over. God shall have servants out of all nations, that shall all be dignified with this new name. First, They shall give honour to God both in their prayers and in their solemn oaths; in their addresses for his favour as their felicity, and his appearance as their justice and as their Judge. This is a part of the homage we owe to God; we must bless our-
selves in him, we must reckon that we have enough to make us happy, that we need no more, and can desire no more, if we have him for our God. It is of great consequence to determine what that is, by which we bless ourselves, in which we must please ourselves with, and value ourselves by our interest in. Worldly people bless themselves in the abundance they have of this world's goods; (Ps. xlix. 18. Luke xii. 19.) but God's servants bless themselves in him, as a God all-sufficient for them. He is their Crown of glory and Diadem of beauty, their Strength and Portion. By him also they shall swear; and not by false oaths, though false gods, by whose judgment they shall refer themselves, from whom every man's judgment doth proceed. Secondly, They shall give honour to him as the God of truth; the God of the Amen; so the word is. Some understand it of Christ, who is himself the Amen, the faithful Witness, (Rev. iii. 14.) and in whom all the promises are yea and amen. 2 Cor. i. 20. In him we must bless ourselves, and by him we must swear unto the Lord, and covenant with him. He that is blessed in the earth, (so some read it,) shall be blessed in the true God, for Christ is the true God, and eternal life, 1 John v. 20. And it was promised of old that in him should all the families of the earth be blessed, Gen. xii. 3. Some read it, He shall bless the families of the God of the faithful people; in God as the God of the true and faithful people, and no more than to share in the blessings whereby they are blessed, to be dealt with as he deals with them. Thirdly, They shall give him honour as the Author of this blessed change, which they have the experience of; they shall think themselves happy in having him for their God, who has made them to forget their former troubles, the remembrance of them being swallowed up in his peace and comfort; because they are hid from God's eyes, they are quite taken away; for if there were any remainder of their troubles, God would be sure to have his eye upon it, in compassion to them and concern for them. They shall no longer feel them, for God will no longer see them: He is pleased to speak as if he would make himself easy by making them easy; and therefore they shall with a great deal of satisfaction bless themselves in him.

17. For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. 18. But be you glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. 19. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her; nor the voice of crying. 20. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed. 21. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. 22. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. 23. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their

offspring with them. 24. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. 25. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

If these promises were in part fulfilled when the Jews, after their return out of captivity, were settled in peace in their own land, and brought as it were into a new world, yet they were to have their accomplishment in the gospel-church, militant first, and at length triumphant; The Jerusalem that is from above is free, and is the mother of us all. In the graces and comforts which believers have in and from Christ, we are to look for this new heaven and new earth. It is in the gospel that old things are fast away, and all things are become new, and by it that those who are in Christ are new creatures, Cor. v. 26. It was a mighty and happy change that was described by the apostle, Rom. viii. 20. Things were forgotten; but here it rises much higher, even the former world shall be forgotten, and shall no more come in mind. They that were converted to the Christian faith were so transported with the comforts of it, that all the comforts they were before acquainted with, became as nothing to them; not only their foregoing griefs, but their foregone joys, were lost and swallowed up in this. The glorified saints will therefore have forgotten this world, because they will be entirely taken up with the other. For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. See how inexhaustible the divine power is; the same God that created one heaven and earth, can create another. See how entire the happiness of the saints is: it shall be all of a piece; with the new heavens God will create them (if they have occasion for it to make them happy) a new earth too. The world is yours, if you be Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 22. When God is reconciled to us, which gives us a new heaven, the creatures too are reconciled to us, which gives us a new earth. The future glory of the saints will be so entirely different from what they ever knew before, that it may well be called a new heaven and a new earth. Behold, I make all things new, Rev. xxi. 3.

1. There shall be new joys. For, (1.) All the church's friends, and all that belong to her, shall rejoice; (v. 18.) You shall be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. The new things which God creates in and by his gospel, are, and shall be, matter of everlasting joy to all believers. My servants shall be joyful; (v. 13.) at least they shall be through now they mourn. Enter them into the joy of your Lord. (2.) The church shall be the matter of their joy; so pleasant, so prosperous, shall her condition be: I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. The church shall not only rejoice, but be rejoiced in. Those that have sorrowed with the church, shall rejoice with her. (3.) The prosperity of the church shall be a matter of joy to himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; (v. 19.) I will rejoice in Jerusalem's joy, and will joy in my people; for in all their affliction he was afflicted. God will not only rejoice in the church's well-doing, but will himself rejoice to do her good, and rest in his love to her, Zech. iii. 17. What God rejoices in, it becomes us to rejoice in. (4.) There shall be no alloy of this joy, nor any alteration of this happy condition of the church; The voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her. If this relate to any state of the church in this life, it means
no more than that the former occasions of grief shall not return, but God's people shall long enjoy an uninterrupted tranquility. But in heaven it shall have a full accomplishment, and both of the perfection and the perpetuity of the promised joy; there all tears shall be wiped away.

2. There shall be new life, v. 20. Untimely deaths by the sword or sickness shall be no more known as they have been, and by this means there shall be no more the voice of crying, v. 19. When there shall be no more death, there shall be no more mourning, crying, and sighing—Rev. 21. 4. As death is the end of all life, so life shall reign by righteousness, Rom. v. 14, 21. (1) Believers through Christ shall be satisfied with life, though it be ever so short on earth. If an infant end its days quickly, yet it shall not be reckoned to die untimely, for the shorter its life is, the longer will its rest be; though death reign over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, yet they, dying in the arms of Christ, the second Adam, and belonging to his kingdom, are not to be called infants of days, but even the child shall be reckoned to die a hundred years old, for he shall rise again at full age, shall rise to eternal life. Some understand it of children who in their childhood are so eminent for wisdom and grace, and by death nipt in the blossom, that they may be said to die a hundred years old for others, that think that they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness, which they shall bring forth in old age; to show that the Lord is upright, and then it is a good old age. An old man, who is wise, and good, and useful, may truly be said to have filled his days. Old men, who have their hearts upon the world, have never filled their days, never have enough of this world, but would still continue to live and be day in day out, and se satur dierum—full of days, who, with Simeon, having seen God's salvation, desires now to depart in peace. (2) Unbelievers shall be unsatisfied and unhappy in life, though it be ever so long. The sinner, though he live to be a hundred years old, shall be accursed; his living so long shall be no token to him of the divine favour and blessing, nor shall it be any shelter to him from the divine wrath and curse; the sentence he lies under will certainly be executed, and his long life is but a long reprobation. Nay, it is itself a curse to him, for the longer he lives, the more wrath he treasures up against the day of wrath, and the more sins he will have to answer for. So that the matter is not great, whether our lives on earth be long or short, but whether we live the lives of saints or the lives of sinners.

3. There shall be a new enjoyment of the comfort of life; that, whereas before it was very uncertain and precarious, their enemies inhabited the houses which they built, and ate the fruit of the trees which they planted, now it shall be otherwise; they shall build houses, and inhabit them, shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them, v. 21, 22. This intimates that the labour of their hands shall be abundant and fruitful, they shall fill their days with the fruits of righteousness, which they shall bring forth in old age; and God's people shall live in ease and plenty. They shall be defended and protected by God, and he shall make them a name, and give them glory, which they aimed at; and what they have gained shall be preserved and secured to them; they shall enjoy it comfortably, and nothing shall imbride it to them, and they shall live to enjoy it long. Strangers shall not break in upon them, to expel them, and plant themselves in their room, as sometimes they have done; Mine elect shall wear out, or long enjoy, the vineyard of their fathers, is a promise of a perpetual and sure possession. It is fair; it is the work of their hands, which they themselves have laboured for, and it is most comfortable to enjoy that, and not to cut the bread of idleness or bread of deceit; if we have a heart to enjoy it, that is the gift of God's grace; (Ecc. iii. 13) and if we live to enjoy it long, it is the gift of God's providence, for that is here promised; as the days of a tree, are the days of my people; as the days of an oak, (ch. vi. 13) whose substance is in it, though it cast its leaves; though it is stripped every year, it is rooted down to the earth, and is as the days of the tree of life; so the LXX. Christ is to them the tree of life, and in him believers enjoy all those spiritual comforts which are typified by the abundance of temporal blessings here promised; and it shall not be in the power of their enemies to deprive them of these blessings, or disturb them in the enjoyment of them.

4. The vineyard of God's church shall be a new generation rising up in their stead, to inherit and enjoy these blessings; (v. 23.) They shall not labour in vain, for they shall not only enjoy the work of their hands themselves, but they shall leave it with satisfaction to those that shall come after them, and not with such a melancholy prospect as Solomon did; (Eccl. i. 18, 19.) They shall not beget and bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and there is a blessing entailed upon them by descent from their ancestors, which their offspring with them shall partake of, and shall be, as well as they, the seed of the blessed of the Lord. They shall not bring forth for trouble; for, (1) God will make their children that rise up come, and be a comfort to them; they shall have the joy of seeing them walk in the paths of righteousness; (Ps. lxxii. 14.) And (2) He will make the times that come after and accompany their children better than they shall be good, so it shall be well with them; they shall not be brought forth to days of trouble; nor shall it ever be said, Blessed is the womb that bare not. In the gospel-church Christ's name shall be borne up by a succession; A seed shall serve him, (Ps. xxii. 50.) the seed of the blessed of the Lord.

5. There shall be a good correspondence between the things that are said in this, the good things of the gospel, and the things that are called, I will answer. God will prevent their prayers with the blessings of his goodness: David did but say, I will confess, and God forgave, Ps. xxxii. 5. The father of the prodigal met him in his return; While they are yet speaking, before they have finished their prayer, I will give them the thing they pray for, or the assurances and earnest of it. These are high expressions of God's readiness to hear prayer; and this appears much more in the grace of the gospel than it did under the law; we owe the comfort of it to the mediation of Christ as our Advocate with the Father, and are obliged in gratitude to give a ready ear to God's calls.

6. There shall be a good correspondence between them and their neighbours; (v. 23.) The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, as they did in Noah's ark. God's people, though they are as sheep in the midst of wolves, shall be safe and unhurt; for God will not so much break the power, and tie the hands, of their enemies, as formerly; but he will turn their hearts, will alter their dispositions by his grace. When Paul, who had been a persecutor of the disciples, who, being of the tribe of Benjamin, roused as a wolf, (Gen. xlix. 27.) joined himself to them, and they were of one mind, and with good grace, the wolf fed together. So also when the enmity between the Jews and Gentiles was slain, all hostilities ceased, and they fed together as one sheepfold under Christ the great Shepherd, John x. 16. The enemies of the church ceased to do the mischief they had done, and its members ceased to be so quarrelsome with, and injurious to, one another as they had done; and they were not thought of or heard of without or from within to hurt or destroy, none to disturb it, much less to ruin it, in all the holy mountain; as was promised, ch. xi. 9. For, (1.) Men shall be changed; the lion shall no more be a beast of prey, as perhaps he never would have been if sin had not entered, but shall eat straw like the bullock, shall know his owner, and his master's crib.
or does. When those that lived by spoil and rapine, and coveted to enrich themselves, right or wrong, are brought by the grace of God to accommodate themselves to their condition, to live by honest labour, and to be content with such provisions as they have; when they that stole steale no more, but work with their hands the thing that is good, then this is fulfilled, that the lion shall eat straw like the bullock. (2.) Satan shall be chained, the dragon bound; for dust shall be the serpent's meat again.

That great enemy, when he has been let loose, has gloried and exalted himself with the precious blood of the saints, in having been their persecutor; and with the precious souls of sinners, who by his instigation have become persecutors, and have ruined themselves for ever; but now he shall be confined to dust, according to the sentence, On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, Gen. iii. 14.

All the enemies of God's church, that are subtle and venomous as serpents, shall be conquered and subdued, and be made to lie the dust. Christ shall reign as Zion's King, till all the enemies of his kingdom be made his footstool, and theirs too. In the holy mountain above, and there only, shall this promise have its full accomplishment, that there shall be none to hurt or destroy.

CHAP. LXVI.

The scope of this chapter is much the same as that of the foregoing chapter, and many expressions of it are the same; it therefore looks the same way, to the different state of things, and had among the Jews, at their return out of captivity; but that typifying the rejection of the Jews in the days of the Messiah, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the setting up of the gospel-kingdom in the world. The chapter appears to be chiefly opened to the dismantling of the temple by the planting of the Christian church; (Acts vii. 49, 50.) which may serve as a key to the whole chapter. We have here, I. The practice of the church, upon this branch, in comparison with moral duties, and an intimation therein of his purpose shortly to put an end to the temple and sacrifice, and reject those that adhered to them, v. 1. to 4. 11. The salvation God will in due time work for his people, out of the hands of their oppressors, (v. 5.) speaking terror to the persecutors, (v. 6.) and comfort to the persecuted, a speedy and complete deliverance, (v. 7. to 9.) a joyful settlement, (v. 10. 11.) the accession of the Gentiles to them, and abundance of satisfaction therein, v. 12. 14. 11. The terrible vengeance which God will bring upon the enemies of his church and people, v. 15. 18. 11. The happy establishment of the church upon large and sure foundations, its constant attachment on God, and triumph over its enemies, v. 19. 25. And we may well expect that this evangelical prophet, here, in the shadow of prophecy, should (as he does) look as far forward as to the latter days, to the last day, to the days of eternity.

1. THUS saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne; and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2. For all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. 3. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol: yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations. 4. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

Here. 1. The temple is slighted in comparison with a gracious soul, v. 1, 2. The Jews in the prophet's time, and afterward, in Christ's time, gloried much in the temple, and promised themselves great things from it; to humble them therefore, and to shake their vain confidence, both the prophets and Christ foretold the ruin of the temple, that God would leave it, and then it would soon be desolate. After it was destroyed by the Chaldeans, it soon recovered itself, and the ceremonial services were revived with it; but by the Romans it was made a perpetual desolation, and the ceremonial law was abolished with it. That the world might be prepared for this, they were often told, as here, of what little account the temple was with God.

1. That he did not need it. Heaven is the throne of his glory and government; there he sits, infinitely exalted in the highest dignity and dominion, above all blessing and praise. The earth is his footstool, on which he stands, overruling all the affairs of it according to his will. If God has so bright a throne, so large a footstool, where is the house the church can build unto God, that can be the residence of his glory, or, where is the place of his rest? What satisfaction is there in building the church; Eternal truth and beauty, all made with men's hands? What occasion has he, as we have, for a house to repose himself in, who fains not, neither is weary, who neither slumbers nor sleeps? Or, if he had occasion, he would not tell us, (Ps. I. 12.) for all these things hath his hand made, heaven and all its courts, earth and all its borders, and all the hosts of both. All these things have been, by him who, looking forward to the coming of God, who was happy from eternity before they were, and therefore could not be benefited by them. All these things are; so some read it; they still continue, upheld by the same power that made them; so that our goodness extends not to him. If he would have had a house for himself to dwell in, he would have made one himself when he made the world; and had made it, it would have been his, this day, as other creatures do, according to his ordinances; so that he had no need of a temple made with hands.

2. That he would not need it, so as he would a humble, penitent, gracious heart. He has a heaven and earth of his own making, and a temple of man's making; but he overlooks them all, that he may look with favour to him that is poor in spirit, humble and serious, self-abasing and self-denying, whose heart is truly contrite for sin, penitent for it, in pain to get it pardoned, and that trembles at God's word, not as Felix did, with a transient qualm that was over when the sermon was done, but with an habitual awe of God's majesty and purity, and an habitual dread of his justice and wrath such a heart is a living sanctuary. Where God dwells there, and it is the place of his rest; it is like heaven and earth, his throne and his footstool.

II. Sacrifices are slighted when they come from ungracious hands; the sacrifices of the wicked is not only unacceptable, but it is an abomination to the Lord; (Prov. xv. 8.) this is largely shown here, v. 3. 4. Observe,

1. How detestable their sacrifices were to God. The carnal Jews, after their return out of captivity, though they relapsed not to idolatry, grew very careless and loose in the service of God; they brought the thorn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice, (Mal. I. 8.) and this made their services abominable to God; they had no regard to their sacrifices, and therefore how could they think God
should have any regard to them? The unbelieving Jews, after the gospel was preached, and in it notice given of the offering up of the great Sacrifice, which put an end to all the ceremonial services, continued to offer sacrifices, as if the law of Moses had been still in force, and could have made the camera thereunto perfect: this was an abomination; He that kills an ox for his own table, is welcome to do it; but he that now kills it, and thus kills it for God, as an offering and a meat-offering, offers it not to God as murder itself: he that does it, does it in effect set aside Christ's sacrifice, treats under-foot the blood of the covenant, and makes himself accessory to the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord; setting up what Christ died to abolish.

He that sacrifices a lamb, if it be a corrupt thing, and not the male in his flock, the best he has, if he think to bring the offering, the branch of the tree, instead of pleasing him; it is as if he cut off a dog's neck; a creature in the eye of the law so vile, that whereas an ass might be redeemed, the price of a dog was never to be brought into the treasury; Deut. xxiii. 18. He that offers an oblation, a meat-offering, or drink-offering, as if he thought to make atonement with swine's blood; a creature that makes itself unacceptable, (ch. lxv. 4.) much more the blood of it. He that burns incense to God, and so puts contempt upon the incense of Christ's intercession, is as if he blessed an idol; it was as great an affront to God as if they had paid their devotions to a false god. Hypocrisy and profaneness are as provoking as idolatry.

What their wickedness was, which made their sacrifices thus detestable; it is because they have chosen their own ways, the ways of their own wicked hearts, and not only their hands do, but their soul delights in, their abominations; they were vicious and immoral in their conversations, chose the way of sin rather than the way of God's commandments, and took pleasure in that which was provoking to God; this made their sacrifices so offensive to God, ch. 1. 11—15. Those that pretend to honour God by a profession of religion, and yet live wicked lives, put an affront upon him, as if he were the Patron of sin. And that which was an aggravation of their wickedness, was, that they persisted in it, notwithstanding the frequent calls given them to repent and reform; they turned a deaf ear to all the warnings of divine justice, and all the offers of divine grace; Wherefore, saith the Lord, I will not answer, (ch. 2.)

And the same follows here that did there; They did evil before mine eyes. Being dext to what he said, they cared not what he saw, but chose that in which they knew he delighted not. How could they expect to please him in their devotions, who took no care to please him in their conversations, but, on the contrary, designed to provoke him?

They chose their own ways, therefore, says God, I also will choose their delusions; They have made their choice, (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it,) and now I will make mine; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions, or mockeries; They have mocked God, and disdained his wrath; the Lord will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or, They shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod, and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. (2.) The doom passed upon them for this; They chose their own ways, therefore, says God, I also will choose their delusions; They have made their choice, (as Mr. Gataker paraphrases it,) and now I will make mine; they have taken what course they pleased with me, and I will take what course I please with them. I will choose their illusions, or mockeries; They have mocked God, and disdained his wrath; the Lord will give them up to their enemies, to be trampled upon and insulted by them. Or, They shall be deceived by those vain confidences with which they have deceived themselves. God will make their sin their punishment; they shall be beaten with their own rod, and hurried into ruin by their own delusions. (3.) The doom passed upon them for this; They will bring upon them, which shall be a terror to them, that which they themselves have been afraid of, and thought to escape by sinful shifts. Unbelieving hearts, and unpurified, unpacificed consciences, need no more to make them miserable, than to have their own fears brought upon them.

5. Hear the word of the Lord; ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. 6. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies. 7. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord; I shall cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. 10. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: 11. That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations, that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. 12. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dallied upon her knees. 13. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. 14. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.

The prophet, having denounced God's judgments against an hypocritical nation, that made a jest of God's word, and would not answer him when he called to them, here turns his speech to these that trembled at his word, to comfort and encourage them; they shall not be involved in the judgments that are coming upon their unbelieving nation. Ministers must distinguish thus, that, when they speak terror to the wicked, they may not make the hearts of the righteous sad. Bone Christianae, hoc nihil ad te—Good Christian, this is nothing to thee. The prophet having assured those that trembled at God's word, of a gracious look from him, (v. 2.) here brings them a gracious message from him. The word of God has comforts in store for those that by his word are brought to God, and are brought to him. There were those (v. 4.) who, when God spake, would not hear; but if some will not, others will. If the heart tremble at the word, the ear will be open to it. Now what is here said to them? 1. Let them know that God will plead their just but injured cause against their persecutors; (v. 5.) Your brethren that hated you, said, Let the Lord be glorified. But he shall appear to your joy. This perhaps might have reference to the case of some of the Jews at their return out of captivity; but no-
thing like it appears in the history, and therefore it is rather to be referred to the first preachers and professors of the Gospel to the Jews; and as to the case it is very applicable. Observe, 1. How the faithful servants of God were persecuted; their brethren hated them. The apostles were Jews by birth, and yet even in the cities of the Gentiles, the Jews they met with there were their most bitter and implacable enemies, and **stirred up the Gentiles against them.** The sparse complains, (Cant. i. 6.) that her name was not loved, is here made good; and that alacrity with which they embraced our Lord Jesus with this, Thine own nation have delivered thee unto me, John xviii. 33. Their brethren, who should have loved them, and encouraged them, for their work's sake, hated them, and cast them out of their synagogues, excommunicated them, as if they had been the greatest blenishes, who really were the greatest blessings of their church and nation. This was a fruit of the old enmity in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman. They that hated Christ hated his disciples, because they supported his kingdom and interest; (John xv. 18.) and they cast them out for his name's sake, because they were called by his name, and called upon his name, and laid out themselves to advance his name. Note, It is no new thing for church's enemies to misapply the grace and spirit, that was intended for her defence, to be turned against her best friends, by the treachery of her governors. And they that did this said, **Let the Lord be glorified;** they pretended conscience, and a zeal for the honour of God and the church in it, and did it with all the formalities of devotion. Our Saviour explains this, and seems to have reference to it, John xvi. 2. They shall put you out of your synagogues, and **whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.** In nomine Domini iniquit omne matutum—In the name of the Lord commences evil of every kind. Or, we may understand it as spoken in defence of God. "You say God will be glorified in your deliverance, let him be glorified then; let him make speed, and hasten his work; (ch. v. 19.) let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him." Some take it to be the language of the profane Jews in captivity, bating their brethren that hoped for deliverance, and ridiculing the expectations they often comforted themselves with, that God would shortly be glorified in it. They thus did what they could to **shame the counsel of the poor, Ps. xiv. 6.**

2. How they were encouraged under these persecutions; and what a fruit they brought. When they were driven abroad a little while; your enemies hate you and oppress you, your brethren hate you and cast you out, but your Father in heaven loves you, and will appear for you when no one else will or dare. His providence shall order things so as shall be for comfort to you, he shall appear for your joy, and for the confusion of those that abuse you and trample on you; they shall be ashamed of their enmity to you. This was fulfilled, when, upon the signals given of Jerusalem's approaching ruin, the Jews' hearts failed them for fear; but the disciples of Christ, whom they had hated and persecuted, lifted up their heads with joy, knowing that their redemption drew nigh, Luke xxi. 26, 28. Though God seem to hide himself, he will in due time show himself.

Of the **Great appearances for the future** there will be such as will make a great noise in the world; (v. 6.) There shall be a voice of noise from the city, from the temple. Some make it the joyful and triumphant voice of the church's friends; others the frightful, lamenting voice of her enemies, surprised in the city, and fleeing in vain to the temple for refuge. These voices do but echo to the voice of the Lord, who is now rendering a recompense to his enemies; and those that will not hear him speaking this terror, shall hear them returning the alarming
family with children, which was to be named from Jesus Christ. When the Spirit was poured out, and the gospel went forth from Zion, multitudes were converted in a little time, and with little pains, compared with the vast product. The apostles, even before they traveled, brought forth, and the children born to Christ were so numerous, and so suddenly and easily produced, that they were rather like the dew from the morning's womb, like the son from the mother's womb, Ps. cx. 3.

The success of the gospel was astonishing; that light, like the morning, strangely diffused itself till it took hold even of the ends of the earth. Cities and nations were born at once to Christ. The same day that the Spirit was poured out, there were three thousand souls added to the church. And when this glorious work was once begun, it was carried on wonderfully, beyond what could be imagined; so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

He that brought to the birth in conviction of sin, caused to bring forth in a thorough conversion to God.

IV. Let them know that their present sorrows shall shortly be turned into abundant joys, vi. 10, 11.

Observe,

1. How the church's friends are described; they are such as love her, and mourn with her and for her. Note, All that love God love Jerusalem: they love the church of God, and lay its interest very near their heart. They admire the beauty of the church, take pleasure in communion with it, and heartily espouse its cause. And they that have a sincere affection for the church, have a cordial sympathy with her in all the cares and sorrows of her mercant state. They mourn for her, all her grievances are their griefs; if Jerusalem be in distress, their harps are hung on the willow-trees.

2. How they are encouraged: Rejoice with her, and again and again, I say, Rejoice. This intimates that Jerusalem shall have cause to rejoice; the days of her mourning shall be at an end, and she shall be comforted according to the time that she has been afflicted. It is the will of God, that all her friends should join with her in her joys, for they shall share with her in these blessings that will be the matter of her joy. If we suffer with Christ, and sorrow with his church, we shall reign with him, and rejoice with her. We are here called, (1.) To bear our part in the church's praises: "Come, rejoice with her, rejoice for joy with her, rejoice greatly, rejoice and know why you rejoice; rejoice on the days of your mourning. You shall be comforted for her in her sorrows, cannot but from the same principles rejoice with her in her joy." (2.) To take our part in the church's comforts. We must suck and be satisfied with the breasts of our consolations; the word of God, the covenant of grace, especially the promises of that covenant, the ordinances of God, and all the opportunities of attending on him, and conversing with him, are the breasts of her church which she recommends to us all, "Take the breasts of her consolations, where her comforts are laid up, and whence by faith and prayer they are drawn; with her therefore we must suck from these breasts, by an application of the promises of God to ourselves, and a diligent attendance on his ordinances; and with the consolations which are drawn hence we must be satisfied, and not be dissatisfied, though we should be driven from her bosoms."

It is the glory of the church, that she has the Lord for her God, that to her pertain the adoption and service of God; with the abundance of this glory we must be delighted. We must take more pleasure in our relation to God, and communion with him, than in all the delights of the sons and daughters of men. Whatever is the glory of the church, must be our glory and joy, particularly her purity, unity, and increase.

V. Let them know that he who gives them this call to rejoice, will give them cause to do so, and hearts to do so, vi. 12—14.

1. He will give them cause to do so. For, (1.) They shall enjoy a long, uninterrupted course of prosperity; I will extend, or am extending, peace to her, all good to her, like a river that runs in a constant stream, still increasing till it be swallowed up by the sea. And I will pour upon her joy, and she shall be her joy, and she shall be joy to the whole world. It is hereby is it received in its proper place, such a peace as this, which shall go on like a river, supplying souls with all good, and making them fruitful, as a river does the lands it passes through, such a river of peace as the springs of the world's comforts cannot send forth, and the dams of the world's troubles cannot stop or drive back, or its sands rather; such a river of peace as can carry the ocean of boundless and endless bliss.

(2.) They shall make advantageous additions made to them; The glory of the Gentiles shall come to them like a flowing stream. Gentle converts shall come pouring into the church, and swell the river of her peace and prosperity; for they shall bring their glory with them; their wealth and honour, their power and interest shall all be devoted to the service of God, and employed in the advancement of his kingdom. If you suck from the breasts of her consolations, when you see such crowding for a share in those comforts, you shall be the more solicitous and the more vigorous to secure your share; not for fear of having the less for others' coming in to partake of Christ, (there is no danger of that, he has enough for all, and enough for each,) "but their zeal shall prove to a deadly jealousy." It is well when it does so, Rom. xi. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 2. (3.) God shall be glorified in all; and that ought to be more the matter of our joy than any thing else. (v. 14.) The hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, the protecting, supporting hand of his almighty power, the supplying, enriching hand of his inexhaustible goodness, the benefit which his servants have by both these, shall be known to his glory as well as theirs. And to make this the more illustrious, he will at the same time make known his indignation toward his enemies. God's mercy and justice shall be both manifested and for ever magnified.

2. God will not only give them cause to rejoice, but will speak comfort to them, will speak it to their hearts; and it is he only that can do that, and make it fasten there. See what he will do for the comfort of his people, when he speaks to them, "You shall be as a child, as a little child, under her arms, she shall be carried upon her sides, under her arms, as little children are, and shall be dandled upon her knees, as darlings are, especially when they are weary and out of humour, and must be got to sleep. Those that are joined to the church, must be treated thus affectionately; the Great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom;" and "I will be her shepherd, they may not be discouraged. Proselytes should be favourites. (2.) God will himself be their powerful Comforter; as one whom his mother comforts, when he is sick or sore, or upon any account in sorrow, so will I comfort you; not only with the rational arguments which a prudent father uses, but with the tender affections and Compassions of a loving mother, that carries her child when it is fast fallen hurt itself, that she may quiet it and make it easy, or endeavours to pacify it after she has chidden it and fallen out with it; Jer. xxxi. 20. Since I spake against him, my bowels are troubled for him; he is a dear son, he is a pleasant child. Thus the mother comforts. Thus you shall be comforted in Jerusalem, in the favours bestowed on the church, which you shall partake of, and in the thanksgivings offered by the church, which you shall concur with. (3.) They shall feel the
blessed effe2 of this comfort in their own souls; (v. 13.) When you see this, what a happy state the church is restored to, not only your tongues and your countenances, but your hearts shall rejoice. This was fulfilled in the wonderful satisfaction which Christ's disciples had in the success of their ministry. Christ, with an eye to that, tells them, (John xvi. 22.) Your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. Then your bowels, that were dried and withered, (the marrow of them quite exhausted,) shall recover a youthful strength and vigour, and shall flourish like an herb. Divine comforts reach the inward man, they are marrow and measting to the bones, Prov. iii. 8. The bones are the strength of the body; these shall be made to flourish with these comforts: The joy of the Lord will be your strength, Neh. viii. 10.

15. For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. 16. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many. 17. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. 18. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. 19. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. 20. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. 21. And I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord. 22. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. 23. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. 24. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

These verses, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a dark side towards the enemies of God's kingdom, and all that are rebels against his crown, and a bright side towards his faithful, loyal subjects. Probably, it refers to the Jews in captivity in Babylon, of whom some are said to have been sent thither for their hurt; and those are they with whom God here threatens to proceed in his controversy, who hated to be reformed, and therefore should be ruined by the calamity, Jer. xxiv. 9. Others were sent thither for their good, and they should have the trouble of being sent thither as a mark of God's mercy through it, and see many a good day after it. Divers of the expressions here used are accommodated to that glorious dispensation; but doubtless it looks further, to the judgment for which Christ did come once, and will come again, into this world; and to the distinction which his word in both makes between the precious and the vile.

Christ will appear to the confusion and terror of all those that stand it against him; sometimes in temporal judgments. The Jews that persisted in infidelity were cut off by fire, and by his sword; the ruin was very extensive, the Lord then pleaded with all flesh and it being his sword with which they are cut off, they are called his slain, sacrificed to his justice: and they shall be many. In the great day, the wrath of God shall be against him; and, if he will cut off and consume all the impudent; and his word, when it takes hold of sinners' consciences, burns like fire, and is sharper than any two-edged sword. Idolaters will especially be contended with in the day of wrath, v. 17. Perhaps some of those who returned out of Babylon, retained such instances of idolatry and superstition as are here mentioned; had their idols by the way of a garnering, and clamored to set them up publicly in the high places: and there purified themselves, as the worshippers of the true God used to do, when they went about their idolatrous rites, one after another, or, as we read it, behind one tree in the midst; behind Ahab, or Eth, some idol that they worshipped by that name; and in honour of which they ate swine's flesh, which was expressly forbidden by the law of God; and other abominations, as the mouse, or some other like animal. But it may refer to all those judgments which the wrath of God, according to the word of God, will bring upon provoking sinners, that live in contempt of God, and are devoted to the world and the flesh—they shall be consumed together. From the happiness of heaven we find expressly excluded all idolaters, and whatsoever worketh abomination, Rev. xxi. 7. 27. xxii. 15. In the day of vengeance the wrath of God shall be laid to the account; for, (v. 18.) I know their works, and their thoughts; God knows both what men do, and from what principle, and with what design they do it; and therefore is fit to judge the world, because he can judge the secrets of men, Rom. ii. 16.

He will appear to the comfort and joy of all that are faithful to him in the setting up of his kingdom in this world, the kingdom of grace, the earnest and first-fruits of the kingdom of glory. The time shall come that he will gather all nations and tongues to himself, that they might come and see his glory as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, v. 18. This was fulfilled when all nations were to be discipled, and the gift of tongues bestowed in order thereto. The church had had him in the setting up of his kingdom at one time, and in one tongue only God was worshipped: but in the days of the Messiah the partition-wall shall be taken down, and those that had been strangers to God shall be brought acquainted with him, and shall see his glory in the gospel, as the Jews had seen it in the sanctuary. As to this, it is here promised.

That some of the Jewish nation should, by the grace of God, be distinguished from the rest, and marked for salvation: I will not only set up a gathering ensign among them, to which the Gentiles shall
The time of a solemn feast, when all the males from all parts of the country were to attend there, and to appropriate to the Temple a share of the national diet. Observers (that had the privilege and the right to the enjoyment of the public feasts) the pleasant and the respectful attendance of the multitude. Though they were a corrupt, degenerate nation, yet God will set apart a remnant of them, that shall be devoted to him, and employed for him, and a mark shall be set upon them, with such certainty will God own them, Ezek. ix. 4. The servants of God shall be sealed in their foreheads, Rev. vii. 3. The Lord knows them that are his; Christ's sheep, the ransomed, are distinguished by grace from the world, by faith and signification. They are a people who are distinguished thus by the grace of God, shall be commissioned to invite others to come and take the benefit of that grace: those that escape the power of those prejudices by which the generality of that nation is kept in unbelief, they shall be sent unto the nations, to carry the gospel among them, and preach it to every creature. Note, Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come, should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin, as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. (1.) Those who themselves have escaped the wrath to come, should do all they can to snatch others also as brands out of the burning. God chooses to send those on his errands that can deliver their message feelingly and experimentally, and warn people of their danger by sin, as those who have themselves narrowly escaped the danger. (1.) They shall be sent unto the nations, divers of which are here named, Tarshish, Javan, Chittim, and others: these shall be as it were interpreters, agreed, what couriers are here intended; Tarshish signifies in general the sea, yet some take it for Tarshus in Cilicia; Puri is mentioned sometimes as the name of one of the kings of Assyria, perhaps some part of that country might likewise bear that name; Lud is supposed to be Lybia, a warlike nation, famed for archers; the Lydians are said to handle and use the bow. Gen. x. 17. Tabul, some think, is Italy or Spain; and Javan most agree to Greece, the Ionians; and the isles of the Gentiles, that were peoples by the posterity of Japhet, (Gen. x. 5.) probably, are here meant by the isles afar off, that have not heard my name, neither have seen my glory. In Judah only God was known, and there only his name was great for many ages; other countries sat in darkness, heard not the joyful sound, saw not the joyful light. This deplorable state of theirs seems to be spoken of here with compassion; for it is pity that any of the children of men should be at such a distance from their Maker as not to hear his name and see his glory. In consideration of this, (2.) Those that are sent to the nations shall go upon God's errand, to declare his glory among the nations, (Isa. xlix. 6.) and by this means the sacrifice of the Gentiles shall be likewise among the nations shall declare the glory of God's providence concerning their nation all along, by which many shall be invited to join with them, as also by the appearances of God's glory among them in his ordinances; some out of all languages of the nations shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, entreat- ing him to take notice of them, to admit them into his house, to stay a while with them, till they are ready, for we will go with you, having heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. Thus the glory of God was in part declared among the Gentiles; but more clearly and fully by the apostles and preachers of the gospel, who were sent into all the world, even to the isles afar off, to publish the glorious gospel of the blessed God. They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, Mark xvi. 20. 3. That many converts shall hereby be made, v. 20. They shall bring all your brethren (for proselytes ought to be owned and embraced as brethren) for an offering unto the Lord. God's glory shall not be in vain declared to them, but by it they shall be drawn, not merely by the promise of it, but, by the manifestation of it, to the Lord. They that are sent to them shall succeed so well in their negotiation, that the more thereupon shall be as great a flocking to Jerusalem, as used to be at
That a gospel-ministry shall be set up in the church, it being the enlargement of such a Gentile, of another people to it: (v. 21.) I will take of them, of the prophets, of the Gentile church, for priests and for Levites, to minister in holy things, and to preside in their religious assemblies, which is very necessary for doctrine, worship, and discipline. Hitherto the priests and Levites were all taken from among the Jews, and were all of one tribe; but in gospel-times God will take the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and will give them to him in holy things, to teach the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord, to be the stewards of the mysteries of God as the priests and Levites were under the law, to be pastors and teachers, or bishops, to give themselves to the word and prayer; and deacons to serve tables, and, as the Levites, to take care of the outward business of the church of God; Phil. ii. 1. Acts vi. 2. The apostles were all Jews, and so were the seventy disciples; the great apostle of the Gentiles was himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews; but when churches were planted among the Gentiles, they had ministers settled, who were of themselves elders in every church, (Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5.) which made the ministry to spread the more easily, and to be the more familiar, and if not the more venerable, yet the more acceptable to the Gentiles; and though I cannot but wish that there would come people of these corruptions which kept a prophet from having honour in his own country. God says, I will take, not all of them, though they are all in a spiritual sense made to our God kings and priests, but of them, some of them. It is God's work originally to choose ministers by qualifying them for, and inclining them to, the service, as well as to qualify them for it, that they may be capable of it for appointment. I will take them, I will admit them, though Gentiles, and will accept of them and their ministrations. This is a great honour and advantage to the Gentile church, as it was to the Jewish church, that God raised up of their sons for prophets, and their young men for Nazarites, Amos iii. 11.

5. That the church and ministry, being thus settled, shall continue and be kept up in a succession from one generation to another, v. 22. The change that will be made by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, is here described to be, (1.) A very great and universal change; it shall be a new world, the new heavens, and the new earth, promised before, ch. lv. 17. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new, (2 Cor. v. 17.) the old covenant of peculiarity is set aside, and a new covenant, a covenant of grace, established, Heb. viii. 13. We are now to serve in newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, Rom. vii. 6. New commandments are given relating both to heaven and earth, and new promises relating to both, and both together make a New Testament; so that they are new heavens and new earth, that God will create, and these a preparative for the new heavens and new earth, and the millennium of time, 2 Pet. iii. 12. (2.) A change of God's own making; he will create the new heavens and the new earth. The change was made by him that had authority to make new ordinances, as well as power to make new worlds. (3.) It will be an abiding, lasting change; a change never to be changed; a new world that will be always new, and never old, or that does with time wear out. It shall remain before me unalterable; for the gospel dispensation is to continue to the end of time, and not to be succeeded by any other. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom that cannot be moved; the laws and privileges of it are things that cannot be shaken, but shall for ever remain, Heb. xii. 27, 28. It shall therefore remain, because it is before God; it is under his eye, and care, and special protection. (4.) It will be maintained in a seed that shall serve Christ; Your seed, and in them, your name, shall be called; a seed of ministers, a seed of Christians; as one generation of born pass over before another generation shall come, and thus the name of Christ with that of Christians, shall continue on earth while the earth remains, and his throne as the days of heaven. The gates of hell, though they fight against the church, shall not prevail, neither enter into the saints of the Most High.

7. That the public worship of God in religious assemblies shall be carefully and constantly attended upon by all that are thus brought as an offering to the Lord, v. 23. This is described in expressions suited to the Old Testament dispensation, to show that though the ceremonial law should be abolished, and the temple-services should come to an end, yet God should be still as regularly, constantly, and acceptably worshipped as ever. Herefore Jews only went up to appear before God, and they were bound to attend only three times a year, and the males only; but now all flesh, Gentiles as well as Jews, men as well as women, shall come and worship before God in his presence, though not in his temple at Jerusalem, but in religious assemblies dispersed all the world over, which shall be to them as the tabernacle of meeting was to the Jews. God will in them set up his name, and though there be but two or three come together, he will be among them, will meet them, and bless them. And they shall have the benefit of these holy congregations frequently, every new moon, and every sabbath, not, as formerly, at the three annual feasts only. There is no necessity of one certain place, as the temple was of old. Christ is our Temple, in whom by faith all believers meet, and therefore the name of God may be set up there, and it is possible that all should meet at one place; but it is fit that there should be a certain time appointed, that the service may be done certainly and frequently, and a token thereby given of the spiritual communion which all Christian assemblies have with each other, by faith, hope, and holy love. The new moons and the sabbaths are mentioned, because, under the law, though the annual feasts were to be celebrated at Jerusalem, yet the new moons and sabbaths were religiously observed all the country over, in the schools of the prophets first, and afterward in the synagogues, (2 Kings iv. 23. Amos viii. 5.) according to the model of which Christian assemblies seem to be performed. Where the Lord's day is weekly sanctified, and the Lord's Supper monthly celebrated, and both duly attended on, there this promise is fulfilled, there the Christian new moons and sabbaths are observed. See here, that God is to be worshipped in solemn assemblies, that it is the duty of all, as they have opportunity, to wait upon God in those assemblies; all flesh must come; though flesh, weak, corrupt, and sinful, let them come that the flesh may be mortified. In worshipping God, we present ourselves before him, and offer a sacrifice acceptable in his sight. For doing this, there ought to be stated times, and are so; and we must see that it is our interest as well as our duty constantly and conscientiously to observe these times.
against God, not only broken his laws, but broken covenant with him, and thought themselves able to contend with him. It may be meant especially of the unbelieving Jews that rejected the gospel of Christ. (2.) What their misery is; it is here represented by the frightful spectacle of a field of battle, covered with the carcases of the slain, that lie rotting above ground, full of worms crawling about them, and feeding on them; and if you go to burn them, they are so scattered, and it is such a noisome piece of work to get them together, that it would be endless, and the fire would never be quenched; so that they are an abhoring to all flesh, nobody cares to come near them. Now this is sometimes accomplished in temporal judgments, and perhaps never nearer the letter than in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation by the Romans, in which destruction it is computed that above two millions, first and last, were cut off by the sword, beside what perished by famine and pestilence. It may refer likewise to the spiritual judgments that came upon the unbelieving Jews, which St. Paul looks upon, and shows us, Rom. xi. 8, &c. They became dead in sins, twice dead; the church of the Jews was a carcase of a church, all its members were putrid carcases, their worm died not, their own consciences made them continually uneasy; and the fire of their rage against the gospel was not quenched, which was their punishment as well as their sin; and they became, more than ever any nation under the sun, an abhoring to all flesh. But our Saviour applies it to the everlasting misery and torment of impenitent sinners in the future state, where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched; (Mark ix. 44.) for the soul, whose conscience is its constant tormentor, is immortal, and the God, whose wrath is its constant terror, is eternal. (3.) What notice shall be taken of it; they that worship God shall go forth, and look upon them, to affect their own hearts with the love of their Redeemer, when they see what misery they are redeemed from. As it will aggravate the miseries of the damned, to see others in the kingdom of heaven, and themselves thrust out, (Luke xiii. 28.) so it will illustrate the joys and glories of the blessed, to see what becomes of them that died in their transgression, and it will elevate their praises to think that they were themselves as brands plucked out of that burning. To the honour of that free grace which thus distinguished them, let the redeemed of the Lord with all humility, and not without a holy trembling, sing their triumphant songs.
AN

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

JEREMIAH.

The Prophecies of the Old Testament, as the Epistles of the New, are placed rather according to their bulk than their seniority; the longest first, not the eldest. There were divers prophets, and writing ones, that were contemporaries with Isaiah, as Micah; or a little before him, as Hosea, and Joel, and Amos, or soon after him, as Habakkuk and Nahum are supposed to be: and yet the prophecy of Jeremiah, who began many years after Isaiah had finished, is placed next to his, because there is so much in it: where we meet with most of God's word, there let the preference be given; and yet those of lesser gifts are not to be despised or excluded. Nothing now occurs to be observed further concerning prophecy in general; but concerning this prophet Jeremiah we may observe,

I. That he was betimes a prophet; he began young, and therefore could say it from his own experience, that it is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth, the yoke both of service and of affliction, Lam. iii. 27. Jerome observes, that Isaiah, who had more years over his head, had his tongue touched with a coal of fire, to purge away his iniquity; (ch. vi. 7.) but that when God touched Jeremiah's mouth, who was yet but young, nothing was said of the purging of his iniquity, (ch. i. 9.) because, by reason of his tender years, he had not so much sin to answer for.

II. That he continued long a prophet; some reckon fifty years, others above forty. He began in the 13th year of Josiah, when things went well under that good king, but he continued through all the wicked reigns that followed; for when we set out for the service of God, though the wind may be fair and favourable, we know not how soon it may turn and be tempestuous.

III. That he was a reproving prophet, was sent in God's name to tell Jacob of their sins, and to warn them of the judgments of God that were coming upon them; and the critics observe, that therefore his style and manner of speaking is more plain and rough, and less polite, than that of Isaiah and some other of the prophets. Those that are sent to discover sin, ought to lay aside the enticing words of man's wisdom. Plain dealing is best when we are dealing with sinners, to bring them to repentance.

IV. That he was a suffering prophet; so he is commonly called, not only because he penned the Lamentations, but because he was all along a mournful spectator of the sins of his people, and of the desolating judgments that were coming upon them. And for this reason, perhaps, those who imagined our Saviour to be one of the prophets, thought him of any of them to be most like to Jeremiah, (Matth. xvi. 14.) because he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

V. That he was a suffering prophet; he was persecuted by his own people more than any of them, as we shall find in the story of this book: for he lived and preached just before the Jews' destruction by the Chaldeans, when their character seems to have been the same as it was just before their destruction by the Romans, when they killed the Lord Jesus, and persecuted his disciples, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, for wrath was come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. The last account we have of him, in his history, is, that the remaining Jews forced him to go down with them into Egypt; whereas the current tradition is, among Jews and Christians, that he suffered martyrdom. Hottinger, out of Elnakin, an Arabic historian, relates, that he, continuing to prophesy in Egypt against the Egyptians and other nations, was stoned to death; and that long after, when Alexander entered Egypt, he took up the bones of Jeremiah where they were buried in obscurity, and carried them to Alexandria, and buried them there. The prophecies of this book, which we have in the nineteen first chapters, seem to be the heads of the sermons he preached in a way of general reproof for sin, and denunciation of judgment; afterward they are more particular and occasional, and mixed with the history of his day, but not placed in the order of time. With the threatenings are intermixed many gracious promises of mercy to the penitent, of the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity, and some that have a plain reference to the kingdom of the Messiah. Among the Apocryphal writings, an epistle is extant, said to be written by Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, warning them against the worship of idols, by exposing the vanity of them, and the folly of idolaters. It is in Baruch, ch. vi. But it is supposed not to be authentic; nor has it, I think, any thing like the life and spirit of Jeremiah's writings. It is also related concerning Jeremiah, (2 Mac. ii. 4.) that when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans, he, by direction from God, took the ark and altar of incense, and carrying them to mount Nebo, redirected them in a hollow cave there, and stopped the door; but some that followed him, and thought that they had marked the place, could not find it; he blamed them for seeking it, telling them that the place should be unknown till the time that God should gather his people together again. But I know not what credit is to be given to that story, though it is there said to be found in the records. We cannot but be concerned, in the reading of Jeremiah's prophecies, to find that they were so little regarded by the men of that generation; but let us make use of that as a reason why we should regard them the more: for they are written for our learning too, and for warning to us and to our kind.
CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. The general inscription or title of this book, with a time and place of Jeremiah's public ministry, v. 1., 3. 2. The call of Jeremiah to the prophetic office, his modest objection against it, and an ample commission given him for the execution of his office, v. 4-10. 3. The vision of the wood of mourning and a seething-pot, signifying the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, v. 11-16. 4. Encouragement given to the prophet to go on undaunted in his work, the assurance of God's presence with him, v. 17-19. Thus is he set to work by one that will be sure to bear him out.

1. The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin: 2. To whom the word of the Lord came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign. 3. It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the end of the eleventh year of Zedekiah the son of Josiah king of Judah, unto the carrying away of Jerusalem captive in the fifth month.

We have here as much as it was thought fit we should know of the genealogy of this prophet, and the chronology of his prophecy.

1. We are told what family the prophet was of. He was the son of Hilkiah: not that Hilkiah, it is supposed, that was High Priest in Josiah's time, (for then he would have been called so, and not, as here, one of the priests that were in Anathoth,) but another of the same name. Jeremiah signifies one raised up by the Lord. It is said of Christ, that he is a prophet whom the Lord our God raised up unto us, Deut. xviii. 15, 18. He was of the priests, and, as a priest, was authorized and appointed to teach the people; but to that authority and appointment God added the extraordinary commission of a prophet. Ezekiel was also a priest. Thus God would support the honour of the priesthood at a time when, by their sins and God's judgments upon them, it was sadly collapsed. He was of the priests in Anathoth; a city of priests, which lay about three miles from Jerusalem. Abiathar had his country house there, 1 Kings ii. 26.

2. We have the general date of his prophecies; the knowledge of which is requisite to the understandings of the prophecy. (1.) He began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, v. 2. Josiah, in the twelfth year of his reign, began a work of reformation, applied himself with all sincerity to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the images, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3. And very seasonably then was this young prophet raised up to assist and encourage the young king in the work of the Lord. (2.) Jeremiah was raised up to him; not only a charge and commission to him to prophesy, but a revelation of the things themselves which he was to deliver. As it is an encouragement to ministers to be contented and protected by such pious magistrates as Josiah was, so it is a great help to magistrates, in any good work of reformation, to be advised and animated, and to have a prophet in the midst of them, by whom the faithful, zealous ministers as Jeremiah was. Now, one would have expected when these two united forces, such a prince, and such a prophet, (as in a like case, Ezra v. 1, 2.) and both young, such a complete reformation would have been brought about and settled, as would have prevented the ruin of the church and state; but it proved quite otherwise. In the eighteenth year of Josiah we find there was not a general at many of the relics of idolatry, that were not purged out: for what can the best princes and prophets do to prevent the ruin of a people that hate to be reformed? And therefore, though it was a time of reformation, Jeremiah continued to foretell the destroying judgments that were coming upon them; for there is no symptom more threatening to any people than fruitless attempts of reformation. Josiah and Jeremiah would have healed them, but they would not be healed by them. (3.) Jeremiah hearkened to prophecy through the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who reigned eleven years apiece; he prophesied to the carrying away of Jerusalem captive, (v. 3.) that great event which he had so often prophesied of. He continued to prophesy after that, ch. xl. 1. But the computation here is made to end with that, because it was the accomplishment of many of the predictions made. The kingdom of Josiah to the captivity was just forty years. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that as Moses was so long with the people, a teacher in the wilderness, till they entered into their own land; Jeremiah was so long with their own land a teacher, before they went into the wilderness of the heathen; and he thinks that therefore a special mark is set upon the last forty years for the iniquity of Judah, which Ezekiel was forty days there, the 25th. day of the second month, at that time, they had Jeremiah prophesying among them, which was a great aggravation of their impenitency. God, in this prophet, suffered their manners, their ill manners, forty years, and at length swared in his wrath that they should not continue in his rest.

4. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 5. Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. 6. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak; for I am a child. 7. But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. 8. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. 9. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth: and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. 10. See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.

Here is,

1. Jeremiah's early designation to the work and office of a prophet, which God gives him notice of as a reason for his early application to that business; (v. 4, 5.) The word of the Lord came to him, with a satisfying assurance to himself that it was the word of the Lord, and not a delusion; and God told him, 1. That he had ordained him a prophet to the nations, or, against the nation, and for the nation. He is the voice, who are therefore now reckoned among the nations, because they had learned their works, and mingled themselves with them in their idolatries, which otherwise they should not have been, Num. xxii. 9. Yet he was given to be a prophet, not to Jews only, but to the neighbouring nations; to whom he was to send scribes, (ch. xxviii. 5.) and whom he must make to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger, ch. xxv. 17. He is still in his writings a prophet to the nations (to cwr nations
Jeremiah 1

319

cannot. Let it be said, I am a child: I speak for such; and though they mock me, and

out of the mouths of babes and sucklings."

Let him not object that he shall meet with many enemies and much opposition; God will be his protector; (v. 8.) "Behold, thou art a child, and shalt be enabled to go to all whom I shall send thee, though they were ever so great, and ever so many. And whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt have judgment, memory, and language, wherewith to speak it, as it should be spoken." Samuel delivered a message from God to Eli, when he was a little child. Note, God can, when he pleases, make children prophets, and ordain strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

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JEREMIAH, I.

bute from them, or to enrich himself with their spoils, but to root out, and pull down, and destroy, and yet withhold that word and plant. [1.] He must attempt to reform the nations, to root out, and pull down, and destroy idolatry and other wickedness among them, to extirpate those vicious habits and customs which had long taken root, to throw down the kingdom of sin, that religion and virtue might be planted and built among them. And to the introducing and establishing of that which is good, it is necessary that which is evil be removed. [2.] He must tell them that it would be well or ill with them, according as they were, or were not, reformed. He must set before them life and death, good or evil, according to God's declaration of the method he takes with kingdoms and nations, ch. xviii. 7, 10. He must assure those who persisted in their wickedness, that they should be rooted and destroyed, and those who repented, that they should be built and planted. He was authorized to read the doom of nations, and God would ratify it, and fulfill it, (Isa. xliv. 26,) would do it according to his word, and therefore is said to do it by his word. It is thus expressed, partly to show how sure the word of prophecy is—it will as certainly be accomplished as if it were done already; and partly to put a hindrance upon the prophetic office, and not to look truly great, that others may not despire prophets, nor they disparage themselves. And yet more honourable does the gospel-ministry look, in that declarative power Christ gave his apostles, to remit and retain, (John xx. 23,) to bind and loose, Matth. xviii. 18.

11. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond-tree. 12. Then said the Lord unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will harden my word to perform it. 13. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething-pot, and the face thereof is toward the north. 14. Then the Lord said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15. For lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the Lord; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. 16. And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands. 17. Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all the words that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. 18. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defended city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the whole land; against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. 19. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.

Here,

1. God gives Jeremiah, in vision, a view of the principal errand he was to go upon, which was to foretell the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their sins, especially their idolatry. This was at first represented to him, in a way proper to make an impression upon him, that he might have it upon his heart in all his dealings with the people.

2. He intimates to him that the people were ripening fast for ruin, and that ruin was hastening fast toward them. God, having answered his objection, that he was a child, goes on to initiate him in the prophetical learning and language; and, having promised to enable him to speak intelligibly to the people, he here teaches him to understand what God says to him; for prophets must have eyes in their heads as well as tongues, must be seers as well as speakers; he therefore asks him, "Jeremiah, what seest thou? Look about thee, and observe now." And he was soon aware of what was presented to him: I see a rod, denoting affliction and chastisement; a correcting rod hanging over us; and it is a rod of an almond-tree, which is one of the forerustess trees in the spring, is in the bud and blossom in winter, which, when the snow is broken out, it flourishes, says Pliny, in the month of January, and by March has ripe fruits; hence it is called in the Hebrew, Shakedh, the hasty tree, whether this rod that Jeremiah saw had already budded, as some think, or whether it was stripped and dry, as others think, and yet Jeremiah knew it to be of an almond-tree, as Aaron's rod was, is unreasonable. Jeremiah explained. (v. 12.) Thou hast well seen. God commanded him that he was so observant, and so quick of apprehension, as to be aware, though it was the first vision he ever saw, that it was a rod of an almond-tree; that his mind was so composed as to be able to distinguish. Prophets have need of good eyes; and those that see well shall be commanded, and those that do not speak shall be warned. "Then hast seen a hasty tree, which signifies that I will hasten my word to perform it." Jeremiah shall prophecy that which he himself shall live to see accomplished. We have the explication of this, Ezek. vii. 10, 11. "The rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded, violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness. The measure of Jerusalem's iniquity fills very fast; and as if their destruction shambled not too long, they break it, they hasten it, and I will hasten to perform what I have spoken against them." 2. He intimates to him whence the intended ruin should arise; Jeremiah is a second time asked, What seest thou? He sees a seething-pot upon the fire, (v. 13.) representing Jerusalem and Judah in great commotion, like boiling water, by reason of the descent which the Chaldean army made upon them; and we see the vapour of smoke, or smoke of the fire, that is wasting away as boiling water does, and sensibly evaporating and growing less and less; ready to boil over, to be thrown out of their own city and land, as out of the pan into the fire, from bad to worse. Some think that those scoffers referred to this, who said, (Ezek. xi. 3.) The city is the caldron, and we be the flesh. Now the mouth or face of the Lord is toward the north; for there is the fire and fuel were to come, that must make the pot boil thus. So the vision is explained, v. 14. Out of the north an evil shall break forth, or shall be opened. It had been long designed by the justice of God, and long desired by the sin of the people, and yet hitherto the divine patience had restrained it, and held it in, as it were;
the enemies had intended it, and God had checked
them; but now all restraints shall be taken off, and
the evil shall break forth; the direful scene shall
open, and the enemy shall come in like a flood.
It
shall be a universal calamity, it shall come upon all
the inhabitants of the land, from the highest to the
lowest, for they have all corrupted their way. Lord,
let my name be numbered among those who shall
for, or hinder thee in, this service; buckle to it with
readiness and resolution; and be not entangled with
doubts about it.” He must be quick—Arise, and
lose no time; he must be busy—Arise, and speak
unto them in season, out of season; he must be bold
—Be not dismayed at their faces, as before, v. 8.
In a word, he must be faithful; it is required of
ambassadors that they be brave.

In two things he must be faithful. 1. He must
speak all that he is charged with. Speak all that I
command thee. He must forget nothing as minute,
or foreign, or not worth mentioning; every word of
God is weighty. He must conceal nothing for fear
of offending; he must utter nothing under pretence
of being afraid of an awkward or unpopular
charge, but without addition or diminution, declare
the whole counsel of God. 2. He must speak to all
that he is charged against; he must not whisper it in a
corner to a few particular friends that will take it
well, but he must appear against the kings of Judah, if
they be wicked kings, and bear his testimony
against the sins even of the princes thereof; for
the greatest of men are not exempt from the judgments,
either of God’s hand, or of his mouth. Nay, he
must not spare the priests thereof; though he
himself was a priest, and was concerned to maintain
the dignity of his order, yet he must not therefore
flatter them in their sins. He must appear against
the people of the land, though they were his own people,

as far as they were against the Lord.

And two things are here given why he should
dius the (1.) Because he had reason to fear the
wrath of God, if he should be false: “Be not
dismayed at their faces, so as to desert thine office, or
shrink from the duty of it, lest I confound and
dismay thee before them; lest I give thee up to thy
faint-heartedness.” Those that consult their own
credit, ease, and safety, more than their work and
duty, are justly left to God’s mercy themselves, and
bring upon themselves the shame of their own
cowardliness. Nay, lest I reckon with thee for thy
faint-heartedness, and break thee to pieces; some read it.
Therefore this prophet says, ch. xvii. 17.
Lord, Be not thou a terror to me. Note, The fear
of God is the best antidote against the fear of man.

Let us always be afraid of offending God, who after
he has killed his power to cast into hell, and then
he will not be willing to spare any of these false
men that can but kill the body, Luke xxi. 4, 5. See
Neh. iv. 14. It is better to have all the men
in the world our enemies than God our Enemy.

(2.) Because he had no reason to fear the wrath
of man if he were faithful; for the God whom he
served, would protect him, and bear him out, so
that they should neither sink his spirits, nor drive
him off from his work, should neither stop his
mouth, nor take away his life, till he had finished
his testimony, v. 18. This young stripping of a
prophet is made by the power of God, as an
impregnable city, fortified with iron pillars and sur-
rounded with walls of brass; he sallies out upon
them in reproofs and threatenings, and keeps them
in awe. They set upon him on every side; the
kings and princes better him with their power, his
priests thunder against him with their church-
councils, and the people of the land shoot their arrows
at him, even slanderous and bitter words; but he
shall keep his ground, and make his part good with
them; he shall still be a curb upon them; (v. 19.)
They shall fight against thee, but they shall not
prevail to destroy thee, for I am with thee to deliver
thee out of their hands: nor shall they prevail to
defeat the word that God sends them by Jer-
emiah, nor to deliver themselves, it shall take hold
of them, for God is against them to destroy
them. Note, Those who are sure that they have
God with them, (as he is if they be with him,)
need not, ought not to be afraid, whoever is against them.

CHAP. II.

It is probable that this chapter was Jeremiah's first sermon after his ordination; and a most lively, pathetic scene it is. Is it not so we have in all the books of the prophets? Let him not say, I cannot speak, for I am a child; for, God having touched his mouth, and put his words into it, none can say that he is not a prophet. The first part of the chapter is a laudation of God's people, their transgressions, even the house of Jacob their sins; it is all by way of reproof and conviction, that they might be brought to repent of their sins, and so prevent the ruin that was coming upon them. Then the least up against them is very high, the aggravations black, the arguments used for their conviction very close and pressing; and the expositions very pregnant and affecting. For they are not charged with here, is idolatry, forsaking the true God, their own God, for other false gods. Now they are told, 1. That this was ungrateful to God, who had been so kind to them, v. 18. II. That it was without precedent, that a nation should change their god, v. 9. 13. III. That hereby they had dispersed and ruined themselves, v. 14. 19. IV. That they had broken their covenants, and degenerated from their good beginnings, v. 20. 21. V. That their wickedness was too plain to be concealed, and too bad to be excused, v. 22. 23. 25. VI. That they persisted willfully and obstinately in it, and were irreclaimable and unalterable in their idolatries, v. 24. 25. 36. VII. That they shamed themselves, especially by their idolatry, and should shortly be made ashamed of it when they should find their idols unable to help them, v. 26. 29. 37. VIII. That they had not merely been convinced of the rebukes of Providence, that had been conveyed to them by their idolatries, but had mixed the most unnatural murders, shedding the blood of the poor and distressed, v. 31. Those hearts were hard indeed, that were untouched and unhumbled when their sins were thus set in order before them. O that by meditating on this chapter we might be brought to repent of our spiritual idolatries, giving that place in our souls to the world and the flesh, which should have been reserved for God only!

1. MOREOVER, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 2. Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the Kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wastest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the Lord. 4. Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: 5. Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? 6. Neither said they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness; through a land of deserts, and of pits; through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt? 7. And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof; and the goodnes thereof: but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. 8. The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Here is, 1. A command given to Jeremiah to go and carry a message from God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He was charged in general (ch. i. 17.) to go, and speak to them; here he is particularly charged to go, and speak this to them. Note, It is good for ministers by faith and prayer to take out a fresh commission, when they address themselves solemnly to any part of the people. Their business is to show the man of God that he has to deliver with the word of God, and see that it agrees with it, that he may be able to say, not only The Lord sent me, but, He sent me to speak this. He must go from Anathoth, where he lived in a pleasant retirement, spending his time (it is likely) among a few friends, and in the study of the law, and must make his appearance at Jerusalem, that noisy, tumultuous city, and cry in their ears, as a man in earnest, and that would be heard; Cry aloud, that all may hear, and none may plead ignorance. Go close to them, and cry in the ears of these that have stopped their ears.

II. The message he was commanded to deliver. He must upbraid them with their horrid ingratitude, in forsaking a God who had been so kind and merciful to them; that this might either make them ashamed, and bring them to repentance, or, might justify God in changing his hand against them.

1. God here puts them in mind of the favours he had of old bestowed upon them, when they were first formed into a people; (v. 2.) I remember for thy sake, and I would have thee to remember it, and improve the remembrance of it for the future; if I can not forget the kindness of them with; and, the love of things spirituals. This may be understood, (A.) Of the kindness they had for God; it was not such indeed as they had any reason to boast of, or to plead with God for favour to be shown them: (for many of them were very unkind and provoking, and when they did return, and inquire early after God, they did but flatter him) yet God would not forget them, to mention it, and plead it in their case; for though it was but a short time that they showed him, he took it kindly. When they believed the Lord and his servant Moses, when they sang God's praise at the Red sea, when at the foot of mount Sinai, they promised, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient; then was the kindness of their youth, and the love of their espousals. When they seemed so forward for God, he said, Surely they are my people, and will be faithful to me, children that will not lie. Note, Those that begin well, and promise fair, but do not perform and persevere, will justly be upbraided with their hopeful and promising beginnings. God remembers the kindness of our youth, and the love of our espousals, the zeal we then seemed to have for him, and the affection wherewith we made our covenants with him, the buds and blossoms that never came to perfection, and it is good for us to remember them, that we may remember whence we are fallen, and return to our first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Gal. iv. 15.

In two things appeared the kindness of their youth. [1.] That they followed the direction of the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness; though sometimes they spoke of Egypt, or pushed forward into Canaan, yet they did neither; forty years together went after the pillar of cloud and fire, through the wilderness, and trusted him to provide for them, though it was a land that was not sown. This God took kindly, and took notice of it to their praise long after, that though much was amiss
among them, yet they never forsake the direction they were under. Thus, though Christ often chid his disciples, yet he commanded them, at parting, for ought I have done did you? ch. xxii. 28. It must be the strong affection of the youth, and the espousals, that will carry us on to follow God in a wilderness, with an implicit faith, and an entire resignation; and it is a pity that those who have so followed him, should ever leave him. [2.] That they entertained divine institutions, set up the tabernacle among them, and attended the service of it. Israel was taught of God, ch. xxvii. 22; so the Jews were taught him in covenant as a peculiar people. Thus they began in the Spirit, and God puts them in mind of it, that they might be ashamed of ending in the flesh. Or, it may be understood, (2.) Of God’s kindness to them; of that he afterwards speaks largely, When Israel was a child, then I loved him, Hos. xi. 1. He then espoused that people to himself with all the affection with which a young man marries a virgins, (ch. iii. 5.) for the time was a time of love, Ezek. xvi. 8.

[1.] God appropriated them to himself; though they were a sinful people, yet by virtue of the covenant made with them, and the church set up among them, they were holiness to the Lord, dedicated to his honour, and taken under his special tuition: they were, as it were, first-fruits of his Israel church he had in the world; these were the first-fruits, but the full harvest was to be gathered from among the Gentiles. The first-fruits of the increase were God’s part of it, were offered to him, and he was honoured with them; so were the people of the Jews; what little tribute, rent, and homage God had from the world, he had it chiefly from them; and it was their honour to be thus set apart from God. This honour have all the saints, they are the first-fruits of his creatures, Jam. i. 18.

[2.] Having espoused them, he espoused their cause, and became an Enemy to their enemies, Exod. xxii. 22. Being the first-fruits of his increase, all that devoured him, (so it should be read,) did offend, they trespassed, they contracted guilt, and evil befell them; as those were reckoned offenders, that devoured the first-fruits, or any thing else that was holy to the Lord, that embrazed them, or converted them to their own use, Lev. v. 15. Whoever offered any injury to the people of God, did it at their hirel; their God was ready to avenge their quarrel, and said to the proudest of kings, Touch not mine anointed, Ps. cv. 14. Exod. xxvii. The God of God’s people, he was in that manner united with those that attempted to devour them, and draw them off from being holiness to the Lord; witness his quarrel with the Midianites about the matter of Peor, Numb. xxxv. 17, 18.

[3.] He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and great terror, (Deut. iv. 34.) and yet with a kind hand and great tenderness led them through a vast howling wilderness, (v. 31.) that they might see the hand of God in giving them to drink of the fulchul land, where there was ground, not to feed them, but to bury them; where there was no good to be expected, for it was a land of drought, and all manner of evil to be feared, for it was the shadow of death; in that darksome valley they walked forty years; but God was with them, his rod, in Moses’s hand, and his fire, in the wilderness; God was a guide for them, (Ps. xix. 5.) gave them bread out of the clouds, and drink out of the rocks. It was a land abandoned by all mankind, as yielding neither road nor rest; it was no thoroughfare, for no man passed through it; no settlement, for no man dwelt there; for God will teach his people to tread untrodden paths, to dwell alone, and to be singular. The difficulties of the journey are thus insisted on, to magnify the power and goodness of God in bringing them, through all, safe to their journey’s end at last. All God’s spiritual Israel must own their obligations to him for a safe conduct through the wilderness of the world, no less dangerous to the soul than that was to the body.

[4.] At length he settled them in Canaan; (v. 7.) I brought you into a plentiful country; which would be the more acceptable after they had been for so many years in a land of drought. They did eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof, and were allowed so to do. I brought you into a land of Carathum’s possession, but you make it a place of extraneous and ordinary fruitfulness; Canaan was as great fruitful field, Deut. viii. 7.

[5.] God gave them the means of knowledge and grace, and communion with him; this is implied, v. 8. They had priests that handled the law, read it, and expounded it to them; that was part of their business, Deut. xxxii. 8. They had pastors to guide them, and take care of their affairs, magistrates and judges; they had prophets to consult God for them, and to make known his mind to them.

2. He upbraids them with their horrid ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for these favours; let them all come, and answer to this charge; (v. 4.) it is exhibited in the name of God against all the families of the house of Israel, for they were not as the other nations: Have you, in your highest estate, done such injuries, or that you might not have done? Have you, upon trial, found God a hard Master? Have his commands put any hardship upon you, or obliged you to any thing unfit, unfair, or unbecoming you? Have his promises put any cares upon you, or raised your expectations of things which you were afterward disappointed of? You that renounce your covenant with God, can you say that it was a hard bargain, and that which you could not live upon? You that forsake the ordinances of God, can you say that it was because they were a wearisome service, or work that there was nothing to be got by? No, the disappointments you have met with, were owing to yourselves, not to God. The yoke of his commandments is easy, and in keeping of them there is great reward. Note, Those that forsake God’s commandments, become judges of their own case, and determine for themselves what provocation to do so for; for this we may safely appeal to the consciences of sinners; the slotful servant that offered such a plea as this, had it overruled out of his own mouth, Luke xix. 22. Though he afflicts us, we cannot say that there is iniquity in him, he deoth us no wrong; the ways of the Lord are undoubtedly equal, all the iniquity is in our ways.

[1.] They had quitted his service; "They are gone from me, nay, they are gone far from me." They studied how to estrange themselves from God and their duty, and got as far as they could out of the reach of his commandments and their own convictions. Those that have deserted religion, commonly set themselves at a greater distance from it, in a greater opposition to it, than those that never knew it.

[2.] They had quitted it for the service of idols, which was so much the greater reproach to God and his service; they went from him, not to mend themselves, but to cheat themselves; they have walked after vanity, that is, idlery; for an idol is a vain thing; it is nothing in the world, 1 Cor. viii. 4. Deut. xxxii. 21. Jer. xiv. 22. "Mischievous wor-
ships are vanities, Acts xiv. 15. Idolaters are vain, for they that make idols are like unto them, (Ps. cxv. 8.) as much stocks and stones as the images they worship, and good for as little.

[5.] They had with idolatry introduced all manner of wickedness. When they entered into the good land which God gave them, they defiled it, (v. 7.) by defiling themselves, and disfiguring themselves for the service of God. It was God's land, they were his tenants to him, sojourners in it, Lev. xxv. 23. It was his heritage, for it was a holy land, Immanuel's land; but they made it an abomination, even to God himself, who was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.

[4.] Having forsaken God, though they soon found that they had changed for the worse, yet they had no thoughts of returning to him again, nor took any steps towards it. Neither the people nor the priests made any inquiry after him, took no thought about their duty to him, nor expressed any desire to recover his favour. First, The people said not, Where is the Lord? v. 6. Though they were trained up in an observance of him as their God, and had been often told that he brought them out of the land of Egypt, to be a peculiar people to himself, yet they never asked after him, nor desired the knowledge of his ways. Secondly, The priests said not, Where is the Lord? v. 8. They whose office it was to attend immediately upon him, who were in no condition to draw any draw near with him, or approve themselves to him. They who should have instructed the people in the knowledge of God, took no care to get the knowledge of him themselves. The scribes, who handled the law, did not know God nor his will, could not expound the scriptures at all, or not aright. The pastors, who should have kept the flock from transgressing, were themselves ringed in with transgressions. They had transgressed against me. The pretenders to prophecy prophecied by Baal, in his name, to his honour, being backed and supported by the wicked kings, to confront the Lord's prophets. Baal's prophets joined with Baal's priests, and walked after the things which do not profit, after the idols which can be no way helpful to their worshippers. See how the best characters are warped, and the best offer not at the sin and ruin of a people when the blind are leaders of the blind.

9. Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the Lord, and with your children's children will I plead. 10. For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing; 11. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. 12. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. 13. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

The prophet having shown their base ingratitude in forsaking God, here shows their unparalleled fickleness and folly; (v. 9.) I will yet plead with you. Note, Before God punishes sinners, he pleads with them, to bring them to repentance. Again, When much has been said of the evil of sin, still there is more to be said, when one article of the charge is made good, there is another to be urged; when we have said a great deal, still we have yet to speak on God's behalf, Job xxxvi. 2. Those that deal with sinners, for their conviction, must urge a variety of their defects, and the more they have had before pleaded with their fathers, and asked why they walked after vanity, and became vain, v. 5. Now he pleads with them, who persisted in that vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers, and with their children's children, with all that in every age tread in their steps. Let those that forsake God know that he is willing to argue the case fairly with them, so it may be justified when he speaks. He pleads that with us, which we should plead with ourselves.

1. He shows that they acted contrary to the usage of all nations; their neighbours were more firm and faithful to their false gods than they were to the true God. They were ambitious of being like the nations, and yet in this they were unlike them. He challenges them to produce an instance of any nation that had changed their gods, (v. 10, 11.) or were apt to change them. Let them survey either the old records, or the present state, of the isles of Chittim, Greece, and the European islands, the countries that were more polite and learned; and of Kedar, that lay south-east, (as the other north-west from them,) which were more rude and barbarous; and they should not find an instance of a nation that had changed their gods; though they had never done them any kindness, nor could do, for they were no gods. Such a veneration had they for their gods, so good an opinion of them, and such a respect for the choice their fathers had made, that though they were gods of wood and stone, they would not change them for gods of silver and gold, no not for the living and true God. Shall we praise them for this? We praise them not. But it may be urged, to the reproach of Israel, that they who were the only people that had no cause to change their God, were yet the only people that had changed him. Note, Men are with difficulty brought off that religion which they had been brought up in, though ever so absurd and grossly false. The zeal and constancy of idolaters should shame Christians out of their carelessness and profession.

II. He shows that they acted contrary to the dictates of common sense, in that they not only changed, (it may sometimes be our duty and wisdom to do so,) but that they changed for the worse, and made a bad bargain for themselves. 1. They parted from a God who was their Glory; who made them truly glorious, and every way put honour upon them, one whom they might with a humble confidence name as theirs, who is himself a glorious God, and the glory of those whose God he is; he was particularly the glory of his people Israel, for his glory had often appeared on their tabernacle. 2. They closed with gods that could do them no good; gods that do not profit their worshipers. Idolaters change God's glory into shame, (Rom. i. 23.) and so they do their own; in dishonouring God, they destroy their own glory; and dishonouring themselves, are enemies to their own interest. Note, Whatever they turn to who forsake God, it will never do them any good; it will flatten them and please them, but it cannot profit them.

Heaven itself is here called upon to stand amazed at the sin and folly of these apostates from God; (v. 12, 13.) Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! He is compared with the heavens, because the heavens are such objects as must be expected to take no notice of it; but let the heavens and heavenly bodies be astonished at it. Let the sun blush to see such ingratitude, and be afraid to shine upon such ungrateful wretches. They that forsook God, worshipped the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, but these, instead of being pleased with the adora-
ions that were paid to them, were astonished and horribly afraid; and would rather have been very lovable, utterly exhausted, as the word is, and derived of their lightness, that it should give occasion to any to worship them. Some refer it to the angels of heaven; if they rejoice at the return of souls to God, we may suppose that they are astonished and horribly afraid at the revolt of souls from him. The meaning is, that the conduct of this people toward God was such as, (1.) We may well admire and wonder at, that ever men, who pretend to do the thing so very absurd, (2.) Such as we ought to have a holy indignation at as impious, and a high affront to our Maker, whose honour every good man is jealous for. (3.) Such as we may trembling to think of the consequences of; what will be in the end hereof. Be horribly afraid to think of the wrath and curse which will be the portion of those, who thus throw themselves out of God's grace and favour. Now what is it that is to be thought of with all this horror? it is this; “My people, whom I have taught, and should have ruled, have committed two great evils, ingratitude and folly; they have acted contrary both to their duty and to their interest. [1.] They have affronted their God, by turning their back upon him, as if he were not worthy their notice; “They have forsaken me, saith the Lord, the fountain of living waters, and have a child shall be charged, and sent to bed, and when he wakened, there was a goodly child standing by the bed. They have an abundant and constant supply of all the comfort and relief they stand in need of, and they have it freely.” God is their Fountain of life, Ps. xxxvi. 9. There is in him an all-sufficiency of grace and strength; all our springs are in him, and our streams from him; to forsake him is, in effect, to deny this; he has been to us a bountiful Benefactor, a Fountain of living waters, overflowing, every flowing, in the gifts of his favour; to forsake him is to refuse to acknowledge his kindness, and to withhold that tribute of love and praise, which his kindness calls for. [2.] They have cheated themselves; they forsook their own mercies, but it was for lying vanities; they took a great deal of pains to have them out cisterns, to dig pits or pools in the earth or rock, which they would carry water to, or which should receive the rain; but they proved broken cisterns, also at the bottom, that they could hold no water. When they came to quench their thirst there, they found nothing but mud and mire, and the filthy sediment of a standing lake. Such idols were to their worshippers, and such a change did they experience, who turned from God to them. If we make an idol of any creature, seeking or pleasure, or honour, if we place our happiness in it, and promise ourselves the comfort and satisfaction in it which are to be had in God only, if we make it our joy and love, our hope and confidence, we shall find it a cistern, which we take a great deal of pains to have cut and fill, and at the best it will hold but a little water, and that dead and flat, and soon corrupted; the cistern that cracks and cleaves in hot weather, so that the water is gone when we have most need of it, Job vi. 15. Let us therefore with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord only, for whither else shall we go? He has the words of eternal life.

14. Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled? 15. The young lions roared upon him and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burnt without inhabitant. 16. Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head. 17. Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? 18. And now, what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihon? Or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river? 19. These own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.

The prophet further to evince the folly of their forsaking God, shows them what mischief they had already brought upon themselves by it; it had already cost them dear, for to this we are owing all the calamities their country was now groaning under; which were but an earnest of more and greater if they repented not. See how they smarted for their folly.

1. Their neighbours, who were their professed enemies, prevailed against them, and that was in consequence of their sin.

2. They were enslaved, and lost their liberty; (v. 4.) Is Israel a servant? No, Israel is not so, my first-born; (Exod. iv. 22.) they are children, they are heirs; nay, their extraction is noble, they are the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen. Is he a home-born slave? No, he is not the son of the bond-woman, but of the free; they were designed for dominion, not for servitude. Every thing in their constitution carried on it the marks of freedom and honour; why then is he spoiled of his liberty? Who is he used as a servant, as a home-born slave? Why does he make himself a slave to his lusts, to his idols, to that which does not profit? v. 11. What a thing is this, that such a birth-right should be sold for a mess of pottage? Such a crown profaned, and laid in the dust! Why is he made a slave to the oppressor? God provided that a Hebrew servant should be free the seventh year, and that their slaves should be of the heathen, not of their brethren, Lev. xxv. 44, 46. But, notwithstanding this, the princes made slaves of their subjects, and masters of their servants, (eb. xxxiv. 11.) and so made their country mean and miserable, which God had made happy and honourable. The neighbouring princes and powers broke in upon them, and made some of them slaves given in to other countries, and perhaps sold others for slaves into foreign countries. And how came they thus to lose their liberties? For their iniquities they sold themselves, Isa. lxii. 1. We may apply this spiritually; Is the soul of man a servant? Is it a home-born slave? No, it is not; why then is it spoiled? It is because it has sold its own liberty, and enslaved itself to divers lusts, and to self-deceit, which is a lamentation, and should be for a lamentation.

2. They were impoverished, and had lost their wealth. God brought them into a plentiful country, (v. 7.) but all their neighbours made a prey of it. (v. 15.) young lions roar aloud over him, and yiel; they are a continual terror to him; sometimes one potent enemy, and sometimes another, and sometimes many, which often shatters down the confidence and triumph over him. They carry off the fruits of his land, and make that waste, burn his cities, when first they have plundered them, so that they remain without inhabitant, either because there are no houses to dwell in, or because those that should dwell in them are carried into captivity.

3. They were abused, and insulted over, and beaten by every body; (v. 16.) "Even the children of Noph and Tahapanes, desppicable people, not
famed for military courage or strength, have broken the crown of thy head, or fed upon it. In all their struggles with thee they have been too hard for thee, and thou hast always come off with a broken head. The principal part of thy country, that which lay next Jerusalem, this been, and is, a prey to thine enemies, whereas the condition of Judah had been of late, in the reign of Manasseh, we find, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. and perhaps it had not now much recovered itself. 4. All this was owing to their sin; (v. 17.) Hast thou not procured this unto thyself? By their sinful confederacies with the nations, and especially their conformity to them in their idolatrous customs and usages, they had made themselves very mean and contemptible, as all those do that have made a profession of religion, and afterward throw it off. Nothing now appeared of that, which, by their constitution, made them both honourable and formidable, and therefore nobody either respected them or feared them. But this was not all; they had provoked God to give them up into the hands of their enemies, and to make them a snare to them, and give them success against them; and thus thou hast procured it to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, revolted from thine allegiance to him, and so thrown thyself out of his protection; for protection and allegiance go together. Whatever trouble we are in at any time, we may thank ourselves for it; for we bring it upon our own heads, by forsaking God. "Thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, at the time that he was leading thee by the way;" (so it should be read) "then, when he was leading thee on to a happy peace and settlement, and thou wast within a step of it, thou forsookest him, and so didst put a bar in thine own door." 11. Their neighbours, that were their pretended friends, deceived them, distressed them, and helped them not; and God did whom they others would not. 1. They did in vain seek to Egypt and Assyria for help; (v. 18.) "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt? When thou art under apprehensions of danger, thou art running to Egypt for help, Isa. xxx. 1-2.—xxxl. 1. Thou art for drinking the waters of Sihon," that is, Niblus. "Thou refuest upon their multitude, and refreshest thyself with the fair promises they make thee; at other times thou dost go about to seek after the same, or going with all speed to fetch recruits thence, and thinkest to satisfy thyself with the waters of the river Euphrates; but what hast thou to do there? What wilt thou get by applying thyself to them? They shall help in vain, shall he broken reeds to thee, and what thou thoughtest would be to thee as a river, will be but a broken cistern." 2. This also was because of their sin; the judgment shall unavoidably come upon them which their sin has deserved; and then to what purpose is it to call in for help against it? (v. 19.) "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and it is impossible for them to save thee; known and see therefore, upon the whole matter, that it is an evil thing that thou hast forsaken God, for that is, that most of thine enemies enemies indeed, and thy friends false friends in vain." Observe here, (1.) The nature of sin; it is forsaking the Lord as our God; it is the soul's alienation from him, and aversion to him. Cheating to sin is leaving God. (2.) The cause of sin; it is because his fear is not in us. It is for want of a good principle in us, particularly for want of the fear of God, that we are made enemies, not only to God, but to one another. Therefore men forsake their duty to God, because they stand in no awe of him, nor have any dread of his displeasure. (3.) The malignity of sin; it is an evil thing and a bitter. Sin is an evil thing, an evil that has no good in it, an evil that is the root and cause of all other evil; it is evil in-
JEREMIAH, II.
32.

proofed upon them, and thay had frount enough to deny it. In this, as in other things, thair way was like that of the adulterous woman, that saus, I have done no such thing. 

2. Notwithstanding all their evasions, thay are convicted of it, and found guilty; "How canst thou deny the fact, and say, I have not gone after Baalim? How canst thou deny the fault, and say, I am not polluted?" The prophet speaks with wonder at their impudence; "How canst thou put on a face to say so, when it is certainly, Ps. (xxvii. 12) that unrighteousness is marked before me, saith the Lord God; it is laid up and hidden, to be produced against thee in thie day of judgment; sealed up among his treasures," Deut. xxxii. 34. Job xxi. 19. Hos. xiii. 12. "It is imprudent deep, and stained before me;" so some read it.

Though then endeavour to wash it out, as murderers to get the stain of the blood of the person slain out of their clothes, yet it will never be got out; God's eye is upon it, and we see that his judgment is according to truth. (2.) "Thine own conscience is a witness against thee. See thy way in the valley;" (they had worshipped idols, not only on the high hills, but in the valleys, (Isa. livi. 3, 6,) in the valley over against Beth-peor, (so some;) there they had worshipped Bal-peon; (Deut. xxxiv. 6. Numb. xxx. 3.) this is put before us as the iniquity of Peor; but if it mean any particular valley, surely it is the valley of the son of Hinnom, for that was the place where they sacrificed their children to Moloch, and which therefore witnessed against them more than any other; "look into that valley, and thou canst not know what thou hast done." 

III. The aggravations of this sin with whieh they are charged, which speak it exceeding sinful.

1. God had done great things for them, and yet they revoluted from him, and rebelled against him; (v. 20.) Of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; this refers to the bringing of them out of the land of Egypt, and the house of bondage, which they would not remember, (v. 6.) but God did; for when he told them that they should have no other gods before him, he prefixed this as a reason, I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of the land of Egypt! These bonds of theirs, which God had loosed, should have bound them for ever to him; but they had ungratefully broken the bonds of duty to that God who had broken the bonds of their slavery. 

2. They had promised fair, but had not made good their promise; "Thou saidst, I will not transgress; then when the mercy of thy deliverance was fresh, thou wast so sensible of it, that thou wast willing to lay thyself under the most sacred ties to continue faithful to thy God, and never to forsake him." Then they said, Nay but we will serve the Lord, Josh. xxiv. 14. Here it is observable that we would not transgress, we would not offend any more, and yet we have started aside, like a deceitful bow, and repeated and multiplied our transgressions. 

3. They had wickedly degenerated from what they were when God first formed them into a people; (v. 21.) I had planted thee a noble vine. The constitution of their government both in church and state was excellent. Like the other laws, statutes ordinances instructive, and very significant; and a generation of good men there was among them when they first settled in Canaan; Israel served the Lord, and kept close to him, all the days of Joshua, and the elders that out-lived Joshua; (Josh. xxiv. 31.) they were then wholly a right seed, likely to remain true, the vines we were planted in with choice vines; but it proved otherwise; the very men of this generation knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done, (Judg. ii. 10.) and so they were worse

at last, that great provocation which they were so notoriously guilty of. 1. They frequented the places of idol worship; (v. 20.) upon every high hill, and under every green tree. Profane shrines, such as the heathen had a foolish faintheartedness and venomed for; thou wast first to one and then to another, like one unsettled, and still uneasy and unsatisfied; but, in all, playing the harlot, worshipping false gods, which is spiritual whoredom, and was commonly accompanied with corporeal idol worship. They had done so in the name of God, wander endlessly, and a vagrant list is inevitable. 

They made images for themselves, and gave divine honour to them; (v. 26, 27.) not only the common people, but even the kings and princes, who should have restrained the people from doing ill, and the priests and prophets, who should have taught them to do well, were themselves so wretchedly sottish and stupid, and under the power of such a strong delusion, as to say to a stock, "Thou art my father, thou art my god, the author of my being, to whom I owe duty, and on whom I have a dependence;" saying to a stone, to an idol made of stone, "Thou hast begotten me, or brought me forth; therefore protect me, provide for me, and bring me up." What greater affront could men put upon God who is our father and sustainer? For that he had wrought their disowning of their obligations to him. What greater affront could men put upon themselves and their own reason, than to acknowledge that which is in itself absurd and impossible, and by making stocks and stones their parents, to make themselves no better than stocks and stones? When these were first made the objects of worship, they were supposed to be animated by some celestial power or spirit; but by degrees the thought of this was lost, and so vain did idolaters become in their imagination, even the princes and priests themselves, that the very idol, though made of wood and stone, was supposed to be their father, and adored accordingly.

5. They multiplied these dunghill-deities endlessly; (v. 28.) According to the number of thy cities art thou gods, O Judah. When they had forsaken that God who is one, and all-sufficient for all, (1.) They were not satisfied with any gods they had, but still desired more; that idolatry being in this respect of the same nature with covetousness, which is spiritual idolatry, that the more men have the more they would have; which is a plain evidence, that what men make an idol of they find to be insufficient, and that they will never be satisfied till they come to unto perfect. (2.) They could not agree in the same god; having left the Centre of unity, they fell into endless discord; one city fancied one deity, and another another, and each was anxious to have one of its own, to be near them, and to take special care of them. Thus did they in vain seek that in many gods, which is to be found in one God.

II. The proof of this; no witnesses need be called, it is proved by the notorious evidence of the facts.

1. They went about to deny it, and were ready to plead Not guilty. They pretended that they would acquit themselves from this guilt, they washed themselves with nitre, and took much soap, offered many things in excuse and extenuation of it, v. 22. They pretended that they did not worship the god, but as demons, and mediators between the immortal God and mortal men; or, that it was not divine honour that they gave them, but civil respect; that they sought to evade the condemnation of God's word, and to screen themselves from the dread of his wrath. Nay, some of them had the impudence to deny the thing altogether; they say, "I have not gone after Baalim, v. 23. Because it was done secretly, and industriously concealed, (Ezek. viii. 12.) they thought it could never be
and worst till they became the degenerate plants of a strange vine; they were now the reverse of what they were at first; their constitution was quite broken, and there was nothing in them of that good which one which might have expected from a people so happily formed, nothing of the purity and piety of their ancestors. Their vine is as the vine of Sodom; Deut. xxxii. 32. This may fitly be applied to the nature of man; it was planted by its great Author, and sustained by his preservative influences (God has graced and governed them) but it is so universally corrupt, that it is become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, that bears gall and wormwood, and it is so to God, it is highly distasteful and offensive to him.

4. They were violent and eager in the pursuit of their idolatries, dotted on their idols, and were fond of new ones, and they would not be restrained from them, neither by the word of God, nor by his providences; so strong was the impetus with which they were carried out after this sin. They are here compared to a swift dromedary traversing her ways, a female of that species of creatures hunting about for a male, (v. 23.) and, to the same purport, a wild ass used to the wilderness, (v. 24.) not tamed by labour, and therefore very wanton, snuffing up the wind at her pleasure when she comes near the herd ass. Let the reader ask himself, if he would be such in the like case? Who can hinder her from that which she lusts after? They that seek her then, will not weary themselves for her, for they know it is to no purpose; but will have a little patience till she be big with young, till that month comes which is the last of the months that she fulfills, (Job xxxix. 2.) when she is heavy and unwieldy, and then they shall find her, and she cannot outrun them. Note, (1.) Egger lust is a brutish thing, and those that will not be turned away from the gratifying and indulging of it by reason and conscience and honour, are to be reckoned as brute beasts and no better; such as were born, and still are, like the wild ass's colt, let them not be looked upon as rational creatures. (2.) Idolatry is strangely intoxicating, and those that are addicted to it will with great difficulty be cured of it. That lust is as headstrong as any other. (3.) There are some so violently set upon the prosecution of their lusts, that it is to no purpose to attempt to give check to them: they that do it, weary themselves in vain. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone. (4.) The time will come when the most fierce will be tamed, and the most wanton will be manageable; when distress and anguish come upon them, then their cars will be open to the discipline that is in that month in which you may find them. Ps. cxlii. 5, 6.

5. They were obstinate in their sin, and, as they could not be restrained, so they would not be reformed, v. 25. Here is, (1.) Fair warning given them of the ruin that this wicked course of life would certainly bring them to at last, with a caution therefore not to persist in it, but to break off from it; he would certainly bring them into a miserable captivity, and make them a reproach and a byword and they should be forced to travel barefoot, and when they would be denied fair water by their oppressors, so that their throat should be dried with thirst; this will be in the end hereof. They that affect strange gods, and strange ways of worship, will justly be made prisoners to a strange king in a strange land. Take up in time therefore thy hand from these fierce ones of thy feet, and thy mouth after them will bring thy throat to thirst; withhold therefore thy foot from these violent pursuits, and thy throat from these violent desires. One would think that it should effectually check us in the career, to consider what it will bring us to at last. (2.) Their rejecting of this fair warning; they said to those that would have persuaded them to repent and return, There is no hope, no, never expect to work upon us, or prevail with us to cast away our idols, for we have loved strangers, and after them we will go; we are resolved we will, and therefore trouble not yourselves or us any more with your admonitions, it is to no purpose. There is no hope that we shall ever break the corrupt habit and disposition we have got, and therefore we may as well yield to it as go about to get the mastery of it.

Note, Their case is very miserable, who have once tasted the sweets of a sensual life, for therefore they cannot, and therefore resolve they will not. But as we must not despair of the mercy of God, but believe that sufficient for the pardon of our sins, though ever so heinous, if we repent, and sue for that mercy, so neither must we despair of the grace of God, but believe that able to subdue our corrupt desires ever so strong, if we pray for and improve that grace. A man must never say, There is no hope, as long as he is on this side hell.

6. They had shamed themselves by their sin, in putting confidence in that which would certainly deceive them in the day of their distress, and putting him away, that would have helped them; (v. 26—28.) As the thief is ashamed when, notwithstanding his arts and his flattery, and all the wiles he can use, he is caught and brought to punishment, So are the house of Israel ashamed, not with a penitent shame for the sin they had been guilty of, but with a penal shame for the disappointment they met with in that sin. They will be ashamed when they find, (1.) That they are forced to cry to the God whom they had put contempt upon. In their prosperity they had turned the back to God, and the face from him; they had slighted him, acted as if they had forgotten him, or did what they could to forget him, would not look toward him, but looked another way; they went from him as fast and as far as they could; but in the time of their trouble they will find no satisfaction but in applying themselves to him; then they will say, Arise, and save us. Their fathers had many a time taken this shame to themselves, (Judg. iii. 9—14.) yet they would not be persuaded to cleave to God, that they might have come to him in their trouble with the more confidence.

(2.) That they have no relief from the gods they have made their court to. They will be ashamed when they perceive that the gods they have made cannot serve them, and that the God who made them will not serve them. To bring them to this discovery, if they will not do this by nature, when they have shown themselves so high with pride, penitence, they are here sent to the gods whom they served, as Judg. x. 14. They cried to God, Arise, and save us, God says of the idols, "Let them arise, and save thee, for then hast no reason to expect that I should. Let them arise, if they can, from the places where they are fixed; let them try whether they can save thee; but then will he be ashamed when they findest that they cannot save thee no good, for though the gods be gods, yet the God who made all things art thou without inhabitant. They are gods of sinners to please themselves with that which will certainly be their grief, and pride themselves in that which will certainly be their shame.

29. Wherefore will ye plead with me ye all have transgressed against me, saith the Lord. 30. In vain have I smitten your children: they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion. 31. O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords; we
will come no more unto thee? 32. Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number. 33. Why trimmest thou thy way to seek love? therefore hast thou also taught the wicked ones thy ways. 34. Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these. 35. Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me: behold I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned. 36. Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria. 37. Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thy hands upon thy head: for the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

The prophet here goes on in the same strain, aiming to bring a sinful people to repentance, that their destruction might be prevented.

1. He avers the truth of the charge; it was evident beyond contradiction, it was the greatest absurdity imaginable in them to think of denying it; (v. 29.) "Wherefore hast thou put me upon the proof of it, or wherefore will you go about to plead any thing in excuse of the crime, or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? Your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you: you know you have all transgressed, one as well as another; why then do you quarrel with me for contending with you?" He aggravates it from the consideration both of their incorrigibleness and of their ingratitude.

(1.) They had been wrought upon by the judgments of God which they had been under; (v. 36.) In vain have I smitten your children, the children or people of Judah. They had been under divine rebukes of many kinds. God therein designed to bring them to repentance, but it was in vain, they did not receive it, nor did they plead with me, and put me upon the proof of it, or wherefore will you go about to plead anything in excuse of the crime, or to obtain a mitigation of the sentence? Your plea will certainly be overruled, and judgment given against you: you know you have all transgressed, one as well as another; why then do you quarrel with me for contending with you?

(2.) They had not been wrought upon by the word of God, which he had sent them in the mouth of his servants, and in affliction; they had not been smitten in vain, they were so soundly before repentance, that they were as untractable as the old ones that had been long accustomed to do evil.

(3.) They had not been wrought upon by the favours God had bestowed upon them; (v. 31.) O generation, (the) does not call them, as he might, O foolishness and perverse generation, O generation of fools, but speaks gently, O ye men of this generation, see ye the word of the Lord, do not only hear it, but consider it diligently, apply your minds closely to it. As we are bid to hear the rod, (Micah vi. 9.) for that has its voice, so are we bid to hear the word, for that has its visions, its views. It intimates, therefore, that he will not be hid but is clearly deniable; you may see it to be very evident; it is written as with a sun-beam, so that he that runs may read it: Have I been a wilderness to Israel, a land of darkness? Note, None of those who have had any dealings with God ever had reason to complain of him as a wilderness, or a land of darkness.

32. They were blessed with the fruits of the earth, and therefore cannot say that he has been a wilderness to us, a dry and barren land, that (as Mr. Gataker expresses it) he has held us to hard meat, as cattle fed upon the common; no, his sheep have been led into green pastures. He has also blessed us with the lights of heaven, and has not withheld them, so that we cannot say, He has been to us a land of darkness. He has caused his sun to shine, as well as his rain to fall, upon the evil and the good. Or, the meaning is, in general, that the service of God has not been to any either as an unpleasant or an unprofitable service. God sometimes has led his people through a wilderness, and a land of darkness, but he himself was then to them all that which they needed, he so fed them with manna, and led them by a pillar of fire, that it was to them a holy field and a land of light. The world is to be such, where none make it their home and their portion, a wilderness, and a land of darkness, vanity and vexation of spirit; but those that dwell in God, have the lives fallen to them in pleasant places.

(4.) Instead of being wrought upon by these, they were grown intolerably insolent and impious. They say, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee. Now that they were become a potent kingdom, or thought themselves such, they set up for themselves, and shock off their dependence upon God. This is the language of presumptuous sinners, and it is not only very impious and profane, but very unreasonable and foolish. (1.) It is absurd for us, who are subjects, to say, We are lords, (that is, rulers,) and we will come no more to God to receive commands from him. None is King of old, so he is King for ever, and we cannot set up for ourselves, and speak from under his authority. (2.) It is absurd for us, who are beggars, to say, We are lords, that is, We are rich, and we will come no more to God, to receive favourers from him, as if we could live without him, and need not to be beholden to him. God justly takes it ill, when those to whom he has been a bountiful Benefactor, say not only not for hearing from him or speaking to him.

3. He lays the blame of all their wickedness upon their forgetting God; (v. 32.) They have forgotten me; they have industriously banished the thoughts of God out of their minds, justly those thoughts cut with thoughts of their idols, and avoided all these things that would put them in mind of God. (1.) They have left him far away, for they are in covenant with him, and professing relationship to him, and had the tokens of his presence in the midst of them, and of his favour to them, yet they forget him. (2.) They have long neglected him, days without number, time out of mind, as we say. They had not for a great while entertained any serious thoughts of him; so that they seem quite to have forgotten him, and received never any comfort from him. How many days of our lives have passed without suitable remembrance of God? Who can number these empty days? (3.) They had not had such a regard and af
JEREMIAH, II.

fection to him, as young ladies generally have to their fine clothes; Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? No, their hearts are upon them, they value them so much, and the beholders upon them, that they are ever and anon thinking and speaking of them; when they are to appear in public, they do not forget any of their ornaments, but put every one in its place, as they are described, Is. iii. 18, &c. And yet my people have forgotten me. It is sad that any should be more in love with their fine clothes than with their God, and will fasten with them, and the beholders upon part with that, than leave any of their ornaments behind them, or part with them. Is not God our Ornament? Is he not a Crown of glory, and a Diadem of beauty, to his people? Did we look upon him to be so, and upon our religion as an ornament of grace to our head, and chains about our neck, (Prov. i. 9.) we should be as mindful of them as every maid was of her ornaments, or a bride of her attire; we should be as careful to preserve them, and as fond to appear in them.

4. He shows them what a bad influence their sins had had upon others; the sins of God's professing people harden and encourage those about them in their evil ways, especially when they appear forward and ringleaders in sin; (v. 33.) Why tristimn thou thy way to seek love? There is an allusion here to a barren woman, who can not conceive, and are reminded themselves by their olging looks and gay dresses, as Jezabel, who painted her face, and tired her head. Thus had they courted their neighbours into sinful confederacies with them, and communion in their idolatries, and had taught the wicked ones their ways, their ways of mixing God's institutions with their idolatrous customs and usages, which was not only an insult upon God, but the subversion of the ways of his people. They were all the more hardened, and made the ways of their idolatry worse than that of others. Those have a great deal to answer for, who, by their fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, make wicked ones more wicked than otherwise they would be.

5. He charges them with the guilt of murder added to the guilt of their idolatry; (v. 34.) Also in thy skirts is bled the blood of the poor innocents, which cried to heaven, and for which God was now making inquisition. The reference is to the children that were offered in sacrifice to Moloch; or, it may be taken more generally for all the innocent blood which Manasseh shed, and with which he had filled Jerusalem, (2 Kings xxiv. 16.) the righteous blood, especially the blood of the prophets and others that witnessed against their impieties. This blood was found not by secret search, nor by digging, (so the word is,) but upon all their was above ground. This intimates that the guilt of this kind, which they had contracted, was certain and evident, not doubtful, or which would bear a dispute; and that it was avowed and barefaced, and which they had not so much sense either of shame or fear as to endeavour to conceal; which would appear at the sight of such an aspect.

6. He overrules their plea of Not guilty. Though this matter be so plain, yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me; and again, Thou sayest I have not sinned, (v. 35.) therefore I will plead with thee, and will convince thee of thy mistake. Because they deny the charge, and stand upon their own justification, therefore God will deal with them, and plead with them, both by his word and by his rod. Those shall be made to know how much they deceived themselves. (1.) Who say that they have not offended God, that they are innocent, though they have been guilty of the grossest enormities. (2.) Who expect that God will be reconciled to them, though they do not repent and reform. They own that they had been under the tokens of God's anger, but they think that it was causeless, and that they by pleading innocence had proved it to be so, and therefore they may conclude that God will immediately set his face against them, and his anger shall be turned from them. This is very provoking, and God will plead with them, and convince them that his anger is just, for they have sinned and he will never cease his controversy, till they, instead of justifying themselves thus, humbly, and judge, and condemn themselves.

7. He upbraids them with the shameful disownments that they had attached to their own persons, as security of their confidence, while they made God their Enemy, v. 36, 37. It was a piece of spiritual idolatry they were often guilty of, that they trusted in an arm of flesh, and their hearts therein departed from the Lord. Now here he shows them the folly of it. (1.) They were restless, and unsatisfied in the choice of their confidences; Why gildst thou about so much to change thy way? Doubtless it is because thou meetest not with that in those thou didst confide in, which thou promisedst thyself. Those that make God their Hope, and walk in a continual dependence upon him, need not gud about to change their way; for their souls may return to him, and repose in him as their Rest; but they that trust in creatures will be perpetually uneasy, like Noah's dove, which found no place to set foot in, (and, like Noah's dove, Eve) in all the things they trust to fail them, and yet they think to change for the better, but they will be still disappointed. They first trusted to Assyria, and when that proved a broken reed, they depended upon Egypt, and that proved no better. Creatures being vanity, they will be vexation of spirit to all these that put their confidence in them; they gud about, seeking rest, and finding none. (2.) They were quite dispossessed, and left as fatherless and alone; the prophet tells them they should be; Thou shalt be ashamed of Egypt, which thou now trustedst in, as formerly thou wast of Assyria, who distressed them, and helped them not, 2 Chron. xxvii. 20. The Jews were a peculiar people in their profession of religion, and for that reason none of the neighbouring nations cared for them, nor could heartily love them: and yet the Jews were still volunteering and confessing in them, and were well enough served when deceived by them. See what will come of it; (v. 37.) Thou shalt go forth from him, thine ambassadors or envoys shall return from Egypt re infecta—disappointed, and therefore with their hands upon their heads, lamenting the desperate condition of their people. Or, Thou shalt go forth from him, into captivity in a strange land, with those hands upon their heads, holding it because it aches. (Ubi dolor, ibi digitus—Where the pain is the finger will be applied) or as people ashamed, for Tamar, in the height of her confusion, laid her hand on her head, 2 Sam. xiii. 19. And Egypt, that thou rechast on, shall not be able to prevent it, or to rescue thee out of captivity. They that will not lay their hand on their hearts in God's work now, and will not be made to lay their hand on their head in the work of God out of the world, which works death. And no wonder that Egypt cannot help them, when God will not. If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I? The Egyptians are broken reeds, for the Lord has rejected thy confidences; he will not make use of them for thy relief, will neither so far honour them, nor so far give commendation of his confidence in them, as to make them to be the instruments of any good to thee, and therefore thou shalt not prosper in them; they shall not stand thee in thy stead, nor give thee any satisfaction. As there is no counsel or wisdom that can prevail against the Lord, so there is none that can prevail with him. Some read it, The Lord has rejected thee from the confidences, because thou hast dealt so unfaithfully with
him as to trust in their creatures, nay, in his enemies, when thou shouldest have trusted in him only, he has abandoned thee to thy destruction from which thou thoughtest thus to have sheltered thyself; and then thou canst not prosper, for none ever either hardened himself against God, or estranged himself from God, and prospered.

CHAP. III.

The foregoing chapter was wholly taken up with reproofs, and threatenings against the people of God; for the apostates from him; but in this chapter, gracious invitations and encouragements are given them to return and repent, notwithstanding the multitude and greatness of their provocations, which are here aggravated, to magnify the mercy of God, and to show that as sin abounded grace did much more abound. Here, 1. It is further showed how bad they had been, and how well they deserved to be quite abandoned, and yet how ready God was to receive them into his favour, upon their repentance, v. 1. 5. II. The impenitence of Judah, and their persisting in sin, are aggravated from the judgments of God upon Israel, which they should have taken warning by, v. 6. 11. III. Great encouragements are given to these backsliders to return and repent; and promises made of great mercy which God had in store for them, and which he should prepare them for by bringing them into his house. Vers. 11, 12. IV. The charge renewed against them for their apostasy from God, and the invitation repeated to return and repent, to which are here added the words that are put in their mouth, which they should make use of in their return to God, v. 20. 29.

1. They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted: but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the Lord. 2. Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with: in the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms, and with thy wickedness. 3. Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hast a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. 4. Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? 5. Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.

These verses some make to belong to the sermon in the foregoing chapter; and they open a door of hope to those who receive the conviction of the reproofs we had; therefore God wounds, that he may heal. Now observe here, 1. How basely this people had forsaken God, and gone a whoring from him. The charge runs very high here: 1. They had multiplied their idols, and their idolatry. They had adored one strange god among them that had been bad enough, but they were insatiable in their lustings after false worship; Thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, v. 1. She was become a common prostitute to idols; not a foolish deity was set up in all the neighbourhood, but the Jews would have it quickly. Where was a high place in the country, but they had an idol in it? v. 2. Ibid. In remembrance, it is good to make sorrowful reflections upon the particular acts of sin we have been guilty of, and the several places and companies where it has been committed, that we may give glory to God, and take shame to ourselves, by a particular confession of it.

2. They had sought opportunity for their idolatry, and had sent about to inquire for new gods; In the high ways hast thou sat for them, as Tamar when she sat on the ground of a harlot, (Gen. xxxviii. 14.) and as the foolish woman, that sits to call passengers, who go right on their way, Prov. ix. 14. 15. As the Arabian in the wilderness; the Arabian heathen, (so some,) that courts customers, and waits for the merchants to get a good bargain and forestall the market; or, the Arabian thief, (so others,) that watches for his prey; so had they waited either to court new gods to come among them, the newer the better, and the more fond they were of them, or to court others with them in the idolatries: they were not only sinners, but Satans; not only traitors themselves, but tempters to others.

3. They were grown very impudent in sin. They not only polluted themselves, but their land, with their whoredoms and with their wickedness; (v. 2.) for it was universal and unpunished, and so became a national sin. And yet, (v. 3.) Thou hast had a whore's forehead, a bazon face of thy own. Thou refusedst to be ashamed; thou didst enough to shame thyself for evil; but thou wouldst shame thyself. Blushing is the colour of virtue, or at least a relic of it; but those that are fast shame, (we say,) are fast hope. Those that have an adulterer's heart, if they indulge that, will come at length to have a whore's forehead, void of all shame and modesty. 4. They abounded in all manner of sin. They polluted the land not only with their whoredoms, their idolatries, but with their wickedness, or malice, (v. 2.) sins against the second table; for how can we think that those should be true to their neighbour, that are false to their God? Nay, (v. 5.) thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst; and wouldest have spoken and done worse, if thou hadst known how; thy will was to do it, but thou lackedst opportunity. Note, Those are wicked indeed that sin to the utmost of their power; that never refuse to comply with a temptation because they should not, but because they cannot.

II. How gently God had corrected them for their sins. Instead of raining fire and brimstone upon them, because, like Sodom, they hadoured their sin, and had gone after strange gods, as Sodom after strange flesh, he only withheld the showers from them, and that only one part of the year, there has been no latter rain; which might serve as an intimation to them of their continual dependence upon God; when they had the former rain, that was no security to them for the latter, but they must still look up to God; but it had not this effect. How gently God had corrected them, and they had abandoned them utterly, and refused ever to receive them again, though they should return; this would have been but according to the known rule of divorces, v. 1. They say, it is an adjudged case, nay, it is a case in which the law is very express, and it is what every body knows and speaks of, (Deut. xxxiv. 4.) that if a woman be once put away for whoredom, and be not married to another man, her first husband shall not marry upon any pretence whatsoever, take her again to be his wife; such playing fast and loose with the marriage-bond would be a horrid profanation of that ordinance, and would greatly pollute that land. Observe what the law says in this case; They say, every one will say, and subscribe to the equity of the law in it; for every man finds something in himself, that forbids him to entertain one that is another
And in like manner they had reason to expect that God should refuse ever to take them to his people again, who had not only been joined to one strange god, but had played the harlot with many lovers. If we had to do with a man like ourselves, after such provocations as we have been guilty of, he would have been implacable, and we might have despised of his being reconciled to us. Jer. vi. He suggests he not only invites them, but directs them, to return to him.

1. He encourages them to hope that they should find favour with him, upon their repentance: "Though thou hast been bad, yet return again to me," v. 1. This implies a promise that he will receive them: "Return, and thou shalt be welcome." God has not tied himself by the laws which he made for the discharge of his religion, that men may have; he will be more kind to Israel, for the sake of his covenant with them, than ever any injured husband was to an adulterous wife; for in receiving penitents, as much as in any thing, he is God, and not man.

2. He therefore kindly expects that they will repent, and return to him, and he directs them what to say to him: "Wilt thou not cry unto me? Wilt thou not from that time cry unto me? Wilt thou not cried hither? wilt thou not from this time apply thyself to me? From this time of conviction and correction, now that thou hast been made to see thy sins, (v. 2) and to smart for them, (v. 3) wilt thou not now forsake them, and return to me, saying, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now?" Hos. vii. 1. 2. "From this time that thou hast had so kind an invitation to return, and assurance that thou shalt be well received: will not this grace of God overcome thee? Now that pardon is proclaimed, wilt thou not come in, and take the benefit of it? Surely thou wilt." (1.) He expects they will claim relation to God, as theirs: Wilt thou not cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth? [1.] They will speak as to God a Father, he being from before their birth, butomit for their unfruitful conduct to him, (Father, I have sinned,) and will hope to find in him the tender compassions of a Father towards a returning prodigal. They will come to him as a Father, to whom they will make their complaints, and in whom they will put their confidence for relief and succour. They will now own him as their Father, and themselves fatherless without him; and therefore hoping to find mercy with him, as those penitents, Hos. xiv. 3. [2.] They will come to him as the Guide of their youth, as their Husband; for so that relation is described, Mal. ii. 14. "Though thou hast gone after many lovers, surely thou wilt at length remember the love of thine espousals, and return to the husband of thy youth." Or, it may be, they come to him as the Guide of my youth. Youth needs a guide. In our return to God, we must thankfully remember that he was the Guide of our youth, in the way of comfort; and we must faithfully covenant that he shall be our Guide from henceforward in the way of duty, and that we will follow his guidance, and give up ourselves entirely to it; that in all doubtful cases, we will consult with what concerns our souls, by attending to his word, and that way we may have the assurance of his presence with us, Hos. xii. 6. (2.) He expects they will appeal to the mercy of God, and crave the benefit of that mercy, (v. 5.) that they will reason thus with themselves for their encouragement to return to him; "Will he reserve his anger for ever? Surely he will not, for he has proclaimed his name gracious and merciful." Repenting sinners may encourage themselves with this, that though God chide, he will not always chide; though he be angry, he will not keep his anger to the end, but that though he cause grief, he will have compassion, and may thus plead for reconciliation. Some will say, Will he not entirely man crying to me, My Father?" Even when they were most addicted to idols, they pretended a regard to God and his service, and kept up the forms of godliness and devotion. It is a shameful thing for men thus to call, when God came not to do the works of the devil; (as the Jews, John viii. 44.) to call him the Guide of their youth, and yet give up themselves to walk after the flesh; and to flatter themselves with the expectation that his anger shall have an end, while they are continually treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath.

6. The Lord said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hath thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain, and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said, after she had done all these things, Turn thou unto me: but she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. 9. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. 10. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the Lord.

11. And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

The date of this sermon must be observed, in order to the right understanding of it; it was in the days of Josiah, who set on foot a blessed work of reformation, in which he was hearty, but the people were not sincere in their compliance with it; to prove them for that, and warn them of the consequences of their hypocrisy, is the scope of that which God here said to the prophet, and which he delivered to them. The case of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah is here compared, the ten tribes that revolted from the house of David, and the tribe of Jerusalem, and the two tribes that adhered to both. The distinct history of those two kingdoms we have in the two books of the Kings, and here we have an abstract of both, as far as relates to this matter.

1. Here is a short account of Israel, the ten tribes. Perhaps the prophet had been just reading the history of that, and had been elegantly observing, how all the kingdom of Israel, when God said, Hast thou seen what backsliding Israel has done? v. 6. For he could not see it otherwise than in history, they having been carried into captivity.
long before he was born: but what we read in the 
hanes of scripture should instruct us and affect 
same, as ourselves had been eye-witnesses of it.
She is called backsliding Israel, because that king-
dom was first founded in an apostasy from the di-
vine institutions, both in church and state. Now he 
had been concerning them,
(1.) That they were wretchedly addicted to 
idiety; they had played the harlot upon every 
high mountain, and under every green tree; (v. 6. 
they had worshipped other gods in their high places 
and groves; and no marvel, when from the first they 
had worshipped God by the images of the golden 
calves at Daju and Bethel. The way of idiety is 
down-hill: they that are in love with images, and 
will have them, soon become in love with other gods, 
and will have them too; for how should they stick at 
the breach of the first commandment, who make 
no conscience of the second?
(2) That God by his prophets had invited and 
encouraged them to repent and reform; (v. 7.) 
"after she had done all these things, for which she 
might justly have been abandoned, yet I said unto 
her, Turn thou unto me, and I will receive thee."
Though they had forsaken both the house of David, 
the kingdom of Judah, and had given themmen 
righteous divinity—God, without dispute, yet 
God sent his prophets among them, to call them to 
return to him, to the worship of him only, not in-
sisting; so much as one would have expected upon 
their return to the house of David, but pressing their 
return to the house of Aaron: we read not that 
Elijah, that great reformer, ever mentioned their 
return to the house of David, but that they were 
pressed by the word of God, for their return to the faithful service of the true 
God according as they had it among them. It is 
serious piety that God stands upon more than even 
his own rituals.
(3.) That, notwithstanding this, they had per-
sisted in their idolatries; but she returned not, and 
God saw it; he took notice of it, and was much dis-
pleased with it, v. 7, 8. Note, God keeps account, 
whether we do or no, how often he has called us 
to turn to him, and we have refused.
(4.) That he had therefore cast them off, and 
given them up into the hands of their enemies; (v. 8.) 
When I saw (so it may be read) that for all the 
actions wherein she had committed adultery, I must 
dismiss her, I gave her a bill of divorces, God 
divorced them out of his protection, and left them an easy prey to any that would lay hands on them; when he scattered all 
their synagogues and schools of the prophets, and 
excluded them from laying any further claim to the 
covenant made with their fathers. Note, Those 
will justly be divorced from God, that join them-
selves to such as are rivals to God. For proof 
of this way, and see what God did to Israel.
2. Let us now see what was the case of Judah, 
the kingdom of the two tribes; she is called thy 
treacherous sister Judah; a sister, because descend-
ed from the same common stock, Abraham and 
Jacob; but as Israel had the character of a back-
slider, so Judah is called treacherous, because, 
though she professed to keep close to God when 
his ways were hid, (she adhered to the kings 
and priests that were of God's own appointing, 
and did not withdraw from her allegiance, so that it was 
expected she should deal faithfully,) yet she proved 
treacherous and false, and unfaithful to her profes-
sions and promises. Note, The treachery of those 
who pretend to cleave to God, will be reckoned for, 
as well as the treachery of those who openly revol-
ved from him. Judah said what Israel did, and what 
came of it, and should have taken warning; Israel's 
capitulation was intended for Judah's admonition, but 
it had not the designed effect. Judah feared not,
ciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever. 13. Only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord. 14. Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: 15. And I will give you pastors according to my heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. 16. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord; neither shall it come to mind, neither shall they remember it, neither shall they visit it, neither shall that be done any more. 17. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. 18. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers. 19. But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Here is a great deal of gospel in these verses, both that which was always gospel, God's readiness to pardon, sin, and to receive and entertain returning repenting sinners, and those blessings which were in a special manner reserved for gospel-times, the forming and founding of the gospel-church, by bringing into it the children of God that were scattered abroad, the superseding of the ceremonial law, and the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, typified by the uniting of Israel and Judah in their return out of captivity.

The prophet is directed to proclaim these words toward the north, for they are to call to backsliding Israel, the ten tribes that were carried captive into Assyria, which lay north from Jerusalem. That way he must look, to show that God had not forgotten them, though their brethren had, and to upbraid the men of Judah with their obstinacy in refusing to answer the calls given them. One might as well call to them who lay many hundred miles off in the land of the north; they will as soon hear as these unbelieving and disobedient people; backsliding Israel will sooner accept of mercy, and have the benefit of it, than treacherous Judah. And perhaps the proclaiming of these words toward the north, looks as far forward as the preaching of repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. A call to Israel in the land of the north, is a call to others in that land, even as many as belong to the election of grace; when it was suspected that Christ would go to the dispersed Jews among the Gentiles, it was concluded that he would teach the Gentiles, John vii. 55. So here,

1. There is an invitation given to backsliding Israel, and in them to the backsliding Gentiles, to return unto God, the God from whom they had revolted; (v. 12.) Return, O backsliding Israel. And again, (v. 14.) O backsliding children, return your backslidings, return to your allegiance; come back to that good way which you have missed, and out of which you have turned aside.” Pursuant to this invitation, 1. They are encouraged to return; Repent, and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out, Acts ii. 19. You have incurred God's displeasure, but return to me, and I will not cause my anger to return to you, though I am ready to fall upon sinners, as a lion falls on his prey, and there is none to deliver; as a mountain of loud falling on them, to sink them past recovery into the lowest hell. But if they repent it shall be turned away, Isa. xii. 1. I will not keep mine anger for ever, but will be reconciled, for I am merciful. We that are sinful, were for ever undone, if God were merciful; but his goodness of his nature encourages us to hope that if we by repentance and qualification we have done against him, he will by a pardoning unanswerable pardon he has said against us. 2. They are directed how to return; (v. 13.) “Only acknowledge thine iniquity, own thyself in a fault, and thereby take shame to thyself, and give glory to God.” I will not keep my anger for ever; (that is a previous punishment,) he shall be delivered from that anger of God which is everlastingly reprobate, it shall come; but upon what terms? Very easy and reasonable ones. Only acknowledge thy sins; if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, that the terms of pardon and peace were brought so low, and yet they would not come up to them. If the prophet had bid them do some great things, would they not have done it? How much more when he says, Only acknowledge thine iniquity? 2 Kings v. 13. In confussing sin, (1.) We must own the corruption of our nature; Acknowledge thine iniquity; the perverseness and irregularity of thy nature. (2.) We must own our actual sins, “that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God, hast affronted him and offended him.” We must own our present, our transgressions, “that thou hast scattered thy ways to the strangers, run hither and thither in pursuit of thine idols, under every green tree. Wherever thou hast rambled, thou hast left behind thee the marks of thy folly. (4.) We must aggravate our sin from the disobedience that there is in it to the divine law. The sinfulness of sin is the worst thing in it; “I have not obeyed thy voice, acknowledge that, and let that burn up more the guiltiness of sin.

II. Here are precious promises made to these backsliding children, if they do return; which were in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, many that belonged to the ten tribes having perhaps joined themselves to those of the two tribes, in the prospect of their deliverance, and returning with them; but is to have it full accomplishment in the prospect that many and the gathering together of the children of God that were scattered abroad to that. “Return, for though you are backsliders, yet you are children; nay, though a treacherous wife, yet a wife, for I am married unto you, (v. 14.) and will not disown the relation.” Thus God remembers his covenant with their fathers, that marriage-covenant, and in consideration of that he remembers their part, and, I say, I will do, I will do, I will do, I will do. (2 Kings v. 14.) He promises to gather them together from all places whither they are dispersed and scattered abroad; (John xi. 52.) I will take you, one of a city
and two of a family, or clan; and I will bring you to Zion. All these that by repentance return to their duty, shall return to their former comfort. Observe, (1.) God will graciously receive those that return to him, nay, it is he that by his distinguishing grace takes them out from among the rest that persist in their ungodliness, and delivers them from what they had been undone. (2.) Of the many that have backslidden from God, there are but few, very few in comparison, that return to him, like the gleanings of the vintage; one of a city, and two of a country; Christ's flock is a little flock, and few there be that find the strait gate. (3.) Of those few, though dispersed, yet not one shall be lost. The flock is not scattered, but it is scattered, they are out that one; he shall not be overlooked in a crowd, but shall be brought safe to Zion, safe to Heaven. The scattered Jews shall be brought to Jerusalem, and those of the ten tribes shall be as welcome there as those of the two. God's chosen, scattered all the world over, shall be brought to the gospel-church, that mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, that holy hill on which Christ reigns.

2. He promises to set those over them that shall be every way blessings to them; (v. 15.) I will give you pastors after my heart, alluding to the character given of David, when God pitched upon him to be king; (1 Sam. xiii. 14.) The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart. Observe, (1.) When a church is gathered it must be governed. I will have them be, who shall make his will their rut to be under discipline, not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd. I will give them pastors, magistrates and ministers; both are God's ordinance for the support of his kingdom. (2.) It is well with a people when their pastors are after God's own heart; such as they should be, such as he would have them be, who shall make his will their rut to be under discipline, not as wild beasts, that range at pleasure, but as sheep that are under the direction of a shepherd. I will give them pastors, magistrates and ministers, both are God's ordinance for the support of his kingdom.

3. He promises that there should be no more occasion for the ark of the covenant, which had been so much the glory of the tabernacle first, and afterward of the temple, and was the token of God's presence with them; that shall be set aside, and there shall be no more inquiry after, nor inquiring of it; (v. 16.) When ye be multiplied and increased in the land, when the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, which by the accession of the Gentiles will bring into the church a vast increase, (and the days of the Messiah the Jewish masters themselves acknowledge to be here intended,) then they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord, they shall have it no more among them to value, or value themselves upon, because they shall have a pure spiritual way of worship set up, in which there shall be no occasion for any of those external ordinances, with the ark of the covenant the whole ceremonial law shall be set aside, and all the institutions of it, for Christ, the Truth of all those types, exhibited to us in the word and sacraments of the New Testament, will be to us instead of all. It is very likely (whatever the Jews suggest to the contrary) that the ark of the covenant was in the sCOND temple, being restored by Cyrus with the other vessels of the house of the Lord, Ezra ii. 7. But in the gospel-temple Christ is the Ark, he is the Propitiatory, or Mercy-seat; and it is the spiritual presence of God in his ordinances that we are now to expect. Many expressions are here used for the bringing in the Ark, which doth not imply that it shall set come to mind, that they shall not remember, but they shall not visit it, that none of these things shall be any more done; for the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 24. But this variety of expressions is used, to show that the ceremonies of the Law of Moses should be totally and finally abolished, never to be used any more among men. It is not said that those who were so long obedient to them should be weaned from them; and that they would not quite let them go till their Holy city and Holy house should both be levelled with the ground.

4. He promises that the gospel-church, here called Jerusalem, shall become eminent and conspicuous, v. 17. Two things shall make it famous. (1.) God's special residence and dominion in it. It shall be called, The throne of the Lord; the throne of God's glory, for that shines forth in the church; the throne of his government, for that also is erected there, there he rules his willing people by his word and Spirit, and brings every thought into obedience to himself. As the gospel went ground, this throne of the Lord was set up there where Satan's seat had been. It is the throne of the Lord, that by faith come to this Jerusalem, come to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 22, 23. (2.) The accession of the Gentiles to it. All the nations shall be discipled, and so gathered to the church, and shall become subjects to that throne of the Lord which is there set up, and devoted to the honour of the name of the Lord which is there both manifested and called upon.

5. He promises that there shall be a wonderful reformation wrought in those that are gathered to the church: They shall not walk any more after the imagination of their evil hearts. They shall not live as they list, but live by rules; not do according to their own corrupt appetites, but according to the will of God. See what leads in sin, the imagination of the heart. It is the throne of the Lord, that by faith come to this Jerusalem, come to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, Heb. xii. 22, 23. (2.) The accession of the Gentiles to it. All the nations shall be discipled, and so gathered to the church, and shall become subjects to that throne of the Lord which is there set up, and devoted to the honour of the name of the Lord which is there both manifested and called upon.

6. That Judah and Israel shall be happily united in one body, v. 18. They were so in their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in Canaan; The house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, as being perfectly agreed, and become one stick in the hand of the Lord, as Ezekiel also foretold, ch. xxxvii. 16, 17. Both Assyria and Chaldea fell into the hands of Cyrus, and his proclamation extended to all the Jews in all his dominions. And therefore we have reason to think that many of the house of Israel came with those of Judah into the land of the north; though at first there returned but forty-two thousand (whom we have an account of, Ezra ii.) yet Josephus says, (Antiq. lib. 11. cap. 4.) that some few years after, under Darius, Zerubbabel went, and fetched up above four millions of souls, to the land that was given for an inheritance to their fathers. And we never read of such anesties and enmities between Israel and Judah as had been formerly. This happy concurrence between Israel and Judah in Canaan, was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, when, all enmities being slain, they should become one sheeplid under one shepherd.
III. Here is some difficulty started, that lies in the way of all this mercy; but an expidient is found to get over it.
1. God asks, How shall I do this for thee? Not as if God showed favour with reluctance, as he punishes with a How shall I give thee up? Hos. xi. 8, 9. No, though he is slow to anger, he is swift to show mercy. But it intimates that we are utterly unworthy of his favours, that we have no reason to expect them. For there is nothing in us to displease him, that we can lay no claim to them, and that he contrives how to do it in such a way as may save the honour of his justice and holiness in the government of the world; means must be devised, that his banished be not for ever expelled from him, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. How shall I do it? (1.) Even backsliders, if they return and repent, shall be put among the children; and who could ever have expected that? Behold, what manner of love is this! John iii. 1. How should we, who are so mean and weak, so worthless and unworthy, and so provoking, ever be put among the children? (2.) Those whom God puts among the children, to them he will give the pleasant land, the land of Canaan, that glory of all lands, that goodly heritage of the hosts of nations, which nations and their burdens are for ever, whereas the hosts of the nations have now got possession of: it was a type of heaven, where there are pleasures for evermore; now who could expect a place in that pleasant land, that has so often despised it, (Ps. cxxiv. 24.) and is so unworthy of it, and unfit for it? Is this the manner of men? 2. He does himself return answer to this question; But I said, Thou shalt call me, My Father. God does himself answer all the objections that are taken from our unworthiness, or they would never be got over. (1.) That he may put returning penitents among the children, he will give them the Spirit of adoption, teaching them to cry, Abba, Father, Gal. iv. 6. Thou shalt call me, My Father; thou shalt return to me, and resign thyself to me as a Father, and that shall recommend thee to my favour. (2.) That he may give them the pleasant land, he will put his fear in their hearts, that they may never turn from him, but may persevere to the end.

20. Surely as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the Lord. 21. A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God. 22. Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God. 23. Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. 24. For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from their youth; their flocks and their herd, their sons and their daughters. 25. We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, and we are our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God.

Here is,
1. The charge God exhibits against Israel for their treacherous departures from him, v. 20. As an adulterous wife elopes from her husband, so have they gone a whoring from God. They were joined to God by a marriage covenant, but they broke that covenant, they dealt treacherously with God, who had always dealt kindly and faithfully with them. Treacherous dealing with men like ourselves is bad enough, but to deal treacherously with God is to deal treasonably.

II. Their conviction and confession of the truth of this charge, v. 21. When God reproved them for their apostasy, there were some among them, even such as God would take, and bring to Zion, whose voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and praying, humbling themselves before the God of their fathers, lamenting their calamities and their sins, the procuring cause of them; for this is that which they lament, for this they bewail themselves, that they have perverted their way, and forgotten the Lord their God. Note, 1. Sin is the perverting of our way, it is turning aside to crooked ways, and perverting that which is right. 2. Forgetting the Lord our God is at the bottom of all sin. If men would remember God, his eye upon them, and their obligation to him, they would not transgress as they do. 3. By sin we embarras ourselves, and ourselves bring upon us such difficulties as we could never have imagined. 4. Prayers and tears will become those whose consciences tell them that they have perverted their way and forgotten their God. When the foolishness of man perverts his way, his heart is apt to fret against the Lord, (Prov. xix. 3.) whereas it should be melted and poured out before him.

III. The invitation God gives them to return to him. (v. 22.) Return, ye backsliding children. He calls them children, in tenderness and compassion to them; foolish and forward as children, yet his sons; whom though he corrects he will not disinherit; for though they are refractory children, (so some render it,) yet they are children. God bears with such children, and so must parents. When they are convinced of sin, (v. 21.) and humbled for that, then they are prepared, and then they are invited, to return; as Christ invites these to him that are weary and heavy laden. The promise to those that return is, I will heal your backslidings; I will comfort you under the grief you are in for your backslidings, deliver you out of the troubles you have brought yourselves into by your backslidings, and cure you of your refractoriness, and bent to backslide. God will heal our backslidings by his pardoning mercy, his reconciling love, and his almighty power.

IV. The ready consent they give to this invitation, and their cheerful compliance with it; Behold, we come unto thee. This is an echo to God's call; as a voice returned from broken walls, so this from broken hearts. God says, Return; they answer, Behold, we come. It is an immediate, speedy answer; without delay, not, We will come hereafter. It is not a negative, but an affirmative, time to consider of it. Not, We come toward thee; but, We come to thee, we will make a thorough turn of it. Observe how universally they are; We come, one and all.

1. They come devoting themselves to God as theirs; Thou art the Lord our God, we take thee to be ours, we give up ourselves to thee to be thine; whither shall the way of the wayfarer lead? It is that which we have gone from thee. It is very comfortable, in our return to God after our backsliding, to look up to him as ours in covenant.
2. They come disclaiming all expectations of relief and succour but from God only; In vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of the mountains; we now see our folly in relying upon creature-confidence, and will never so deceive ourselves any more. They worshipped
their idols upon hills and mountains, (v. 6.) and they had a multitude of idols upon their mountains, which they had sought unto and put a confidence in; but now they will have no more to do with them. In vain do we look for any thing that is good from them, while from God we may look for every thing that is good; even salvation itself. Therefore,

3. They come depending upon God only as their God: In the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel. He is the Lord, and he only can save; he can save when all other successors and savours fail; and he is our God, and will in his own way and time work salvation. The prophet applies the words of the salvation from sin, which Jesus Christ wrought out for us; that is the salvation of the Lord, his great salvation.

4. They come justifying God in their troubles, and judging themselves for their sins, v. 24, 25. (1.) They implore all the calamities they had been under to their idols, which had not only done them no good, but had done them abundance of mischief; all the mischief that had been done them: Shame, (the idol, that shameful thing,) has devoured the labour of our fathers. Note, [1.] True penitents have learned to call sin shame; even the beloved sin, which has been as an idol to them, which they have been most pleased with and proud of, even that they shall call a scandalous thing, shall put content upon, and speak of it with regret. True penitents have learned to call sin death and ruin, and to charge upon it all the mischiefs they suffer; "It has devoured all those good things which our fathers laboured for, and left us; we have found from our youth that our idolatry has been the destruction of our prosperity. Children often throw away upon their lusts that which their fathers have done a great deal of good for; and it is well if at length they are brought (as these here) to see the folly of it, and to call those vices their shame, which have wasted their estates, and devoured the labour of their fathers. They mention the labour of their fathers, which their idols had devoured, their flocks and their herds, their sons and their daughters. First, Their idolatry had provoked God to bring these desolating judgments upon them, which had ruined their country and families, and made their estates a prey, and their children captives to the conquering enemy. They had procured these things to themselves. Or rather, Secondly, These had been sacrificed to their idols, had been separated unto that shame; (Hos. ix. 10.) and they had devoured them without mercy, they did eat the fat of their sacrifices, (ver. 20.) 39. (2.) Thus they have sacrificed. (2.) They put to themselves the shame of their sin and folly; (v. 25.) "We lie down in our shame, being unable to bear up under it, our confusion covers us, both our penal and our penitential shame. Sin has laid us under such rebukes of God's providence, and such reproaches of our own consciences, as surround us, and fill us up with shame. For we have sinned, and gone astray, and we are still attended with the sense of this sin. We are sinners by descent, guilt and corruption are entailed upon us; we and our fathers have sinned; we were sinners betimes, we began early in the course of sin, we have sinned from our youth; we have continued in it, have sinned even unto this day, though often called to repent, and forsake our sins. When God forgive us, for we have sinned; and when God forgive us, we must forgive ourselves, and still attend believers with the sense of their own sins.

We must notice of their repentance, to provoke the men of Judah to a holy emulation. David used it as an argument with the elders of Judah, that it would be a shame for them, that were his bone and his flesh, to be the last in bringing the king back, when the men of Israel appeared forward in it. 2 Sam. xix. 11, 12. Some other prophet excites Judah to repent, because Israel did; and well it were if the zare of others less likely would provoke us to strive to get before them, and go beyond them, in that which is good.

CHAP. IV.

It should seem that the two first verses of this chapter might better have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, for they are directed to Israel, the ten tribes, by way of reply to their compliance with God's call, directing and warning them, v. 1. 1. The rest of the chapter concerns Judah and Jerusalem. They are called to repent and reform, v. 3, 4. They are warned of the advance of Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against them, and are told that it is for their sins, from which they are again exhorted to wash themselves, v. 5. 18. III. To affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, the prophet does not make use of the might of nations but sympathises with his people in the calamities it brought upon them, and the plunge it brought them to, representing it as a reduction of the world to its first chaos, v. 19-31.

1. If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me; and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove. 2. And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

When God called to backsliding Israel to return, (ch. iii. 22.) they immediately answered, Lord, we return; now God here takes notice of their answer, and, by way of reply to it,

4. He directs them how to pursue their good resolutions: "Blest thou say, I will return," (v. 2.) "Then shalt thou return unto me, and return ye, that ye will not talk of it, but do it." (2.) "Thou must utterly abandon all sin, and not retain any of the relics of the idolatry; put away thine abominations out of thy sight, out of all places, for every place is unclean mine eye; especially out of the temple; the house which I have in a particular manner mine eye upon, to see that it is kept clean. It intimates that their idolatries were not only obvious, but offensive to the eye of God; they were abominations which he could not endure the sight of, therefore they were to be put away, and to be done away with, and all that was a branch or appendage of thine idolatry to the pure eyes of God's glory. Sin must be put away out of the heart, else it is not put away out of God's sight, for the heart and all that is in it is open before his eye. (3.) They must not return to sin again; so some understand that, Thou shalt not remove, reading it, Thou shalt not, or must not, wander. If thou shalt return to thine abominations, and wilt not wander after them, as thou hast done, all shall be well." (4.) They must give unto God the glory due unto his name; (v. 2.) Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth. His existence shall be with thee the most sacred fact, then which nothing can be more sure; and his judgment the supreme court to which thou shalt appeal, than which nothing can be more awful. Swearing is an act of religious worship, in which we are to give honour to...
Jeremiah, IV.

338

God three ways. [1.] We must swear by the true God only, and not by creatures, or any false gods; by the God that truth, not by the gods that are dead, and dumb, and dead; by him only, and not by the Lord and by Malechah, as Zeph. i. 5. [2.] We must swear that only which is true, in truth and in righteousness; not daring to assert that which is false, or which we do not know to be true, or to assert that as certain, which is doubtful, or to promise that which we mean not to perform, or to violate the promise we have made. To say that which is untrue, or to do that which is unrighteous, is bad, but to back either with an oath is much worse. [3.] We must do it solemnly, swear in judgment, that is, when judicially called to it, and not in common and daily vent. A rash swearing is as profane a profanation of God’s name, as solemn swearing is an honour to it. See Deut. x. 20. Matt. v. 34, 37.

2. He encourages them to keep in this good mind, and adhere to their resolutions. If the scattered Israelites will thus return to God, (1.) They shall be blessed themselves; for to that sense the first words may be read; “If thou wouldest return to me, then thou shalt be as the plough-land; and if thou dost plough back out of thy captivity into thy own land again, as was of old promised,” Deut. iv. 29.—xxx. 2. Or, “Then thou shalt rest in me, shall return to me as thy rest, even while thou art in the land of thy captivity.” (2.) They shall be blessings to others; for their returning to God again will be a means of others turning to him, who never knew him. If thou wilt own the living Lord, then will thereby be his living; and if thou art, to bless themselves in him, to place their happiness in his favour, and to think themselves happy in being brought to the fear of him. See Isa. lxxv. 16. They shall bless themselves in the God of truth, and not in false gods; shall do themselves the honour, and give themselves the satisfaction, to join themselves to him; and then in him shall they glory, shall make him their Glory, and shall please, may shall pride, themselves with the blessed change they have made. Those that part with their sins to return to God, however they scurped the bargain at first, when they go away, then they boast.

3. For thus saith the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow-ground, and sow not among thorns. 4. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

The prophet here turns his speech, in God’s name, to the men of the place where he lived. We have heard what words he proclaimed toward the north, (ch. lii. 12.) for the comfort of those that were now in captivity, and were humbled under the hand of God; let us now see what he says to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, who were now in prosperity, for their conviction and awakening. In these two verses, he exorts them to repentance and reformation, as the only way left them to prevent the desolating judgments that were ready to break in upon them. Observe, 1. The duties required of them, which they are concerned to do.

(1.) They must do by their hearts as they do by their ground that they expect any good of; they must plough up their plough-land, or, “Plough up your plough-land, that you were not among thorns, that you may not labour in vain, for your own safety and welfare, as those do that sow good seed among thorns, and as you have been doing a great while.” Put yourselves into a frame fit to receive mercy from God, and put away all that which keeps it from you, and then you may expect to receive mercy, and to prosper in your endeavours to help yourselves.” Note, [1.] An unconfessed, unhumbled heart is like fallow-ground, ground tillled, unoccupied. It is ground capable of improvement; it is our ground, let out to us, and we must be accountable for it; but it is fallow; it is unconfessed, and lies common, it is unfruitful, and of no advantage to the owner, and (which is principally intended) it is overgrown with thorns and weeds, which the more we endeavor to uproot, the more it be not renewed with grace. Rain in profusion will be lost upon it, Heb. vi. 7, 8. [2.] We are concerned to get this fallow-ground ploughed up; we must search into our own hearts, let the word of God divide (as the plough does) between the joints and the marrow, Heb. iv. 12. We must rend our hearts, Joel ii. 13. We must pluck up by the roots those corruptions, which, as thorns, choke both our evangelical and speculative expectations, Hos. x. 12. (2.) They must do that to their souls, which was done to their bodies when they were taken into the covenant with God; (v. 4.) “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskin of your heart.” Mortify the flesh and the lusts of it. Pare off that superfluity of naughtiness, which hinders your receiving with meekness the engraven word, which is a jewel of the most eminent, and rent in pieces, and cast far away, the circumcisions of the body, for that is but a sign, and will not serve without the thing signified. It is a dedicating sign. Do that in sincerity, which was done in profession by your circumcision; devote and consecrate yourselves into the Lord, to be to him a peculiar people.” Circumcision is an obligation to keep the law; lay yourselves afresh under that obligation. It is a seal of the righteousness of faith, lay hold then of that righteousness, and so circumcise yourselves to the Lord.

2. The danger they are threatened with, which they are concerned to avoid. Repent and reform, lest my fury come forth like fire, which it is now ready to do, as that fire which came forth from the Lord, and consumed the sacrifices, and which was always kept burning upon the altar, and none might enjoy the sacrifices except the meek and lowly sinners, because of the evil of their doings. Note, (1.) That which is to be dreaded by us more than any thing else, is, the wrath of God; for that is the spring and bitterness of all present miseries, and will be the quintessence and perfection of everlasting misery. (2.) It is the evil of our doings, that kindles the fire of God’s wrath against us. (3.) The consideration of the imminent danger we are in, of falling and perishing under this wrath, should awaken us with all possible care to sanctify ourselves to God’s glory, and to see that we be sanctified by his grace.

5. Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities. 6. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. 7. The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way: he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate: and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant 8. For this
gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl; for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us. 9. And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes; and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder. 10. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! surely thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul. 11. At that time shall it be said to this people and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse. 12. Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them. 13. Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles. Wo unto us! for we are spoiled. 14. O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? 15. For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim. 16. Make ye mention to the nations: behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah. 17. As keepers of a field are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the Lord. 18. Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee: this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thy heart.

God's usual method is, to warn before he wounds. In these verses, accordingly, God gives notice to the Jews of the general destruction that would shortly by brought upon them by a foreign invasion. This must be declared and published in all the cities of Judah, and streets of Jerusalem, that all might hear and fear, and by this loud alarm be either brought to repentance, or left inexcusable. The prediction of this calamity is here given very largely, and in lively expressions, which one would think should have awakened and affected the most stupid. Observe,

I. The war proclaimed, and general notice given of the advance of the enemy. It is published now, some years before, by the prophet; but since this will be slighted, it shall be published after another manner, when the judgement is actually breaking in, v. 5, 6. The trumpet must be blown, the standard must be set up, a summons must be issued out to the people, to gather together, and to draw toward Zion, either to guard it, or expecting to be guarded by it. There must be a general rendezvous, the militia must be raised, and all the forces mustered. Those that are able men, and fit for service, must go into the defenced cities, to garrison them; those that are weak, and would lessen their provisions, but not increase their strength, must retire, and not stay.

II. An express arrives with intelligence of the approach of the king of Babylon and his army. It is an evil that God will bring from the north, as he had said, ch. i. 15. even a great destruction, beyond all that had been done upon the nation of the Jews. The enemy is here compared,

1. To a lion that comes up from his thicket, when he is hungry, to seek his prey, v. 7. The helpless beasts are so terrified with his roaring, (as some report,) that they cannot flee from him, and so become an easy prey to him. Nebuchadnezzar is this roaring, (as he is in the seventy years' captivity of the nations,) that has laid many countries waste, and now is going his way on full speed toward the land of Judah. The destroyer of the Gentiles shall be the destroyer of the Jews too, when they have by their idolatry made themselves like the Gentiles. He is gone forth from his place, from Babylonia, or the place of the rendezvous of his army, on purpose against this land; that is the pray he has now his eye upon, not to plunder it only, but to make it desolate, and here-in he shall succeed to that degree, that the cities shall be laid waste, without inhabitants, shall be overgrown with grass as a field; so some read it.

2. To a dry, blasting wind, (v. 11.) a parching, scorching wind, which spoils the fruits of the earth, and withers them. Not a wind which brings rain, but which actually comes out of this desert, drives away rain, (Prov. xxv. 23.) but brings something worse instead of it, such shall this evil out of the north be to this people; a black freezing wind, which they can neither fence against, nor flee from, but, wherever they go, it shall surround and pursue them; and they cannot see it before it comes, but, when it comes, they shall feel it. It is a wind of the high places in the wilderness, or blast, that beats upon the tops of the hills, or that carries all before it in the plain, where there is no shelter, but the ground is all champaign. It shall come in its full force toward the daughters of my people, that have been brought up so tenderly and delicately, that they could not endure to have the wind blow upon them. Now this fierce wind shall come against them, not to fan, or cleanse them, nor such a gentle wind as is used in winnowing corn, but a full wind, (v. 12.) a strong and violent wind, blowing full upon them; this shall come to me, or rather for me, it shall come with commission from God, and shall accomplish that for which he sends it; for this, as other stormy winds, fulfill his word.

3. To clouds and whirlwinds for swiftness, v. 15. To stories of the Chaldean, clouds driven with the wind; so thick shall they stand, so fast shall they march, and it shall be to no purpose to offer to stop them, or to make head against them, any more than to arrest a cloud, or give check to a whirlwind. The horses are swifter than eagles when they fly upon their prey; it is in vain to think either of opposing them, or of outrunning them.

4. To ana the words, and the voice declareth from Dan, a city which lay farthest north of all the cities of Canaan, and therefore received the first tidings of this evil from the north, and hastened it to mount Ephraim, that part of the land of Israel which lay next to Judaea; they received the news of the affliction, and transmitted it to Jerusalem. II. Views by space; and an impenetrable people, that hides itself, expect no other than ill news. Now, what is this news? Tell the nations, those mixed nations that now inhabit the cities of the ten tribes, mention it to them, that they may provide for their own safety: but publish it against Jerusalem, that is the place aimed at, the game shot at, let them know that the lands and cities come from a far country, soldiers that will watch all opportunities to do mischief. Priests, soldiers we call private sentinels, or watchers. They are coming in full career, and give out that
against the cities of Judah; they design to invest them, to make themselves masters of them, and to attack them with loud shouts, as sure of victory. As keepers of a field surround it, to keep all out from it, so shall they surround the enemy, and keep all in them, till they be constrained to surrender at discretion; they are against her round about, compassing her on every side. See Luke xix. 43. As formerly the good angels, those watchers and holy ones, were like keepers of a field to Jerusalem, watching about it, that nothing might go anon, to its prejudice; so now their enemies were as watchers and keepers of a field, surrounding it, that nothing might go anon, to its defect and ruin.

III. The lamentable cause of this judgment: how is it that Judah and Jerusalem come to be thus abandoned to ruin? See how it came to this. 1. They sinned against God, it was all owing to themselves; She has been rebellious against me, saith the Lord, v. 17. Their enemies surrounded them as keepers of a field, because they had taken up arms against their rightful Lord and Sovereign, and were to be seized as rebels. The Chaldeans are breaking in upon them, and it was sin that opened the gap at which they entered; Thy way and thy doings have provoked these things unto thee, (v. 18.) thy evil way, and thy doings that have not been good. It was not a false step or two that did them this mischief, but their way and course of living in general, it was a whole course of their troubles. Those that go on in sin, while they are endeavouring to ward off mischiefs with one hand, are at the same time pulling them upon their own heads with the other. 2. God was angry with them for their sin. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that makes the army of the Chaldeans thus fierce, thus furious; that is kindled against us, and is not turned back from us, v. 8. Notice, In men's anger against us, and the violence of that, we must see God's anger, and the power of that. If that were turned back from us, our enemies should not come forward against us. 3. In his just and holy anger he condemned them to this dreadful punishment: Now also will I give sentence against them, p. 12. The execution was done, not in a heat, but in pursuance of a sentence solemnly passed, according to the just merits of the case. See what wisdom he had in the execution of it. They that read it, Now will I do execution upon them, according to the doom formerly passed; and we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and the execution of that judgment.

IV. The lamentable effects of this judgment, upon the first alarm given of it. 1. The people that should fight shall quite despair, and shall not have a heart to make the least stand against the enemy, (v. 8.) For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl; you will do so, when the cry is made through the kingdom, Arm, arm, all will be seized with a consternation, and all put into confusion; instead of girding on the sword, they will gird on the sackcloth; instead of animating one another to a vigorous resistance, they will law and howl, and so dishonour one another. While the enemy is yet at a distance, they will give up all for gone, and cry, Woe unto us, for we are spoiled, v. 13. We are all undone, the spoilers will certainly carry the day, and it is in vain to make head against them. 2. The public safety shall be at their wit's end; (v. 9.) At that day, the heart of the king shall perish, both his wisdom and his courage; despairing of success, he shall have no spirit to do anything, and, if he had, he will not know what to do. His princes and privy-councilors, who should animate and advise him, shall be as much at a loss, and as much in despair, as he. See how easily, how effectually, God can bring ruin upon a people that are doomed to it, merely by displaying their weakness, taking away the heart of the chief of them, (Job xii. 20, 24.) cutting off the head of the princes, Ps. lxxxvi. 12. The business of the priests was to encourage the people in the time of war; they were to say to the people, Fear not, and let not your hearts fail, Dent. xx. 3. They were to blow the trumpets, for an assurance to them that in the day of battle they should be remembered before the Lord their God, Num. x. 9. But now the priests themselves shall be astonished, and shall have no heart themselves to do their office, and therefore shall not be likely to put spirit into the people. The prophets too, the false prophets, who had cried peace to them, shall be put into the greatest amazement imaginable, seeing their own guilty blood ready to be shed by that sword which they had often told the people there was no danger of. Nete, God's judgments come with the greatest terror upon those that have been most secure. Our Saviour foretells that at the last destruction of Jerusalem men's hearts should fail them for fear, Luke xxii. 26. And it is common for those who have cheated and flattered people into a carnal security, not only to fail them, but to discourage them when the trouble comes.

V. The prophet's complaint of the people's being deceived, and discouraged, and the reason of it is, it was not a false step or two that did them this mischief, but their way and course of living in general; and so was it with them; and yet this is so common, that it is worth while to read it, Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, saying, Ye shall have peace. We are sure that God deceives none; let no man say, when he is tempted or deluded, that God has tempted or deluded him. But, 1. The people deceived themselves with the promises that God had made in general of his favour to that nation, and the many public privileges with which they were dignified; building upon them, though they took no care to perform the conditions, on which the accomplishment of those promises, and the continuance of those privileges, did depend; they had no regard to the threatenings which in the law were set over against those promises. Thus they cheated themselves, and then wickedly complained that God had cheated them. 2. The false prophets deceived them with false promises, which they had false minds persuaded them to believe; but when they came to read it, Now will I do execution upon them, according to the doom formerly passed; and we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth, and the execution of that judgment.

VI. The prophet's endeavour to undeceive them; when the prophets they loved and esteemed dealt falsely with them, he when they had hated and persecuted doth faithfully.
1. He shows them their wound; they were loth to see it, very loth to have it searched into; but if they will allow themselves the liberty of a free thought, they might discover their punishment in their sin; (v. 18.) "This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter." Now thou seest that it is a bitter thing to depart from God, and will certainly be bitterness in the latter end; (ch. ii. 19.) it is an effect of his hatred to the city and the people, to the thought of the heart, toucheth to the quick, and in the most tender part; the sword reacheth to the soul," v. 10. God can make trouble reach the heart even of those that would lay nothing to heart. And by this thou mayest see what is thy wickedness, that it is a bitter thing, a root of bitterness, that bears gall and wormwood, and that it has reached to the heart; is the corruption of the imagination of the thought of the heart. If the heart were not polluted with sin, it would not be disturbed and disquieted as it is with trouble.

2. He shows them the cure, v. 14. Since thy wickedness reacheth to the heart, there the application must be made; O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayst be saved. By Jerusalem he means each one of the inhabitants of the city, for he has a heart of his own to take care of, and it is personal reformation that must help the public. Every one must return from his own evil way, and in order to that, cleanse his own evil heart. And let the heart of the city too be purified, not the suburbs only, the out-skirts of it; the vitals of a state must be amended by the reformation of those that have the commanding influence upon. Note, (1.) Reformation is absolutely necessary to salvation; there is no other way of preventing judgments, or turning them away, when we are threatened with them, but taking away the sin by which we have procured them to ourselves. (2.) No reformation is saving, but that which reacheth the heart. There is heart-wickedness that is defiling to the soul, from which we must wash ourselves. By repentance and faith we must wash our hearts from the guilt we have contracted by spiritual wickedness, by those sins which begin and end in the heart, and go no further: and by mortification and watchfulness we must suppress and prevent this heart-wickedness for the future. The tree must be made good, else the fruit will not. Jerusalem was all overspread with the leprosy of sin; now it is to be washed, as the body when affected with leprosy, that external applications will do no good, unless physic be taken inwardly to carry off the humours that lurk there, and to change the miasma of the blood, so it is with the soul, so it is with the state, there will be no effectual reformation of manners, without a reformation of the mind; the mistakes there must be rectified, the corruptions there must be purified, and the evil dispositions there changed. "Though thou art Jerusalem, called a holy city, that will not save thee, unless thou wash thine heart from wickedness." In the latter part of the verse he reasons with them, How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? He complains here, [1.] Of the delays of their reformation; "How long shall that filthy heart be continued?" They have not speeded it, nor shall it be speeded; they have been loth to have anything to do with it. They have been too ready to toy with thoughts of consolation, and too slow to apply themselves to true repentance. [2.] Of the root of their corruption; the vain thoughts that lodged within them, and defiled their hearts, from which they must wash their hearts. Thoughts of iniquity or mischief, though withal evil thoughts that are passions bitter in the heart, from which all other wickedness is produced, Matt. xvi. 29. These are our own, the conceptions of our own lusts, (Jam. i. 15.) and they are most dangerous when they lodge within us, when they are admitted and entertained as guests, and are suffered to continue. Some read it thoughts of affliction, such thoughts as will bring nothing but affliction and misery. Some by the vain thoughts there understand all those frivolous pleas and excuses with which they turned off the reproves and calls of the word, and rendered them ineffectual, and bolstered themselves up in their wickedness. Wash thy heart from wickedness, and think not to say, We are not polluted, (ch. ii. 33.) or, "We are Jerusalem, we have Abraham to our father," Matth. iii. 8, 9.

19. My bowls, my bowls! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. 20. Destruction upon destruction is cried: for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. 21. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? 22. For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sotish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. 23. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. 24. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. 25. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. 26. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. 27. For thus hath the Lord said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. 28. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it. 29. The whole city shall flee for the noise of the horsemen and bowmen; they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein. 30. And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou cloakest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life. 31. For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child; the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Wo is me now: for my soul is weary because of murderers.

The prophet is here in agony, and cries cut like one upon the rack of pain with some acute distem
per, or as a woman in travail. The expressions are 
very pathetic and moving, enough to melt a heart
of stone into compassion. My bowels, my bowels,
I am pained at my very heart; and yet well, and in
heath himself, and nothing ails him. Note, A good
man in such a sad world as this, cannot but be a
man of sorrows. My heart makes a noise in the
through the tumults of my spirits, and I cannot hold
me, because it is, and therefore I was at first, and at length
sudden destruction, for a woful day it would be to him.
It becomes us to tremble at the thoughts of the
misery that sinners are running themselves into,
through good hopes, through grace, that we
ourselves are delivered from the wrath to come.
2. Tell it to them that are at ease; for they cannot
prevent so great a judgment by a true and timely
repentance, Note, Those that would affect others
with the word of God, should evidence that they are
themselves affected with it.
Now let us see what there is in the destruction
here foreseen and foretold, that is so very affecting.
(1.) It is a swift and sudden destruction; it comes
upon them, as the priests and elders (v. 21.) had no
light, nor power, nor knowledge, nor information in
themselves, nor were any comfort to the people,
or any guide to them. Compare Matth. xxiv. 29.
(2.) The mountains trembled, and the hills moved
their strength; Destruction upon destruction is cried,
and it speaks the unchangeableness of God's covenant, which stands so firm, that though he may direct the events of it very severely, yet he will not cast them off, ch. xxx. 11.

(4.) Their case was helpless, and without remedy.

[1.] God would not help them; so he tells them plainly, v. 28. And if the Lord do not help them, who can? This is that which makes their case deplorable; for this the earth mourns, and the heavens above are black; there are no prospects but what is worst. They have spoken it, v. 29. He has given the word which shall not be called back. I have purposed it, it is a consumption decreed, determined, and I will not repent, and not change this way, but proceed in it, and will not turn back from it. They would not repent, and turn back from the way of their sins, (ch. ii. 5.) and therefore God will not repent, and turn back from the way of his judgments. [2.] They could not help themselves, v. 30, 31. When the thing appeared at a distance, they flattered themselves with hopes that though God should not appear for them as he had done for Hezekiah against the Assyrian army, yet they should find some means or other to secure themselves, and give check to the forces of the enemy. But the prophet tells them, that when it comes to the great attack, it will be quite another case. When thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? What course wilt thou take? Sit down now, and consider this in time. He assures them that, whatever were now their contrivances and confidences, First, They will then be despised by their allies whom they depended upon for assistance. He had often compared the sin of Jerusalem to whoredom, not only her idolatry, but her trust in creatures, in the neighbouring powers. Now he sees he must carry her to a harlot abandoned by all the lewd ones that used to make court to her. She is supposed to do all she can to keep up her interest in their affections; she does what she can to make herself appear considerable among the nations, and a valuable ally; she compasses them by her ambassadors to the highest degree, to engage them to stand by her now in her distress; she clothes herself with ornaments of gold, as if her treasures were still as full as ever they had been; she rents her face with painting, puts the best colours she can upon her present distresses, and does her utmost to palliate and extenuate her losses, sets a good face upon them. But this is a delusion. That face will not engage the present, really rent it; the former splendor of paint spoils the skin, cracks it, and makes it rough; so the case which by false colours has been made to appear better than really it was, when truth comes to light, will look so much the worse; "And after all, in vain shall thou make thyself fair; all thy neighbours are sensible how low thou art brought; the Lord's eye is upon the naked, and he shall make thee to be naked. The Lord is thy God, and he will give thee provision; he will restore thee, and will not cast thee off." The Chaldeans will strip thee of thy crimson and ornaments, and then thy confederates, thy allies, will not come to thy rescue, and refuse to give thee any succour, but they will join with those that seek thy life, that they may come in for a share in the prey of so rich a country. Here seems to be an allusion to the story of Jezebel, who thought, by making herself look fair and fane, to have outfaced her doom, but in vain, 2 Kings ix. 3. 4. God will make thee as ashes in the fire; the prophet says, when we confide in them, how treacherous they are, instead of saving the life, they seek the life; they often change, so that they will sooner do us an ill turn, than any service. And see to how little purpose it is for those that have by sin deformed themselves in God's eyes, to think by any arts they can use to beautify themselves in the eye of the world. Secondly, They will then be themselves in despair; they will find their troubles to be like the pains of a woman in travail, which she cannot es
not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. 5. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them: for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. 6. Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thereof shall be torn in pieces; because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased. 7. How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. 3. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. 9. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Here is,

1. A challenge to produce any one right honest man, or at least any considerable number of such, in Jerusalem, v. 1. Jerusalem was become like the old world, in which all flesh had corrupted their way. There were some perhaps who flattered themselves with hopes that there were yet many good men in Jerusalem, who would stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God; and there might be others who boasted of its being the Holy city, and thought that this would save it; but God bids them search the town, and intimates that they should scarcely find a man in it who executed judgment, and made conscience of what he said and did: "Look in the streets where they make their appearance, and converse together, and in the broad places where they keep their markets; see if you can find a man, a magistrate," (so some,) "that executes judgment, and administers justice impartially, that will put the laws in execution against vice and profaneness. When the faith of thus cease out fail, there is time to cry, Wo is me?" (Mic. vii. 1. 2.)

2. Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. 2. And though they say, The Lord liveth, surely they swear falsely. 3. O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return. 4. Therefore I said, Surely these are poor; they are foolish: for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.
They do not swear by idols, they forewarn themselves, which is no less an affront to God, as the case of truth, then the other is as the only true God.

II. A complaint which the prophet makes to God of the obstinacy and wilfulness of these people. God had appealed to their eyes; (v. 1.) but here the prophet appeals to his eyes; (v. 3.) "Are they not thine eyes upon the truth? Dost thou not see every man's character? And is not this the truth of their case? Their eyes have been wickedly and deceitfully set upon the face of a rock?" Or, "Behold, thou dost rest truth in the inward part; but where is it to be found among the men of this generation? For though they say, The Lord liveth, yet they never regard him; thou hast stricken them with one affection after another, but they have not grieved for the affliction, they have been as stocks and stones under it, much less have they grieved for the sin by which they have brought it upon themselves. Thou hast gone further yet, hast consumed them, hast corrected them yet more severely; but they have refused to receive correction, to accommodate themselves to thy design in correcting them, and to answer to it. They would not receive instruction by the correction. They have set themselves to overthrow the divine service, and to destroy the execution of it, for they have made their faces harder than a rock; they cannot change countenance, neither blush for shame, nor look pale for fear, cannot be beaten back from the pursuit of their lusts, whatever check is given them; for though often called to it, they have refused to return, and would go forward, right or wrong, as the horse into the battle."

II. The trial made both of rich and poor, and the bad character given of both.

1. The poor were ignorant, and therefore they were wicked. He found many that refused to return, for whom he was willing to make the best excuse: their case would bear, and it was this, (v. 4.) "Surely, these are poor, they are foolish; they never had the advantage of a good education, nor have they wherewithal to help themselves now with the means of instruction; they are forced to work hard for their living, and have no time or capacity for reading or hearing, so that they know not the way of the Lord, or the judgments of their God; they understand neither the way in which God by his precepts will have them to walk toward him, nor the way in which he by his providence is with them. Notwithstanding, their willful ignorance is the lamentable cause of abounding impurity and iniquity. What can one expect but works of darkness from brutish, sottish people that know nothing of God and religion, but choose to sit in darkness? (2.) This is commonly a reigning sin among poor people. There are the devil's poor, as well as God's; who, notwithstanding their poverty, might know the way of the Lord, so as to walk in it, and do their duty, without being book-learned; but they are willingly ignorant, and therefore their ignorance will not be their excuse.

2. The rich were insolent and haughty, and therefore they were wicked; (v. 5.) "I will get me to the great men, and see if I can find them more pliable to the word and providence of God; I will speak to them the way of the Lord, and convince them."

VOL. IV.—2 X
or that a God of infinite purity will connive at such abominable uncleanness? These are things that must be reckoned for, else the honour of God's government cannot be maintained, nor his laws saved from contempt; but sinners will be tempted to think him altogether such a one as themselves, contrary to that conviction of their own consciences concerning the judgment of God, which is necessary to be supported, That they which do such things are worthy of death. Rom. i. 32. Observe, When God punishes sin, he is said to visit for it, or inquire into it; for he weighs the cause before he passes sentence. Sinners have reason to expect punishment, upon the account of God's holiness; to which sin is highly offensive, as well as upon the account of his justice, to which it renders us obnoxious; this is intimated in that, Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? It is not only the word of God, but his soul, that takes vengeance. And he has national judgments wherewith to take vengeance for national sins. Such nations as this was cannot long go unpunished. How shall I pardon thee for this? v. 7. Not but that those who have been guilty of these sins, have found mercy with God, as to their eternal estate; (Manasseh himself did, though so much necessary to the inquiry of those things;) but nations, as such, being rewarding and punishable only in this life, it would not be for the glory of God to let a nation so very wicked as this pass without some manifest tokens of his displeasure.

10. Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end: take away her battlements; for they are not the Lord's. 11. For the house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the Lord. 12. They have belied the Lord, and said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine; 13. And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them. 14. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. 15. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. 16. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. 17. And they shall eat up thy harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thy herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword. 18. Nevertheless in those days, saith the Lord, I will not make a full end with you. 19. And it shall come to pass, when ye shall say, Wherefore doth the Lord our God all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land; so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

We may observe in these verses, as before, I. The sin of this people, upon which the common mission signed against them is grounded. God disowns them, and dooms them to destruction, v. 10. But is there not a cause? Yes; for, 1. They have desolated the land of God, v. 11. The house of Israel and the house of Judah have dealt very treacherously against one another, yet both agreed to deal very treacherously against God. They forsook the worship of him, and therein violated their covenants with him; they revolved from him, and played the hypocrite with him. 2. They have defied the judgments of God, and given the lie to his threatenings in the mouth of his prophets, v. 12, 13. They were often told that evil would follow them; and therefore must expect some desolating judgments, sword and famine; but they were secure, and said, We shall have peace, though we go on. For, (1.) They did not fear what God is; they belied him, and confront ed the dictates even of natural light concerning him, for they said, It is not he, he is not such a one as we have been made to believe he is; he does not see, or not right, or not right will be made to us, and therefore no evil shall come upon us. Multitudes are blinded by being made to believe that God will not be so strict with them as his word says he will; nay, by this artifice Satan undid us all; Ye shall not surely die. So here, Neither shall we see sword nor famine. Vain hopes of impunity are the deceitful support of all impiety. (2.) They did not fear what God said. The prophets gave them fair warning, but they turned it off with a jest; Thus do they talk so, because it is their trade; they are words of course, and words are but wind. It is not the word of the Lord that is in them; it is only the language of their melancholy fancy, or their ill will to their country, because they are not preferred. Note, Impudent sinners are not willing to own any thing to be the word of God, that makes against them; that tends either to part them from, or disquiet them in, their sins. They threaten the prophets; They shall become wind, shall pass away unregarded, and thus shall it be done unto them, what they threaten against us we will inflict upon them. Do they frighten us with famine? Let them be fed with the bread of affliction. (So Micah was, i. 13.) Do they say, They shall tell us of the sword? Let them perish by the sword, ch. ii. 30. Thus their mocking and misusing of God's messengers, filled the measure of their iniquity.

II. The punishment of this people for their sin. I. The threatenings they laughed at shall be executed; (v. 14.) Because ye speak this word of contempt concerning the prophets, and the word in their mouths, therefore God will put honour upon them and their words, and one iota or title of them shall fall to the ground, i Sam. iii. 19. Here God turns to the prophet Jeremiah, who had been thus blantered, and perhaps had been a little uneasy at it; Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire. God owns them for his words, though men denied them, and will as surely make them to take effect as the fire consumes combustible matter that is in its wood; it is not the word, but the wood. Sinners by sin make themselves fuel to that wrath of God, which is revealed from heaven against all uncleanness and unworthiness of men in the scripture. The word of God will certainly be too hard for those that contend with it. They shall break, who will not bow before it. Therefore they that think them selves in no danger of shall be brought under by God. God gives them their commission; (v. 19.) Go up upon her walls, mount them, trample upon them, tread
them down; walls of stone, before the divine commission, shall be but mud walls. Having made yourselves masters of the walls, you may destroy at pleasure; for you may take away her battlements, and leave the fenced, fortified cities to lie open; for her battlements are not the Lord's, he does not own them, and therefore will not protect and fortify them. They were not erected in his fear, nor with a dependence upon him: the people have trusted to them more than to God, and therefore they are not his. When the city is filled with sin, God will not look to them with favor, and therefore when you see that they are paper walls. What can defend us, when he who is our Defence, and the Defender of all our defences, is departed from us? Numb. iv. 9. What is not of God, cannot stand, not stand long, nor stand us in any stead.

What dreadful work these invaders should make, is here described; (v. 15.) Lo, I will bring a nation upon you, O house of Israel. Note, God has all nations at his command, does what he pleases with them, and makes what use he pleases of them. And sometimes he is pleased to make the nations of the earth, the heathen nations, a scourge to the house of Israel, when that is become an hypocritical nation. This nation of the Chaldeans is here said to be a remote nation; it is brought upon them from afar off; it is the panic-dread, and the longer stay, that they may pay themselves well for so long a march. It is a nation that thou hast had no commerce with, by reason of their distance, and therefore cannot expect to find favour with. God can bring trouble upon us from places and causes very remote. It is a mighty nation, that there is no making head against; an ancient nation, that value themselves upon their antiquity, and will therefore be the more haughty and imperial. It is a nation whose language thou knowest not; they speak the Syriac tongue, which the Jews at that time were not acquainted with, as appears, 2 Kings xviii. 26. The difference of language would make it the more difficult to treat with them of peace; compare this with the threatening, (Deut. xxviii. 49.) which it seems to have a reference to, for the law and the prophets exactly agree. They are well armed; Their quiver is an open sepulchre; their arrows shall fly so thick, hit so sure, and wound so deep, that they shall be reckoned to breathe nothing but death and slaughter; they are able-bodied, all effective, mighty men, v. 16. And when they have made themselves masters of the country, so shall their power extend, they shall reckon all their own, that they can lay their hands on, v. 17. (1.) They shall strip the country, shall not only sustain, but surfeit, their soldiers with the rich products of this fruitful land. They shall not cores up, (then it might possibly have been retriev-able,) but eat up, thine harvest in the field, and thy bread in the house, which thy sons and thy daughters eat. 20. We that have, we have for our families, and it is comfort to see our sons and daughters eating that which we have taken care and pains for. But it is a grievous vexation to see it devoured by strangers and enemies; to see their camps victualled with our stores, while those that are dear to us are perishing for want of it; this also is according to the curse of the law; (Deut. xxiii. 19.) They shall not eat the fruit of thy vineyards and fig-trees. (2.) They shall starve the towns; They shall impoverish thy fenced cities, (and what fence is there against poverty, when it comes like an armed man?) those cities wherein thou trustedst to be a protection to the country. Note, It is just with God to impoverish that which we make our confidence. They shall impoverish them with the sword, cutting off all provisions from coming to them, and intercepting trade and commerce, which will impoverish even fenced cities.

III. An intimation of the tender compassion God has yet for his people, the enemy is commissioned to destroy and lay waste, but must not make a full end, v. 10. Though they make a great slaughter, yet some must be left to live; though they make a great spoil, yet something must be left to live upon, for God has said it, (v. 18.) with a non obstant—a never-theless, to the present desolation; Even in those days, disdain not small provision, and lay up for yourselves provisions in the towns, for the Lorp will send forth the fruits of the earth in their place, that ye may live; and if God said not the enemy shall not, God has mercy in store for this people, and therefore will set bounds to this desolating judgment; hitherto it shall come, and no further.

IV. The justification of God in these proceedings against them: as he will appear to be gracious in not making a full end with them, so he will appear to be righteous in coming so near it, and will have it acknowledged that he has done them no wrong, v. 19. Observe, 1. A reason demanded, insolently demanded, by the people for these judgments. They will say, Wherefore doth the Lord our God do all this unto us? What provocation have we given him, or what quarrel has he with us? As if against such a sinful nation there did not appear cause enough of action. Note, Unhumbled hearts, when they are ready to blaspheme the name of God, their own and other men's perfictions, and pretend they are to seek for the cause of them, when it is written in the forefront of them. But, 2. Here is a reason immediately assigned: the prophet is instructed what answer to give them, for God will be justified when he speaks, though he speaks with ever so much terror. He must tell them that God does this against them for what they have done against him, and that they may, if they please, read their sin in their punishment. Do not they know very well that they have forsaken God; and therefore can they think it strange if he has forsaken them? Have they forgotten how often they served strange gods in their own land, that good land, in the abundance of the fruits of which they ought to have served God with gladness of heart; and therefore is it not just with God to make them serve strange gods in a strange land, where they can call nothing their own, as he had threatened to do? Deut. xxviii. 47, 48. They that are fond of strangers, to strangers let them go.

20. Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, 21. Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not: 22. Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? 23. But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revoluted and gone. 24. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. The prophet, having reproved them for sin, and threatened the judgments of God against them, here sent them to them again upon another errand, which
he must publish in Judah: the purport of it is to persuade them to fear God, which would be an effectual principle of their reformation, as the want of that fear had been at the bottom of their apostasy.

1. He complains of the shameful stupidity of this people, and their bent to backslide from God; speaking as if he knew not what course to take with them.

2. Their understandings were darkened, and unfit to admit the rays of the divine light. They are a foolish people and without understanding, they apprehend not the mind of God, though ever so plainly discovered to them, by the written word, by his prophets, and by his providence; (v. 21.) They have eyes, but they see not, ears, but they hear not, lieth their minds so with the world, (Deut. iv. 6.) and yet really they are a foolish file, and without understanding. Note, We cannot judge of men by the advantages and opportunities they enjoy; there are those that sit in darkness in a land of light, that live in sin even in a holy land, that are bad in the best places.

2. Their wills were stubborn, and might to submit to the rules of the divine laws. (v. 22.) This people has a revolting and rebellious heart; and no wonder, when they were foolish and without understanding, Ps. lxxxi. 5. Nay, it is the corrupt bias of the will, that bribes and besets the understanding: none so blind as those that will not see. The character of this people is the true character of all people by nature, till the grace of God has wrought a change; we are foolish, slow of understanding, and apt to mistake and forget; yet that is not the worst; we have a revolting and a rebellious heart, a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to his law; not only revolting from him by a rooted aversion to that which is good, but rebellious against him by a strong inclination to that which is evil. Observe, The revolting heart is a rebellious one: they that withdraw from their allegiance to God, and will not bow down before his name and the Son, take up arms against him. They are revolted and gone. The revolting heart will produce a revolting life: They are gone, and they will g;: (so it may be read;) now nothing will be restrained from them, Gen. xi. 6.

11. He ascribed this to the want of the fear of God. When he observes them to be without understanding, he asks, “Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?” v. 22. If you would but keep up an awe of God, you would be more observant of what he says to you; and did you but understand yourselves better, you would be more under the commanding rule of God’s fear.” When he observes that they are revolting and gone, he adds this, as the root and cause of their apostasy, (v. 24.) Agg. he says, “Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, and will ye not tremble at my presence?”

2. We must fear the Lord and his greatness; (v. 22.) upon this account he demands our fear: “Shall we not tremble at his presence, and be afraid of the --- him, or trilling with him, who in the kingdom of nature and providence gives such magnificent and powerful proofs of his almighty power? Here is one instance given of very many that might be given; he keeps the sea within compass; though the tides flow with a mighty strength, twice every day, and if they should flow on for awhile, would crown the world; though in a storm the billows rise high, and dash to the shore with incredible force and fury, yet they are under check, and cannot rise to their height. Thus it is the Lord’s doing, and it would be marvelous, if it were not common, in our eyes. He has placed the sand for the bound of the sea, not only for a measure, to mark our how far it may come, and where it must stop, but as a mound, or fence, to put a stop to it. A wall of sand shall be as effectual as a wall of brass to check the flowing waves, when God is pleased to make it so; nay, that is chosen rather to teach us that a soft answer like the soft sand, turns away wrath, and quits a feasting rage, when grievous words, like hard rocks, do but exacerbate, and make the waters cast forth so much the more mire and dirt. This bound is placed by a perpetual decree; by an ordinance of antiquity—so some read it, and then it sends us as far back as to the decree all the world, when God said, He that SATA with the sea and the dry land, and fixed marches between them, (Gen. i. 9, 10.) which is elegantly described, Ps. civ. 6, &c. and Job xxxvii. 8, &c. or to the period of Noah’s flood, when God promised that he would never drown the world again, Gen. xi. 11. An ordinance of perpetuity—so our translation takes it. It is a perpetual decree, it has its effect all the world, and till the end of the world, and shall still continue till day and night come to an end. This perpetual decree the waters of the sea cannot pass over or break through. Though the waves thereof toss themselves, as the troubled sea does when it cannot rest, yet can they not prevail: though they roar and rage as if they were vexed at the check given them, yet can they not pass over. Now this is a good reason why the Hebrews obey the Lord, (1.) By this they observe that he is a God of almighty power and universal sovereignty, and therefore to be feared and had in reverence. (2.) This shows us how easily he could drown the world again, and how much we continually lie at his mercy, and therefore we should be afraid of making him our Enemy. (3.) Even the unruly waves of the sea observe his decree, and retreat at his check; and shall not we? Why are our hearts revolting and rebellious, when the sea neither revolts nor rebels? We must fear the Lord and his goodness, Hos. iii. 5. The instances of this, as of the former, are fetched from God’s common providence; (v. 24.) We must fear the Lord our God, we must worship him, and give him glory, and be always in care to keep ourselves in his love, because he is continually doing us good; he is one of the the and the latter rain; the former a little after seedness, the latter a little before harvest, and both in their season; and by this means he reserves to us the appointed weeks of harvest. Harvest is reckoned by weeks, because in a few weeks enough is gathered to serve for sustenance the year round. The weeks of the harvest are appointed by the promise of God, that seed-time and harvest shall not fail. And this is the promise that we are reserved to us by the Divine Providence, otherwise we should come short of them. In harvest-mercy therefore God is to be acknowledged, his power, and goodness, and faith
fulness, for they all come from him. And it is a good reason why we should fear him, that we may keep ourselves in his love, because we have such a necessary dependence upon him. The fruitful seasons were witnesses for God, even to the heathen world, sufficient to leave them inexusable in their contempt of him: (Acts xiv. 17.) and yet the Jews, who had the written word to explain their testimony by, were not wrought upon to fear the Lord, though it appears how much it is our interest to do so.

25. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withheld good things from you. 26. For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait as he that setteth snares: they set a trap, they catch men. 27. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich. 28. They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. 29. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 30. A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; 31. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

Here.

I. The prophet shows them what mischief their sins had done them; they have turned away these things, (v. 25.) the former and the latter rain, which they used to have in due season, (v. 24.) but which had of late been withheld, (ch. iii. 3.) by reason of which the appointed weeks of harvest had sometimes disappointed them. "It is your sin that has withheld good from you, when God was ready to bestow it upon you," Note. It is sin that stops the current of God's favours to us, and deprives us of the blessings we used to receive. It is that which makes the heavens as brass and the earth as iron.

II. He shows them how great their sins were, how heinous and provoking. When they had forsaken the worship of the true God, even moral honesty was lost among them; Among my people are found wicked men, (v. 26.) some of the worst of men, and so much the worse they were, insomuch as they were found among God's people.

1. They were spiteful and malicious. Such are properly wicked men, men that delight in doing mischief; they were found, caught in the very act of their wickedness; as hunters or fowlers lay snares for their game, so did they lie in wait to catch men; and made a sport of it, and took, as much pleasure in it, as if they had been entrapping beasts or fish. They contrived ways of doing mischief to good people, (whom they hated for their goodness,) especially to those that faithfully reproved them; (Isa. xxi. 21.) or to those that stood in the way of their preferment, or that they supposed to have affronted them, or done them a diskindness; or to those whose estates they coveted; so Jezebel murdered Naboth for his vineyard. Nay, they did mischief for mischief-sake.

2. They were false and treacherous; (v. 27.) is cage, or coop, is full of birds, and of food for them to fatten them for the table, so are their houses full of deceit, of wealth gotten by fraudulent practices, or of arts and methods of defrauding. All the business of their brains is done with an eye to the purse; there ready deals with them, they will cheat him if they can; which is easily done by those who make no conscience of what they say and do. Herein they overpass the deeds of the wicked, v. 28. Those that act by deceit, with a colour of law and justice, do more mischief perhaps than these wicked men, (v. 26.) that carried all before them by open force of violence. They are the worst of the worst, they harden themselves, and are the worst of the worst. And would you think it? They prosper in these wicked courses, and therefore their hearts are hardened in them. They are greedy of the world, because they find it flows in upon them, and they stick not at any wickedness in pursuit of it, because they find that it is so far from hindering their prosperity, that it furthers it. They are become great in the world, they are waxen rich, and thrive upon it. They have wherewithal to make provision for the flesh to full the lusts of it, to which they are very indulgent, so that they are waxen fat with living at ease, and beholding themselves in all the delights of sense; they are sleek and smooth; they shine, they look fair and gay; every body admires them. And they fear the judgments of God. No wonder is it, if in the end they escape the evils which one would expect their sins should bring upon them; they are not in trouble as other men, much less as we might expect bad men, Ps. lxxxiii. 3, &c.

3. When they were grown great, and had got power in their hands, they did not do that good with it which they ought to have done: They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and the right of the needy. The fatherless are often needy, always need assistance and advice, and advantage is taken of their helpless condition to do them an injury. Who should succour them then but the great and rich? What have men wealth for, but to do good with it? But these would take no cognizance of any such distressed cases: they had not so much sense of justice, or compassion for the injured; or, if they did concern themselves in the cause, it was not to do right, but to protect them that did wrong. And yet they prosper still, God layeth not folly to them. Certainly then the things of this world are not the best things, for often the worst men have the most of them: yet we are not to think that, because they prosper, it allows of their practices. No, though sentence against their works be not executed speedily, it will be executed.

4. There was a general corruption of all orders and degrees of men among them; (v. 30, 31.) A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The degeneracy of such a people, so privileged and advanced, was a wonderful thing. How could they stand, with such weak oblations? It was a horrible thing, and to be detected, and the consequences of it dreaded. To frighten ourselves from sin, let us call it a horrible thing. What was the matter? In short, this: [1.] The leaders misled the people: The prophets prophesy falsely, counterfeit a commission from heaven, when they are factors for hell. Religion is never so dangerous as when it is misapplied; and yet misapplied, as it is, the very revolution. But why did not the priests, who had power in their hands for that purpose, restrain these false prophets? Alas! instead of doing that, they made use of them as the tools of their ambition and tyranny; they bare rule by their means; they supported themselves in their grandeur and wealth, their baseness and luxury, their impositions and oppressions, by the help of the false prophets, and their interest in the people. Thus they were in a combination against everything that was good, and
strengthened another one's hands in evil. (2.) The people were well enough pleased to be misled; "They are my people," says God, "and should have stood up for me, and borne their testimony against the wickedness of their priests and prophets; but they love to have it so." If the priests and prophets will let them alone in their sins, they will give them no disturbance in theirs. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and like those rulers very well wherein they are trusted, and those teachers that will not referre them.  

III. He shows them how fatal the consequences of this would certainly be. Let them consider, 1. What the reckoning would be for their wickedness; (v. 29.) Shall not I visit for these things as before, v. 9. Sometimes mercy rejoices against judgment; How shall I give thee up, Ephraim! Here, judgment on reasoning against mercy; Shall I not visit? We are sure that Infinite Wisdom knows how to accommodate the matter between them. The manner of expression is very emphatical, and speaks, (1.) The certainty and necessity of God's judgments; Shall not my soul be avenged? Yes, without doubt, vengeance will come, it must come, if the sinner repents not. (2.) The justice and equity of God's judgments; he appeals to the sinner's own conscience. Do they not deserve to be punished, that have been guilty of such abominations? Shall he not be avenged on such a nation, such a wicked, provoking nation as this?  

2. What the direct tendency of their wickedness was: What will you do in the end thereof? That is, (1.) What a pitch of wickedness will you come to at last? What will you do, when God is pleased to do that which you have caused? What will this grow to? You will certainly grow worse and worse, till you have filled up the measure of your iniquity. (2.) What a fit of destruction will you come to at last! When things are brought to such a pass as this, as nothing can be expected from you but a deluge of sin, so nothing can be expected from God but a deluge of wrath; and what will ye do when that comes? Note, Those that walk in bad ways, would do well to consider the tendency of them both to greater sin and utter ruin. An end will come, the end of a wicked life will come, when it will be all called over again, and without doubt will be bitterness in the latter end.  

CHAP. VI.  

In this chapter, as before, we have, 1. A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah, and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldæan army, (v. 1. 8.) with the spoils which they should make of the country, (v. 9.) and the terror which all should be seized with on that occasion, v. 22. 28. 11. An account of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem, which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppression; (v. 7.) their contempt of the word of God; (v. 10. 12.) their worldliness; (v. 13.) the treachery of their prophets; (v. 14.) their impiety in sin; (v. 15.) their obstinacy against reproofs, v. 18. 19. These made their sacrifices unacceptable to him, (v. 29.) and for these he gave them up to destruction. He that stirr'd them up to evil by his words and signs, and the people that rejected them as irreclaimable, v. 29. 30. III. Good counsel given them in the midst of all this, but in vain, v. 8. 19. 17.  

1. O YE children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoa, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem: for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. 2. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman. 3. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her: they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. 4. Prepare ye war against her; arise, and let us go up at noon. Wo unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out. 5. Arise, and let us go by night, and let us destroy her palaces. 6. For thus hath the Lord of hosts said, How ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited; she is wholly oppression in the midst of her. 7. As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds. 8. Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited.  

Here is, 1. Judgment threatened against Judah and Jerusalem; the city and the country, which were at this time secure, and under no apprehension of danger; they saw no cloud gathering, but every thing looked safe and serene: but the prophet tells them that they shall shortly be invaded by a foreign power, an army shall be brought against them from the north, which shall lay all waste, and shall cause not only a general destruction, but a general desolation. It is here foretold, 1. That the alarm of this should be loud and terrible. This is represented, v. 1. The children of Benjamin, in which tribe part of Jerusalem lay, are here called to shift for their own safety in the country; for the city (to which it was first thought advisable for them to flee, ch. iv. 5. 6.) would soon be made too hot for them, and they would find it the wisest course to flee out of the midst of it. It is common, in public frights, for people to think any place safer than that in which they are; and therefore those in the city are for shifting into the country, in hopes there to escape out of danger, and those in the country are for shifting into the city, in hopes there to make head against the danger; but it will be in vain, when evil first appears, to shift with commission. That which bid send the alarm into the country, and to do what they could for their own safety; Blow the trumpet in Tekoa, a city which lay twelve miles north from Jerusalem. Let them be stirred up to stand upon their guard; Set up a sign of fire, that is, kindle the beacons in Beth-haccerem, the house of the vineyard, which lay on a hill between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Prepare to make a vigorous resistance, for the evil appears out of the north. This may be taken ironically; Keep yourselves to the best methods you can think of for your own preservation, but all shall be in vain; for when you have done your best, it will be a great destruction, for it is in vain to contend with God's judgments. 2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable, and such as they should be a very unequal match for. (1.) See what the daughter of Zion is, on whom the assault is made; she is likened to a comely and delicate woman, (v. 2.) bred up in every thing that is nice and soft, that will not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy, (Deut. xxxix. 56.) nor suffer the wind to blow upon her; and, not being accustomed to hardship, she will be the less able either to resist the enemy, (for those that make war must endure hardness,) or to bear the destruction with.
that patience which is necessary to make it tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of the life we love, the more we shall have to bear the troubles of this life. (2.) See what the daughter of Babylon is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to shepherds and their flocks; (v. 3.) in such numbers and in such order did they come, the soldiers following their leaders, as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of Zion dwell at home, (so some read it,) in her beauty, the common city, owned by none, pitch their tents in it, and their flocks quickly eat it bare; so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all.

For the further illustration of this, he shows,
[1.] How God shall commission them to make their slaughter upon Jerusalem, which was the holiest city, that were his peculiar. It is he that says, (v. 4.) Prepare ye war against her; for he is the Lord of hosts, that has all hosts at his command, and he has said, (v. 6.) How ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem, in order to the attacking of it. The Chaldeans have great power against Judah and Jerusalem, and yet they have no power but what is given them from above. God has marked out Jerusalem for destruction; he has said, 'This is the city to be visited, visited in wrath, visited by the divine justice, and this is the time of her visitation.' The day is coming, when those that are careless and secure in sinful ways, will be visited.

[2.] How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or dissuaded, the counsels of war which the enemies held are made to agree with his counsels. God having said, Prepare war against her, their determinations are made subservient to his; and notwithstanding the distance of place, and the many difficulties that lay in the way, it is soon resolved nothing shall be delayed, but all shall be prepared to move, and as go. Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God are pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, Isa. x. 6, 7. In this campaign, First, They resolved to be very expedient. They have no sooner resolved upon it, than they address themselves to it; it shall never be said that they left anything to be done; the evening is stretched out, and they could do to-day. Arise, let us go up at noon, though it be in the heat of the day; nay, (v. 5.) Arise, let us go up by night, though it be in the dark; nothing shall hinder them, they are resolved to lose no time. They are described as men in care to make dispatch, (v. 4.) 'We unto us, for the day goes away, and we are not going on with our work; the sun and its brightness are gone, arise, and sit still, and let slip the opportunity.' O that we were thus eager in our spiritual work and warfare, thus afraid of losing time, or any opportunity, taking the kingdom of heaven by violence! It is folly to trifle when we have an eternal salvation to work out, and the enemies of that salvation to fight against. Secondly, They confidently expect to be very successful, and may bring all their places, and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them. It was not that they might

contend with God's counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager; yet God alwaysPerch scourge them for it. Thus they carry on the work of trouble, and the troubles of life with these means. (3.) How the daughter of Babylon will be thus employed. Thus, (v. 9.) she is employed, bring her own with her; for she has given them what they needed. They have had hard work with them one another, each in their turns, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enmity shall be thus employed, and the same men, that by oppression, and violence, and wrong-doing, is here charged upon them, 1. As a national sin; (v. 6.) Therefore this city is to be visited, it is time to make inquisition, for she is wholly oppressed in the midst of her. All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you will, there were causes for complaints of this kind. 2. As a sin that was become in a manner natural to them; (v. 7.) She casts out wickedness in all the instances of malice and mischievousness, as a fountain casts out her waters, as plentifully and constantly; the streams bitter and poisonous, like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will flow forth in all its streams, if it be once let; and this by laws or conscience in their violent proceedings. This is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in his natural state; it casts out wickedness, one evil imagination or other, as a fountain casts out her waters, naturally and easily; it is always flowing, and yet always full. 3. As that which was become a constant practice with them. Violence and spoil are heard in her. The cry of it is come up before God, as that of Sodom; Before me continually are grievance and wounds—the complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common Parent of mankind, regards and rescinds, and sooner or later will revenge the mischiefs and wrongs that men do to one another.

III. The counsel given them, how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given, now upon the whole matter; 'Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, v. 8. Receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by his prophets; be wise at length for thyself.' They knew very well what they had been instructed to do; nothing remained but to do it, for till then they could not be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they ran upon, if they refused to comply with the instructions given them; lest my soul depart, or be disjoined, from thee. This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it. Note, 1. The God of mercy is this path to depart even from a provoking people, as mercifulst with them, by true repentance and reformation to prevent things coming to that extremity. 2. Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined; it intimates the loss not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. Compare this with what is said in the same word, Heb. x. 38. If any man drew back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 3. These whom God forsakes are certainly undone; when God's soul departs from Jerusalem, she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited, Matth. xxiii. 38.

9. Thus said the Lord of hosts. They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine; turn back thy hand as a grape-
There is in their anger we may see God angry. Now see on whom the fury is poured out in full phials; upon the children abroad, or in the streets, where they are playing; (Zech, vii, 5) or whether they run out innocently to look about them; the sword of the merciful saileth unobserved. The Chaldeans; ch. ix. 21. The children perish in the calamity which the fathers' sins have procured. The execution shall likewise reach the assembly of young men, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness, they shall be cut off together. Nor shall these only fall into the enemies' hands, who meet for lewdness, but the Lord himself and his house shall be taken, these two in bed together, and neither left, but both taken prisoners. And as they have no compassion for the weak but fair sex, so they have none for decrepit but venerable age; the old with the fall of days, whose deaths can contribute no more to their safety than their lives to their service, who are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, they shall be either cut off or carried off. Their houses shall then be turned to others, (v. 12.) the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their stores; their fields and wives shall fall together into their hands as was threatened, Deut. xxviii. 30, 8c. For God stretches out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land, and none can go out of the reach of it.

Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath, 1. The prophets have but expressed it in terror, hardly, for herein he dealt faithfully; (v. 11.) "I am full of the fury of the Lord, full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently." He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him uneasy; but he could not contain himself, he was uneasy with holding in; he suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he durst, but he was so full of power by the spirit of the Lord of hosts, that he must speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the scripture, we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their message pleasing or unpleasant. 2. He condemns the false prophets, who preached plausibly, for therein they flattered people, and dealt unfaithfully, v. 13, 14. The priests and the prophet, who should be their watchmen and monitors, have dealt falsely, have not been true to their trust, nor told the people their faults and the danger they were in; they should have been their physicians, but they murdered their patients by letting them have their wills, and giving them every thing they had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger; (v. 14.) They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, or, according to the cure of some slight hurt; skimming over the wound, and never searching it to the bottom; applying lotions only, when there is a need of surgery. Here, 1. He gives the false professors, who are not only guilty of the sins of their times, and giving them eulogies, to make them easy for the present, while the disease was prevailing upon their vitals. They said, "Peace, peace, all shall be well." If there were some thinking people among them, who were awake, and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetic authority, boldly averring, that they must have been in error, or that the case was in a different way, when there is no peace, because they went on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends, that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies, who flatter us in a sinful way.

II. The sin of Judah and Jerusalem is here dis
covered, which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them, and justified him in it.

1. They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming, v. 3. "But," says he, "to whom shall I speak, and give warnings?" I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a patience hearing. I may give warnings long enough, but there is nobody that will take warning. I cannot speak, that they may hear, cannot speak to any purpose, or with any hope of success; for their ear is uncircumsized, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that they cannot hearken. They love to hear the voice of the skulk, and the gains of hearing, so that divine things might as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved that they will not. The word of the Lord is unto them a reproof. Both the reproves and the threatenings of the word are so; they reckon themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resent the prophet's plain-dealing with them, as they would the most causeless slander and calumny. This was kicking against the pricks, (Acts ix. 5.) as the lawyers against the word of Christ; (Luke xi. 45.) Thus saying, thou reproachest us also. Note, These reproves that are counted reproaches, and that are regarded as a gainst them, be at some times in the heaviest woes. When it is here said, They had no delight in the word, more is implied than is expressed; they have an antipathy to it, their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them, and enranges their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face, and pull out the eyes, of their reprovers. And how can those expect that the word of the Lord shall not be for them, who have no delight in it, but would rather be any where than within hearing of it?

2. They were inordinately set upon the world, and wholly carried away by the love of it; (v. 13.) From the least of them even to the greatest, old and young, rich and poor, high and low, those of all ranks, professions, and employments, every one is given to the gratifying of the world, which is what they can get, her fis per nefas—right or wrong, and this made them oppressive and violent, (v. 6, 7.) For of that evil, as well as others, the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets; they were the coves of Phariasees that derided Christ, Luke xvi. 14.

3. They were become impudent in sin, and past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask. (v. 15.) Were they ashamed, when they had committed all these abominations, which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? Did they blush at the conviction, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is some good, though little, in them. But alas! there did not appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened, that they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush, they had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confuted the convictions which should have humbled them; and brought them to repentance. They resolved to flout the warnings, and not to own their guilt. Some refer it to the priests and prophets, who had healed the people slightly, and told them that they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them, and gave them the lie. Those that are shameless are graceless, and their case hopeless. But they that will not submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows, Therefore they shall fall among them that fall, they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be cast down, and be made to tremble, because they would not blush. Note, Those that sin, and cannot blush for it, shall find that it is bad with them now, and that it will be worse with them shortly. At first, they hardened themselves, and would not blush, afterward, they were so hardened, that they could not. Quid uum habuist in malis bonum perdunt, peraudci iercundam. They have lost the good they have; they have been in many bad ones, that is, shame, for having done amiss. Senec. de Vit. Bcet.

III. They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose. 1. By way of advice concerning their duty, v. 16. God had been used to say to them, Stand in the ways and see. That is, (1.) He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but to do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause and inquire for it. If they have any reason to think that they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have got satisfaction. O that more would be thus minded, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe lawful and unlawful are of no less consequence to us than the right way and the wrong are to a traveller! (2.) He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them; "Ask for the old paths; inquire of the former age; (Job vii. 1.) ask the sage, the ancient; (Deut. xxxiii. 7.) and thou wilt find the way of godliness and righteousness has always been the way which God has owned and blessed, and in which men have prospered. Ask for the old paths, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses. Write the promises made to them, tread in their steps. Ask for the old paths; Where is the good way? We must not be guided merely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path; no, there is an old way which wicked men have trodden, Job xxii. 13. But when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the good way, the highway of the righteous. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a good old way; the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in. (3.) He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these inquiries; "When you have found out which is the good way, walk therein; practise accordingly, keep close to that way, proceed and persevere in it. Some of these words may be applied to the troubles and declensions of the church; and others refer to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets, between those that said they should have peace, and those that told them trouble was at the door; they pretended they knew not which to believe; "Stand in the way," says God, "and see, and inquire, which of these two agrees with the written word, and the usual methods of God's providence, and make that your choice, for that is the good way, and do accordingly." (4.) He assures them, that if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls; "Walk in the good old way, and you will find that your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves, and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk
in that way, you will find an abundant recompense at your journey's end."

(3.) He bemoans that this good counsel, which was so rational in itself, and so proper for them, could not find acceptance; "But they said, We will not walk therein. Not only will we not be at the pains to inquire which is the good way, the good old way; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way, yet we will not walk ourselves and our horses so as to walk in it." Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright willfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger. Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by lesser judgments he threatens greater, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in; (v. 17.) Also I set watchmen over you. God's ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them set over us in the Lord. Now observe here, (1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen. This was the burden of their song, they cried again and again, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. God, in his providence, sounds the trumpet; (Zech. ix. 14.) the watchmen heard the melodies and are affected with it. (Jer. 22. 19.) and they are to call upon others to hearken to it too, to hear the Lord's controversy, to observe the voice of Providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it. (2.) This fair warning slighted; "But they said, We will not hearken; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble. The reason why sinners perish is, because they do not hearken to the sound of the trumpet; and the reason why they do not is, because they will not; and they have no reason to give why they will not, but because they will not, that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may more easily deal with ten men's reasons, than one man's will.

18. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. 19. Hear, O earth; behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it. 20. To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country! your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. 21. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish. 22. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. 23. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy: their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee. O daughter of Zion. 24. We have heard the fame thereof; our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain as of a woman in travail. 25. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side. 26. O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us. 27. I have set thee for a tower and a fortress among my people, that thou mayest know and try their way. 28. They are all grievous revolters, walking with slanders: they are brass and iron; they are all corrupters. 29. The bellows are burned, the lead is consumed of the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away. 30. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them.

Here, I. God appeals to all the neighbours, may, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem; (v. 18, 19.) "Hear, ye nations, and know particularly, O congregation of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of the states about you, and make remarks upon them. Observe now what is doing among them of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon the earth, and the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should bring evil upon this people, that are in covenant with me, that profess relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land? (Deut. xxix. 24.) Know then," 1. "That it is the natural product of their devices. The evil brought upon them is the fruit of their thought. They thought to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves, they betrayed and exposed themselves." 2. "That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion. God does but execute upon them the curse of the law for their violation of its commandments. It is because they have not hearkened to my words refer to my law, that I have reckoned a word I have said to them but rejected it all. They would never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's hand, if they had refused to be ruled by the judgments of his mouth: therefore you cannot say that they have any wrong done them."
III. He foretells the desolations that was now coming upon them. 1. God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed; (v. 21.) I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, occasions of falling, not into sin, but into trouble. Those whom God has marked for destruction he perplexes and embarrasses in their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The worse they were, the worse they did find themselves, wherever they went, were stumbling-blocks to them, in every corner they stumbled upon them, and were dashed to pieces by them; The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them, or get over them, The sins that sinned with their fathers, fall with them. 2. Except the Lord God be his sword, he shall perish, and not be able to help either themselves or one another. 3. He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do, he will find out proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched from the north, from the sides of the earth. Babylon itself lay a great way off northward; and some of the countries they were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his sword had been farther. These must be employed in his service, v. 22, 23. For, (1.) It is a people very numerous, a great nation, which will make their invasion the more formidable. (2.) It is a warlike people; they lay hold on bow and spear, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them; they ride upon horses, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation has ever brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans. (3.) It is a barbarous people; they are cruel, and have no mercy, being greedy of prey, and flushed with victory. They take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice roars like the sea. And, lastly, They have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country. They are set in array against them, O daughter of Zion. The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

IV. He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in, upon the approach of this formidable enemy, v. 24—26. 1. They are seized with a sense of the utter power and intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy; "When we have but heard the fame thereof, our hearts wax feeble, and we have no heart to make any resistance; anguish has taken hold of us, and we are immediately in an extremity of pain, like that of a woman in travail." Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men, upon the approach of any thing that is to be done. 2. They are afraid of their own weakness, and would have none to help themselves, who have made God their Enemy? 3. They confine themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad, for though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meanly there than run any venture, either by flight or flight, to help themselves. Two things they are to do for themselves, Hold forth into the field, no to fetch to your provision thence, nor walk by the way; dare not to go to church or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the sword of the enemy, and the fear of it, is on every side; the highways are uncouraged, as in Joel's time," Judg. vi. 6. Let this remind us, when we travel the roads in safety, and there is none to molest us, to observe the old maxim of the restraint of all public tranquility. 3. The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations; "O daughter of my people, hear thy God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call: do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but gird it on for thy constant wear; do not only put ashes on thy head, but wallow thyself in ashes; put thyself into close mourning, and use all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and forced only, but freely and from the heart, for all the desolations that are to come for an only son, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do they lament for the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us. Though he is not come yet, he is coming, the decree is gone forth; let us therefore meet the execution of it with a suitable sadness." As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they lose them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatened. 4. He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial; as ch. i. 10. I have set thee over the nations; so here, I have set thee for a tower, or as a sentinel, or a watchman, upon a tower, among my people, as an inspector of their actions, and to give them warning and try their ways, v. 27. Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison, but by the spirit of prophecy: but thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them, and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgment to come. God set him for a tower conspicuous to all, and attacked by many, but made him a fortress, a strong tower, gave him courage to stem the tide, and bear the shock of their displeasure. They that will be faithful reprovers, have need to be firm as fortresses.

Now in trying their ways he will find two things: 1. That they are wretchedly debauched; (v. 28.) They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters, (so the word is,) the worst of revolters, as a servant of servants is the meanest servant. They have a revolting heart, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They have seemed to start fair, but they revolt and start back. They walk with slanders; they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another, nay, they make it a sort of sport to say the worst of one another, and of course; and they govern themselves by the slanders they hear, hating these that they hear ill-spoken of, though ever so unjustly. They are brass and iron, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable. They were as silver and gold, but they are degenerated. Nay, as they are all revolters, so they are all corrupted, not only debauched themselves, but intractable to be reformed. 2. That they would never be reformed and reformed; it was in vain to think of reducing them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, v. 29, 30. It is impossible to submit to such a sort to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains, about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people, and to purify them from their wickedness, as it was in all vain. Not all the timbering of the word, and a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. The belles have been still kept so near the fire, to blew it, that they are burnt
with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use, and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have reached their throats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The lead, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, is consumed of the fire, and has not done its work; for the founder melts in vain, his labour is lost, for the wicked are not plucked away, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, the gold and the old leaven, to cast out of communion those who, being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, Their wickednesses are not removed, (so some read it,) they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins; they will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have heard, and all they have felt, of the wrath of God, which is hereby expressed upon them, v. 30. Reprobate silver shall they be called, useless and worthless; they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them, and for this reason the Lord has rejected them. He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will take them away like their wicked progenitors, and consume them with a fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire. By this it appears, (1.) That God has no pleasure in the death and sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction, and qualify them for salvation. Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins, and yet with many it is all lost labour: We have hited you to, and you have not danced; we have mourning ed unto you, and you have not wept. Therefore, (2.) God will be justified in the death of sinners, and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reduce them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hope of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared that they were reprobate silver.

CHAPTER VII.

The prophet having in God's name reproved the people for their sins, and given them warning of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, in this chapter pursues the same intention for their humiliation and awakening. I. He shows them the invalidity of the plea they so much relied upon, that they had the temple of God among them, and constantly attended the service of it, and endeavours to take them off from their confidence in their external privileges and performances, v. 1. II. He against them the impositions of the law; and foretells that such should be the desolations of Jerusalem, v. 12. 13. III. He represents to the prophet their abominable idolatries, for which he was thus incensed against them, v. 17. 18. IV. He sets before the people that fundamental maxim of religion, that to obey is better than sacrifice, (1 Sam. xx. 22.) and that God would not accept the sacrifices of those that obstinately persisted in disobedience, v. 21. 22. V. He threatens, should they separate among the latter day waste for their idolatry and iniquity, and to multiply their stain as they had multiplied their sin, v. 29. 31.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord: 3. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. 4. Trust you not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. 5. If ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; 6. If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: 7. Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. 8. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. 9. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; 10. And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? 11. Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord. 12. But go ye now unto my place, which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. 13. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the Lord, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; 14. Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. 15. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

These verses begin another sermon, which is continued in this and the two following chapters; much to the same effect, with those before, to reason them to repentance. Observe, 1. The orders given to the prophet to preach this sermon; for he had not only a general commission, but particular directions and instructions, for every message he delivered. This was a word that came to him from the Lord, v. 1. We are not told when this sermon was to be preached, but are told, 1. Where it must be preached—in the gates of the Lord's house, where he had set his name, and in the outer court, or the court of the people. It would affront the priests, and expose the prophet to their rage, to have such a message as this delivered within their precincts; but the prophet must not fear the face of man, he cannot be faithful to his God if he do. 2. To whom it must be preached—to the men of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord; probably, it was at this time, when all the males from all parts of the country were to appear before the Lord in the courts of his house, and not to appear empty. Then he had many together to preach to, and that was the most seasonable time to admonish them not to trust to their privileges. Note, (1.) Even those that profess religion have need to be preached to, as well as those that are without. (2.) It is desirable to have opportunity of preaching to many together. Wisdom
chooses to cry in the chief place of concourse, and as Jeremiah here, in the opening of the gates, the temple-gates. (3.) When we are going to worship God, we need to be admonished to worship him in the spirit, and to have no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3.

11. The contents and scope of the sermon itself. It is delivered in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, who commands the world, but conveys with his people. As creatures we are bound to regard the Lord of hosts, as Christians the God of Israel; what he said to them he says to us, and it is not much the same with that which John Baptist said to them when he was baptized; (Matt. iii. 9.) Bring forth fruits meet for repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father. The prophet here tells them.

1. What were the true words of God, which they might trust to. In short, they might depend upon it, that, if they would repent, and reform their lives, and return to God in a way of duty, he would restore and confirm their peace, would redress their grievances, and return to them in a way of mercy; (v. 3.) Amend your ways and your doings. This implies that there had been much amiss in their ways and doings, many faults and errors. But it is a great instance of the favour of God to them, that he gives them liberty to amend, shows them where and how they erred, and tells them how they may amend, and repent; measure them upon their amendment; "I will cause you to dwell quietly and peaceable in this place, and a stop shall be put to that which threatens your expulsion." Reformation is the only way, and a sure way, to prevent ruin.

He explains himself, (v. 5—7.) and tells them particularly,

1. That the amendment was which he expected from them. They must thoroughly amend; in making good, they must make good their ways and doings; they must reform with resolution, and it must be a universal, constant, persevering reformation; not partial, but entire; not hypocritical, but sincere; not wavering, but constant. They must make the tree good, and make the fruit good; must amend their hearts and thoughts, and so amend their ways and doings. In particular, (1.) They must be honest and just in all their dealings. They that had power in their hands must thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, without partiality, and according as the merits of the cause appeared. They must not either in judgment or in contract oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, nor lend money upon usury; that did oppress, nor refuse to do them right when they sought for it: they must not shed innocent blood, and with it defile this place and the land wherein they dwelt. (2.) They must keep close to the worship of the true God only; Neither walk after other gods; "Do not hangen after them, nor hearken to those that would draw you into communion with idols; for it is, as they say, their common concern, this with all speed, go through with it, and abide by it; and I will cause you to dwell in this place, this temple; it shall continue your place of resort and refuge, the place of your comfortable meeting with God and one another; and you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers for ever and ever, and shall never be turned out either from God's house or from your own. It is promised that they shall still enjoy their civil and sacred privileges, that they shall have a comfortable enjoyment of them; I will cause you to dwell here, (and those dwell at ease, whom God gives a settlement to;) they shall enjoy it by covenant, by virtue of the grant made of it to their fathers, not by providence; but by promise. They shall continue in the enjoyment of it without eviction or molestation, they shall not be disturbed, much less dispossessed, for ever and ever; nothing but sin could throw them out.

And an everlasting inheritance in the heavenly Canaan is hereby secured to them, which lies in all godliness and honesty. And the vulgar Latin reads a further privilege here, v. 2. 7. Ibidem venire— I will dwell with you, in this place; and we shall find Canaan itself but an uncomfortable place to dwell in, if God did not dwell with us there.

2. What were the lying words of their own hearts, which they must not trust to. He cautions them against this self-deceit; (v. 4.) "Trust not in lying words; you are told in what way, and upon what terms, you may be easy, safe, and happy; now do not flatter yourselves with an opinion that you may be so on any other terms, or in any other way." Yet he charges them with this self-deceit arising from vanity; (v. 8.) "Behold, it is plain that you do trust in lying words, notwithstanding what is said to you; you trust in words that cannot profit; you rely upon a plea that will stand you in no stead. To give that confidence, which is the very soul of all words of truth, which would profit them, take shelter for it in the word of God, which cannot profit them. Now these lying words were, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these. These buildings, the courts, the holy place, and the holy of holies, are the temple of the Lord, built by his appointment, to his glory; here he resides, here he is worshiped, and here he makes his abode under his people, and is our homage to him as our King in his palace." This they thought was security enough to them to keep God and his favours from leaving them, God and his judgments from breaking in upon them. When the prophet tells them how sinful they were, and how miserable they were likely to be still, they appealed to the temple; "How can we be either so or so, as long as we have that holy, happy place among us?"

The prophet repeats it because they repeated it upon all occasions. It was the cant of the times, it was in their mouths upon all occasions. If they heard an awakening sermon, if any startling piece of news was brought upon them, they lulled themselves asleep again with this, "We cannot but do well, for we have the temple of the Lord among us." Note, The privileges of a flourishing church are often the pride and confidence of those that are strangers and enemies to the power of it. It is common for those that are farthest from God, to boast themselves most of their being near to the church. They are haughty because of the holy mountain; (Zeph. iii. 11.) as if God's mercy were so tied to that, that he would be none of them.

Now, to convince them what a frivolous plea this was, and what little stead it would stand them in,

(1.) He shows them the gross absurdity of it in itself. If they knew any thing either of the temple of the Lord, or of the Lord of the temple, they must think that to plead that, either in excuse of their sin against God, or in arrest of God's judgment against them, was the most ridiculous, unreasonable thing that could be.

[1.] God is a holy God; but this plea made him the Patron of sin, of the worst of sins, which even the light of nature condemns; (v. 9. 10.) "What," says he, "will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, be guilty of the vilest immoralities, and which the common interest, as well as the common sense, of mankind witness against? Will you swear falsely, a crime which all nations (who with the belief of a
God had a veneration for an oath) have always had a horror of? Will you burn intense to Baal, a dung-hill-deity, that sets up as a rival with the great Jehovah, and, not content with that, will you walk after other gods too, whom you know not, and by all these crimes put a daring afront upon God, how as the Lord of hosts, and the God of Israel? Will you exchange a God whose power and goodness you have had such a long experience of, for gods whose ability and willingness to help you you know nothing of? And when you have thus done the worst you can against God, will you brazen your faces so far as to come and stand before him in this house which is called by his name, and in which his name is hallowed upon—stand before him as servants writing his commands, as supplicants expecting his favour? Will you act in open rebellion against him, and yet herd yourselves among his subjects, among the best of them? By this, it should seem, you think that either he does not discover, or does not dislike, your wicked practices, to imagine either of which is to put the highest indignity possible upon him. It is as if you should say, We are delivered to do all these abominations. If they had not the front to say this totidem verbis—in so many words, yet their actions speak it aloud. They could not but own that God, even their own God, had many a time delivered them, and been a present Help to them, when otherwise they must have perished. He, in delivering them, designed to cause them to render accounts to him, and to lead them to repentance; but they resolved to persist in their abominations notwithstanding; as soon as they were delivered, (as of old in the days of the Judges,) they did evil again in the sight of the Lord; which was, in effect, to say, in direct contradiction to the true intent and meaning of the providences which had affected them, that God had delivered them in order to lead them to their ruin, as by sacrificing the more profusely to their idols. Note, Those who continue in sin because grace has abounded, or that grace may abound, do, in effect, make Christ the Minister of sin. Some take it thus: You present yourselves before God with your sacrifices and sin-offerings, and then say, We are delivered, we are discharged from inward guilt. But now, if this is his true business, and his true force, it is to blind the world, and stop the mouth of conscience, that you may, the more easily to yourselves, and the more plausibly before others, do all these abominations. [2.] His temple was a holy place; but this plea made it a protection to the most unholy persons; Is this house, which is called by my name, and is standing sign of God's kingdom, set men in opposition to the kingdom of sin and Satan—Is this become a den of robbers in your eyes? Do you think it was built to be not only a rendezvous of, but a refuge and shelter to, the vilest of malefactors? No; though the horns of the altar were a sanctuary to him that slew a man unawares, yet they were not so to a willful murder, nor to one that did it with premeditation. (Ex. xxi. 14.)

Kings ii. 29. Those that think to excuse themselves in unchristian practices with the Christian name, and sin the more boldly and securely because there is a Sin-offering provided, do, in effect, make God's house of prayer a den of thieves; as the priests in Christ's time, Matt. xxiii. 15. But could they thus insultingly presume upon the presence of the Lord, have seen the real iniquities through the counterfeit and dissembled piety. Note, Though men may deceive one another with the shows of devotion, yet they cannot deceive God. [2.] He shows them the insufficiency of this plea adjoined long since in the case of Shiloh. [1] It is certain that Shiloh was ruined, though it had God's sanctuary in it, when by its wickedness it profaned that sanctuary; (v. 12.) Go ye now to my place which was in Shiloh; it is probable that the ruins of that once flourishing city were yet remaining; they might, at least, read the history of it, which ought to affect them as if they saw the place: there God set his name at the first, there the tabernacle was set up when Israel first took possession of Canaan, (Josh. xviii. 1.) and thither the tribes went up; but those that attended the service of the tabernacle there, corrupted both themselves and others, and from them arose the wickedness of his people Israel; that fountain was poisoned, and sent forth malignant springs; and what came of it? Go, see what God did to it! Was it protected by its having the tabernacle in it? No, God forsook it, (Ps. lxxviii. 60.) sent his ark into captivity, cut off the house of Eli that presided there; and it is very probable that the city was quite destroyed, for we never read any more of it but as a monument of divine vengeance upon holy places when they harbour wicked people. Note, God's judgments upon other nations have really revolted from God, while they kept up a profession of nearness to him, should be a warning to us not to trust in lying words. It is good to consult precedents, and make use of them; remember Lot's wife; remember Shiloh and the seven churches of Asia; and know that the ark and candlestick are moveable things, Rev. iii. 18. [2.] It is certain that Shiloh's fate will be Jerusalem's doom, if a speedy and sincere repentance prevent it not. First, Jerusalem was now as sinful as ever Shiloh was; that is proved by the unerring testimony of God himself against them; (v. 13.) You have done all these works, you cannot deny it: and they continued obstinate in their sin; that is proved by the very incriminating precedents, they profaned the tabernacle and the ark, and brought it into exile, and finally into captivity, rising up early and speaking, as one in care, as one in earnest, as one who would lose no time in dealing with them; nay, who should take the fittest opportunity for speaking to them early in the morning, when, if ever, they were sober, and had their thoughts free and clear; but it was all in vain, God spake, but they were deaf, as if they were dead; as if they were mindless; he called them, but they answered not; they would not come at his call. Note, What God has spoken to us greatly aggravates what we have done against him. Secondly, Jerusalem shall shortly be as miserable as ever Shiloh was; Therefore will I do unto this house as I did to Shiloh, ruin it, and lay it waste: v. 14. Those that tread in the steps of wickedness that went before them, must expect to fall by the like judgments, for all these things happen to them for examples. The temple at Jerusalem, though ever so strong built, if wickedness was found in it, would be as unable to keep its ground, and as easily conquered, as even the tabernacle in Shiloh was, when God's day of vengeance was come; "This great sanctuary, erected by a step of solemn consecration, and therefore you may think that I should protect it; it is the house in which you trust, and you think that it will protect you; this land is the place, this city the place, which I gave to you and your fathers, and therefore you are secure of the continuance of it, and that nothing can turn you out of it; but the men of Shiloh thus treated there God set his name at the first, there his service." This quotes another precedent, (v. 13.) the ruin of the kingdom of the ten tribes, who were the seed of Abraham, and had the covenant of circumcision, and possessed the land which God gave to them and their fathers, and yet their idolatries threw them out, and extirpated them; And can you think that the same evil courses should be as
speaks the prophet not to pray for them, because he would not have his prayers to be (as prophets' prayers seldom did) unanswered. God said to Moses, Let me alone, Exod. xxxii. 10. It is an ill omen to a people, when God restrains the spirits of his ministers and people from praying for them, and gives them to see their case so desperate, that few of them will have heart to speak a good word for them. Those who pray expecting no answer, may not expect any benefit by their prayers; and if you will not hear us when we speak from God to you, God will not hear us when we speak to him for you.

II. He gives him a reason for this prohibition. Praying is too precious a thing to be lost and thrown away upon a people hardened in sin, and marked for ruin.

I. They are resolved to persist in their rebellion against God, and will not be turned back by the prophet's preaching: for this he appeals to the prophet himself, and his own inspection and observation; (v. 17.) Seest thou not what they do openly, and publicly, without either shame or fear, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? This is intimated, that the sin was evident, and could not be denied, and that the shewers were impudent, and would not be reformed; they committed their wickedness even in the prophet's presence and under his eye; he saw what they did, and yet they did it, which was an affront to his office, and to him whose officer he was, and bade defiance to both.

Now observe, (1.) What the sin is, with which they are here charged—it is idolatry, v. 18. Their idolatrous respects are paid to the queen of heaven, the moon, either in an image, or in the original, or both: they worshipped it, probably, under the name of Ashtaroth, or some other of their goddesses, being in love with the brightness in which they saw the moon walk, and thinking themselves indebted to her for her benign influence, or hearing her malignant ones, Job xxxi. 26. The worshipping of the moon was much in use among the heathen nations, Jer. xlv. 17, 19. Some read it the frame or workmanship of heaven, the whole celestial globe with all its ornaments and powers was the object of their adoration. They worshipped the host of heaven, Acts vii. 42. The homage they should have paid to the Queen, they paid to the statues that beautified the front of it, this is intended of the heathen gods, which they worshipped the creatures instead of him that made them: the servants instead of him that commands them, and the gifts instead of him that gave them. With the queen of heaven they worshipped other gods, images of things not only in heaven above, but in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; in these that forsake the true God, wander endlessly after false ones. To these do the children of their own making they offer cakes for meat-offerings, and pour out drink-offerings, as if they had their meat and drink from them, and were obliged to make to them their acknowledgments; and see how busy they are, and how every hand is employed in the service of these idols, according as they used to be employed in their debasing services. The children were sent to gather wood, the fathers they worshipped out the oven, being of the poorer sort, that could not afford to keep servants to do it, yet they would rather do it themselves than it should be undone; the women kneaded the dough with their own hands, for perhaps though they had servants to do it, they took a pride in showing their zeal for their idols by doing it themselves. Let us be instructed even by this this had example, in the service of God.

Let us honour him with our substance, as those that have our subsistence from him, and eat and drink to the glory of him from whom we have our next

God had showed them, in the foregoing verses, that the temple, and the service of it, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted, should not avail to prevent the judgment threatened: But there was another thing which might stand them in some stead, and which yet they had no value for, and that was, the prophet's intercession for them; his prayers would do them more good than their own pleas: now here that support is taken from them; and their case is sad indeed, who have lost their interest in the prayers of God's ministers and people. 

I. God here forbids the prophet to pray for them; (v. 16.) "The decree is gone forth, their ruin is resolved on, therefore pray not thou for this people, pray not for the preventing of this judgment threatened; they have sinned unto death, and therefore pray not for their life, but for the life of their souls," 1 John v. 16. See here, 1. That God's prophets are freemen of God's prophet for the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, and yet pray for their preservation, not knowing that the decree was absolute; and it is the will of God that we pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Even when we threaten sinners with damnation, we must pray for their salvation, that they may turn, and live. Jeremiah was hated, and persecuted, and reproached, by the children of his people, and yet he lived for them, and for it becomes us to labour for evil. 2. That God's praying prophets have a great interest in heaven, how little soever they have in earth. When God was determined to destroy this people, he be

16. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee. 17. Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger. 19. Do they provoke me to anger? saith the Lord: do they not provoke themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? 20. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.
and drink. [2] Let us not decline the hardest services, nor disdain to step to the meanest, by which God may be honoured; for none shall kindle a fire on God's altar for naught. Let us think it an honour to be employed in any work for God. [3] Let us bring up our children in the acts of devotion: let them, as they are capable, be employed in doing something toward the keeping up of religious exercises.

2. What is the direct tendency of this sin; "It is that they may provoke me to anger, they cannot design any thing else in it. But, (v. 19.) do they provoke me to anger? Is it because I am hard to be pleased, or easily provoked? Or am I to bear the blame of the resentment? No, it is their own doing, they are their own enemies, and their own wrong, and they alone shall bear it." Is it against God, that they provoke him to wrath? Is he the worse for it? Does it do him any real damage? No, is it not against themselves, to the confusion of their own faces? It is a malice against God, but it is impotent malice, it cannot hurt him; nay, it is foolish malice, it will hurt themselves; they show their spite against God, but they do not know it; they are not able to discern that a people, thus desperately set upon their own ruin, should be abandoned.

2. God is resolved to proceed in his judgments against them, and will not be turned back by the prophet's prayers; (v. 26.) Thus saith the Lord God, and what he saith he will not unsay, nor can all the world guesstain; hear it therefore, and tremble; "Behold, my anger is kindled, but a little, much more is it kindled; as the flames of fire upon the new carpet of earth, or the shower of fire and brimstone upon Sodom; since they will anger me, let them see what will come of it." They shall soon find, (1.) That there is no extinguishing this deluge of fire, either by flying from it, or fencing against it; it shall be poured out on this place, though it be a holy place, the Lord's house. It shall reach both men and beast, like the plagues of Egypt, and, like some of them, shall destroy the trees of the field, and the fruit of the ground, which they had designed and prepared for Baal; and of which they had made cakes to the queen of heaven. (2.) There is no extinguishing it; it shall burn, and shall not be quenched; prayers and tears shall then avail nothing; when his wrath is kindled but a little, much more will it be kindled to such a degree, there shall be no quenching of it. God's wrath is that fire unquenchable, which eternity itself will not see the period of; Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

21. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. 22. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: 23. But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. 24. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. 25. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them: 26. Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. 27. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. 28. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

God, having showed the people that the temple would not protect them while they polluted it with their wickedness, here shows them that their sacrifices would not alone for them, nor be accepted, while they went on in disobedience. See with what contempt he here speaks of their ceremonial service; (v. 21.) "Put your burnt-offerings to your sacrifices, go on in them as long as you please; add one sort of sacrifice to another; turn your burnt-offerings, which were to be wholly burnt to the honour of God, into peace-offerings," (which the offerer himself had a considerable share of,) "that you may eat flesh, for that is all the good you are likely to have from your sacrifices, a good meal's meat or two; but expect not any other benefit by them while you live at this loose rate. Keep your sacrifices to yourselves, and do not serve God himself at your own table, for they are no way acceptable at God's altars." For the opening of this,

I. He shows them that obedience was the only thing he required of them, v. 22. 23. He appeals to the original contract, by which they were first formed into a people, when they were brought out of Egypt. God made them a kingdom of priests himself, not that he might be regaled with their sacrifices, as the devils, whom the heathen worshipped, which are represented as eating with pleasure the fat of their sacrifices, and drinking the wine of their drink-offerings, Deut. xxxiii. 38. No, Will God eat the flesh of bulls? Ps. i. 13. I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; the law of the temple was given before the ceremonial institutions; and those came afterward, as trials of their obedience, and assistance to their repentance and faith. The Levitical law begins thus, If any man of you will bring an offering, he must do so and so, (Lev. i. 2.—li. 1.) as if it were intended rather to regulate sacrifice than to require it: but that which God commanded, which he bound them to by his suprime authority, and which he insisted upon as the condition of the covenant was, Obey my voice; see Exod. xv. 26. where this was the statute and the ordinance by which God proved them, Hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God. The condition of their being God's peculiar people was this, (Exod. xix. 5.) Be ye mine army. Make conscience of the duties of natural religion, observe positive institutions from a principle of obedience; and then, I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," the greatest honour, happiness, and satisfaction, that any of the children of men are capable of. "Let your conversation be regular, and in everything study to comply with the will and word of God: walk within the bounds that I have set you, and in all the ways that I have commanded you, and then you may assure yourselves that it shall be well with you." The demand here is very reasonable, that we should be directed by Infinite Wisdom to that which is fit; that he that made us should command us, and that he should give us law,
361. The promise is very encouraging; let God's will be your rule, and his favour shall be your felicity.

11. He shows them that disobedience was the only thing for which he had a quarrel with them. He would not reprehense them for their sacrifices, for the omission of them, they had been continually before him, (Ps. 1. 8.) with them they hoped to allure God, and purify a way to go on in sin. Then there was no cause of quarrel which God had all along laid to their charge, was breaking his commandments in the course of their conversation; while they observed them, in some instances, in the course of their devotion, v. 24, 25, &c.

1. They set up their own will in competition with the will of God. They hearted false to God and to his law, they never heeded that, it was to them as if it had never been given, or were of no force; they inclined not their ear to attend to it, much less their hearts to comply with it. But they would have their own way, would do as they chose, and not as they were bidden. Their own counsels were their guide, and not the dictates of divine wisdom; that shall be lawful and good with them, which the word of God says quite contrary. The imaginations of their evil heart, the appetites and passions of it, shall be a law to them, and they will walk in the way of it, and in the sight of their eyes.

2. If they began well, yet they did not proceed, but soon flew off. They went backward, when they talked of making a captain, and returning to Egypt and the places of their former sin, and they thought that it was to them as if they had never been there; they inclin'd their ear. This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn, refractory disposition with those that went before them; it had all along been the genius of the nation, and an evil genius it was, that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

3. Their practice and character were still the same; they are worse, and not better, than their fathers.

(1.) Jeremiah can himself witness against them, that they were disobedient, or he shall soon find it so; (v. 27.) as men rise up early to call servants to their work, but they were as deaf to the prophets as they were to God, and not the word of God, but their inclin'd their ear. This had been their way and manner all along; they were of the same stubborn, refractory disposition with those that went before them; it had all along been the genius of the nation, and an evil genius it was, that continually haunted them till it ruined them at last.

(2.) He must therefore own that they deserved the character of a disobedient people, that were ripe for destruction, and must go to them, and tell them so to their faces; (v. 28.) Say unto them, This is a nation that obeys not the voice of the Lord their God; they are notorious for their obstinacy; they sacrifice to the Lord as their God, but they will not be ruled by him as their God; they will not receive either the instruction of his word or the correction of his rod, they will not be reformed or returned by either; true, that is not among them; they cannot receive it, they will not submit to it, nor be governed by it; they will not speak truth, there is no believing a word they say, for it is cut off from their mouth, and lying comes in the room of it; they are false both to God and man.

29. Cut off thy hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected, and forsaken the generation of his wrath. 30. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord; they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. 31. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded not, neither came it into my heart. 32. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor, The valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet till there be no place. 33. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. 34. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; for the land shall be desolate.

Here is,

I. A loud call to weeping and mourning. Jerusalem, that had been a joyous city, the joy of the whole earth, must now take up a lamentation on high places, and lamentations where they had observed their idols; there must they now bewail their misery. In token both of sorrow and slavery, Jerusalem must now cut off her hair, and cast away; the word is peculiar to the hair of the Nazarites, which was the badge and token of their dedication to God, and it is called their crown. Jerusalem had been a city which was a Nazarite to God, but must now cut off her hair, must be profaned, degraded, and separated from God, as she had been separated to him. It is time for these that have lost their holiness, to lay aside their joy.

II. Just cause given for this great lamentation.

1. The sin of Jerusalem appears here very heinous, nowhere worse, or more exceedingly sinful. The children of Judah (God's professing people, that came forth out of the waters of Judah, Isa. lxxxv.) have done evil in my sight, under my eye, in my presence; they have affronted me to my face, which very much aggravates the affront; or, They have done that which they know to be evil in my sight, and in the highest degree offensive to me. Idoltry was the sin which was, above all other sins, distasteful to God's sight. Now here are two things charged upon them in their idolatry, which were very provoking.

(1.) That they were very impudent in it toward God, and set him at defiance; (v. 30.) They have
This valley of Tophet was a place where the citizens of Jerusalem walked to take the air; but it shall now be spoiled for that use, for it shall be full of graves, that there shall be no walking there, because of the danger of contracting a ceremonial pollution by the touch of a grave. There it was that they sacrificed some of their children, and dedicated others to Moloch, and there they shall fall as victims to his worship. Tophet was the burying-place, or burning-place, of the dead bodies of the besiegers, when the Assyrian army was routed by an angel; and for this it was ordained of old, Isa. xxx. 33. But they having forgotten this mercy, and made it the place of their sin, God will now turn it into a burning-place for the besieged. In allusion to this valley, he bids in the prophecies of the commencement of it, that Tophet, in the midst of the great city of Jerusalem, shall be the burning-place of the Assyrians, and the revolting Jews; so hell is a receptacle after death both for infidels and hypocrites, the open enemies of God's church, and its treacherous friends; it is the congregation of the dead; it is prepared for the generation of God's wrath. But so great shall that slaughter be, that even the sparsel of the valleys of the city of Jerusalem shall not be able to bury the slain; and at length there shall not be enough left alive to bury the dead, so that the carcasses of the people shall be meat for the birds and beasts of prey, that shall feed upon them like carrion, and none shall have the concern or courage to frighten them away, as Rizpah did from the dead bodies of Saul's sons, 2 Sam. xxi. 16. This was according to what the threatening prophets and a branch of the curse; (Deut. xxviii. 26.) The carcasse shall be meat to the fowls and beasts, and no man shall fray them away. Thus do the law and the prophets agree, and the execution with both. The decent burying of the dead is a piece of humanity, in remembrance of what the dead body has been—the tabernacle of a reasonable soul. Nay, it is a piece of divinity, in expectation of what the dead body shall be at the resurrection: the want of it has sometimes been an instance of the rage of men against God's witnesses, Rev. xi. 9. Here it is threatened as an instance of the wrath of God against his enemies, and is an intimation that evil pursues sinners even after death.

(2.) Joy shall depart from them; (v. 34.) Then shall I cause to cease the voice of mirth. God shall be called by his prophets, and by lesser judgments, to weeping and mourning; but they walked contrary to him, and would hear of nothing but joy and gladness, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. And what came of it? Now God called to lamentation, (v. 29.) and he made his call effectual, leaving them neither cause for joy for heart and gladness. They that will not weep, shall weep; they that will not by the grace of God be emptied of all mirth, shall be made to see the justice of God be deprived of all mirth; for when God judges he will overcome. It is threatened here, that there shall be nothing to rejoice in; there shall be none of the joy of weddings; no mirth, for there shall be no marriages; the comforts of life shall be abandoned, and all care to keep up mankind upon earth cast off; there shall be none of the voice of the godly glee and the bire and mirth, shall be the music sung; nor shall there be any more of the joy of harvest, for the land shall be desolate, uncultivated and unimproved; both the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, shall look thus melancholy: and when they thus look about them, and see no cause to rejoice, no marvel if they retire into themselves, and find no heart to rejoice. God can so move New Jerusalem, Jerusalem the new, Jerusalem the holy city, which is a reason why we should always rejoice with trembling; be merry and wise.
The prophet proceeds, in this chapter, both to magnify and to justify the destruction that God was bringing upon his people for their iniquity. He shows how grievous was the sin, and how righteous is the punishment. 1. He represents the judgments coming as so very terrible, that death should appear so as most to be dreaded, and yet should be desired, v. 1-3. He aggravates the wasted stupidity and wilfulness of this people, as that which brought this ruin upon them, v. 4-12. 2. He describes the great confusion and consternation that the whole land should be in, upon the alarm of it, v. 13-17. 3. The prophet is himself deeply affected with it, and lays it very much to heart, v. 18-22.

1. At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: 2. And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. 3. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts.

These verses might fitly have been joined to the close of the foregoing chapter, as giving a further description of the dreadful desolation which the army of the Chaldeans should make in the land. It shall strangely alter the property of death itself, and for the worse too.

1. Death shall not now be, as it always used to be—the repose of the dead. When Job makes his court to the grave, it is in hope of this, that there he shall rest with kings and counsellors of the earth; but now the ashes of the dead, the bones of the kings, and the bones of the priests, and their bones scattered at the grave's mouth, Ps. cxli. 7. It was threatened in the close of the former chapter, that the slay should be unburied; that might be through neglect, and was not so strange; but here we find the graves of those that were buried, industriously and maliciously opened by the victorious enemy; who, either for covetousness, hoping to find treasure in the graves, or for the sake to the nation, and in a rage against it, brought out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the princes. The dignity of their sepulchres could not secure them, nay, did the more expose them to be rifled; but it was base and barbarous thus to trample upon royal dust. We will hope that the bones of good Josiah were not disturbed, because he piously protected the bones of God, or for the sake of the bones of the idolatrous priests, 2 Kings xxiii. 18. The bones of the priests and prophets too were dug up and thrown about. Some think the false prophets, and the idol-priests, God putting this mark of ignominy upon them: but if they were God's prophets and his priests, it is what the Psalmist complain's of, as the fruit of the outrage of the enemies, Ps. lx. 1, 2. Nay, those of the sinful Chaldeans that could not reach to violate the sepulchres of princes and priests, would rather play at small game than sit out, and therefore pulled the bones of the ordinary inhabitants of Jerusalem out of their graves. The barbarous nations were sometimes guilty of these absurd and inhuman triumphs over those they had conquered, and God permitted it here, for a mark of his displeasure against the generation of his wrath, and for terror to those that survived. The bones being dugged out of the graves, were spread abroad upon the face of the earth in contempt, and made objects of the most ghastly contemplation. They spread them to be dried, that they might carry them about in triumph, or might make fuel of them, or make some superstitious use of them. They shall be spread before the sun; for they shall not be ashamed openly to avow the fact at noon-day: and before the moon and stars, even all the host of heaven, whom they have made idols of. From the mention of the sun, moon, and stars, which should be the unconcerned spectators of this tragedy, the prophet takes occasion to show how they had idolized them, and paid those respects to them, which they should have paid to God only; that it might be observed how little they got by worshipping the creature, for the creatures they worshipped when they were in distress, saw it, but were not pleased; and rather grieved to see those whom they had abused in being defiled, by whom they had been abused in being defiled. See how their respects to their idols are enumerated, to show how we ought to behave toward our God. (1.) They loved them; as amiable beings and bountiful benefactors they esteemed them and delighted in them, and therefore did all that follows. (2.) They served them, did all they could in behalf of them, and thought nothing too much; they conformed to all the laws of their superstition, without disputing. (3.) They walked after them, strove to imitate and resemble them, according to the characters and accounts of them they had received, which gave rise and countenance to much of the abominable wickedness of the heathen. (4.) They sought them, consulted them as oracles, appealed to them as judges, implied their favour; and prayed to them as their benefactors. (5.) They worshipped them, gave them divine honour, as having a sovereign dominion over them. Before these lights of heaven, whom they had courted, shall their dead bodies be cast, and left to putrefy, and to be as dung upon the face of the earth; and the sun's shining upon them will but make them the more noisome objects; for the sun shall set but be as barley ground, and the dust of the earth shall be gathered; and the true God only, it will stand us in no stead on the other side death and the grave, not for the body, much less for the soul.

2. Death shall now be what it never used to be—the choice of the living: not because there appears in it any thing delicious: on the contrary, death never appeared in more horrid, frightful shapes than now. But to the believer it is but one of either a comfortable death or a human burial; and yet everything in this world shall become so irksome, and all the prospects so black and dismal, that death shall be chosen rather than life; (v. 3.) not in a believing hope of happiness in the other life, but in an utter despair of any case in this life. The nation is now reduced to a family, so small is the residue of those that remain in the land, if it be an evil family, still as bad as ever, their hearts unhumbled, and their lusts unmortified: these remain alive (and that is all) in the many places whither they were driven by the judgments of God; some prisoners in the country of their enemies, others beggars in their neighbours' country, and others fugitives in the land of the heathen. And though these that died, died very miserably, yet these that survived, and were thus driven out, should live yet more miserably; so that
4. Moreover, thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return? 5. Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return. 6. I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle. 7. Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. 8. How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. 9. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them? 10. Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely. 11. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. 12. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, saith the Lord.

The prophet here is instructed to set before this people the folly of their impertinence, which was it that brought this ruin upon them. They are here represented as the most stupid, senseless people, in the world, that would not be made wise by all the methods that Infinite Wisdom took to bring them to themselves and their right mind, and so to prevent the ruin that was coming upon them.

1. They would not attend to the dictates of reason; they would not act in the affairs of their souls with the same common prudence with which they acted in other things. This is least signified, in they would show themselves men; and religion would soon rule them, if right reason might. Observe it here; Come, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; (v. 4, 5.) Shall men fall, and not arise? If men happen to fall to the ground, to fall into the dirt, will they not get up again as fast as they can? They are not such fools as to lie still when they are down. Shall a man turn aside out of the right way? Yes, the most careful traveller may miss his way; but then, as soon as he is aware of it, will he not return? Yes, certainly he will, with all speed, and will thank him that showed him his mistake. Thus men do in other things; why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? Why do they not, when they are fallen into sin, hasten to get up again by repentance? Why do not they, when they see they have missed their way, correct their error, and return? No, this was a man in a way that he knows will never bring him to his way's end; why then is his people slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? See the nature of sin—it is a backsliding, it is going back from the right way: not only into a by-path, but into a contrary path: back from the way that leads to life to that which leads to utter destruction. And this backsliding, if ambiguity greatly be the design to prevent it, will be a perpetual backsliding. It may be-
He mocks at fear, and is not affrighted. Thus the daring sinner laughs at the threatenings of the word as bugbears, and runs violently upon the instruments of death and slaughter, and nothing will be restrained from him.

III. They would not attend to the dictates of piety, but understand the voice of God in them. (v. 7.) It is an instance of their sottishness, that, though they are God's people, and therefore should readily understand his mind, upon every intimation of it, yet they know not the judgment of the Lord, they apprehend not the meaning either of a mercy or of an affliction, not how to accommodate themselves to either, or to answer God's intention in either. They regarded the sacred word: God affords them when he sends them his prophets, nor how to make use of the rebukes they are under when his voice cries in the city. They discern not the signs of the times. (Matt. xvi. 3.) nor are aware how God is dealing with them. They know not that way of duty, which God had prescribed them, though it be written both in their hearts and in their books. (v. 1.) An aggravation of the want of religion, that there is so much sagacity in the inferior creatures. The stork in the heavens knows her appointed times of coming and continuing; so do other season-birds, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow; these by a natural instinct change their quarters, as the temper of the air alters; they come when the spring comes, and are gone, we know not when. When they, truly, truly, they think, they are wise, because the climates, as some birds come with winter, and are gone when that is over.

IV. They would not attend to the dictates of the written word. They say, We are wise; but how can they say so? With what face can they pretend to any thing of wisdom, when they do not understand themselves so well as the brute creatures? Very, truly, truly, they think they are wise, because the law of the Lord is with them, the book of the law and the interpreters of it; and their neighbours, for the same reason, conclude they are wise; Deut. iv. 6. But their pretensions are groundless for all this; Lo, certainly in vain made he it; surely never any people had Bibles to so little purpose as they have. They might as well have been without the law, unless they had made a living of it: they have indeed made it able to make men wise to salvation, but as to them it is made so in vain, for they are never the wiser for it; The pen of the scribes, of those that first wrote the law, and of those that now write expositions of it, are in vain. Both the favour of their God, and the labour of their scribes, are lost upon them; they receive the grace of God therein in vain. Note, There are many that enjoy abundance of the means of grace, that have great plenty of Bibles and ministers, but they have them in vain; they do not answer the end of their having them. But it might be said, They have some wise men among them, to whom the law and the pen of the scribes are not in vain. To this it is answered, (v. 9.) The wise men are ashamed, they have reason to be so, that they have not made better use of their wisdom, and lived more up to it. They are confounded and taken; all their wisdom has not served to keep them from those courses that tend to their ruin. They are taken in the same snares that others of their neighbours, who have not pretended to so much wisdom, are taken in, and filled with the same confusion. Those that have more knowledge than others, and yet do no better than others for their own souls, have reason to be ashamed. They talk of their wisdom, but, Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; they would not be governed by it, would not follow its direction, would not do what they knew; and then what wisdom is in them? None to any purpose; none that will be found to their praise at the great day, how much soever it is found to their pride now.

The pretenders to wisdom, who said, "We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us," were the priests and the false prophets; with them the prophet here deals. 1. He threatens the judgments of God against them. Their families and estates shall be ruined; (v. 10.) Their wives shall be given to others, when they are taken captives, and their fields shall be taken from them by the victorious enemy, and shall be given to those that shall inherit them; not only strip them for once, but take possession of them as their own, and acquire a property in them, which they shall transmit to their posterity. And, (v. 12.) notwithstanding all their pretensions to wisdom and sanctity, they fall among them that fall; for if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall together into the ditch. In the time of their visitation, when the wickedness of the land comes to be inquired into, it will be found that they have contributed to it more than any, and therefore they shall be sure to be cast down and cast out.

2. He gives a reason for these judgments, (v. 10, 12.) even the same account of their business which we meet with before, (ch. vi. 13—15.) where it was opened at large. (1.) They were greedy of the wealth of this world, which is bad enough in any, but worst in prophets and priests, who should be best acquainted with another world, and therefore should show more than others for their sins, and so be the first to be destroyed. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they healed them slightly, killed the patient with punitive cures; silencing their fears and complaints with "Peace, peace, all is well, and there is no danger," when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them. (2.) They flattered themselves that their children could not be destroyed, because they were the least of the greatest, were given to covetousness. The priests teach for hire, and the prophets drone for money, Mic. iii. 11. (2.) They made no conscience of speaking truth, no not when they spake as priests and prophets; Every one deals falsely; looks one way, and rows another. There is no such thing as sincerity among them. (3.) They flattered their neighbours in their sins, and so deluded them into destruction. They pretended to be the physicians of the state, but knew not how to apply proper remedies to its growing maladies; they healed them slightly, killed the patient with punitive cures; silencing their fears and complaints with "Peace, peace, all is well, and there is no danger," when the God of heaven was proceeding in his controversy with them. (4.) When it was made to appear how basely they prevaricated, they were not at all ashamed of it, but rather gloried in it; (v. 12.) They could not blush, so perfectly lost were they to all sense of virtue and honour; when they were convicted of the grossest forgeries, they would justify what they had done, and laugh at those whom they had imposed upon. Such as these were ripe for ruin.

13. I will surely consume them, saith the Lord; there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig-tree, and the leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them. 14. Why do we sit still? assemble yourselves, and let us enter into the defended cities, and let us be silent there; for the Lord our God hath put us to silence, and given us waters of gall to drink, because we have sinned against the Lord. 15. We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and be hold trouble! 16. The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones; for they are come, and have
devoured the land, and all that is in it; the city, and those that dwell therein. 17. For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which will not be charmed; and they shall bite you, saith the LORD. 18. When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me. 19. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, because of them that dwell in a far country. Is not the LORD in Zion? is not her king in her? why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with strange vanities? 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. 21. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. 22. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

In these verses we have,

1. God threatening the destruction of a sinful people. He has been long with them, but they are still more and more provoking, and therefore now their ruin is resolved on; I will surely consume them; (v. 13.) consuming I will consume them, not only surely, but utterly, consume them; will follow them with one judgment after another, till they are quite consumed; it is a consummation determined, Is. x. 23.

1. They shall be quite stripped of all their comforts; (v. 13.) There shall be no grapes on the vine. Some understand it as intimating their sin; God came looking for grapes from this vineyard, seeking fruit upon this fig-tree, but he found none, (as Is. v. 2. Luke xix. 6.) nay, they had not so much as leaves, Matth. xxii. 19. But it is rather to be understood of God's judgments upon them; and may be meant literally. The enemy shall seize the fruits of the earth, shall pluck the grapes and figs for themselves, and beat down the very leaves with them; or, rather, figuratively; They shall be deprived of all their comforts, and shall have nothing left them wherewith to make glad their hearts. It is explained in the last clause, The things that I have given them shall pass away from them. Note, God's gifts are upon condition, and revocable upon non-performance of the condition. Mercies abused are forfeited, and it is just with God to take the forfeiture.

2. They shall be set upon by all manner of grievances, and surrounded with calamities; (v. 17.) I will send serpents among you, the Chaldean army, fiery serpents, flying serpents, cockatrices; these shall not be charmed, nor shall any thing pacify them or allure them to leave them, but they shall bite them, and they shall be not be charmed, as some serpents used to be, with music. These are serpents of another nature, that are not so wrought upon; or they are as the deaf adder, that stops her ear, and will not hear the voice of the charmer. The enemies are so intent upon manifesting their infection, that it will be too no purpose to accuse them gently, or offer any thing to pacify them or mollify them, or to bring them to a better temper. No peace with God, therefore none with them.

11. The people sinking into despair under the pressure of these calamities. They that were void of fear, (when the trouble was at a distance,) and set it at defiance, are void of hope now that it breaks in upon them, and have no heart, either to make head against it, or to bear up under it, v. 14. They cannot think themselves safe in the open villages; Why do we sit still here? Let us assemble and go in to the friendly cities. Though they could expect no other than to be surely cut off there at last, yet not so soon as in the country, and therefore, "Let us go, and be silent there; let us attempt nothing, nor so much as make a complaint; for to what purpose?" It is not a submissive, but a sullen, silence, that they here condemn themselves to. Those that are most jovial in their prosperity, commonly despise most, and are most melancholy, in trouble.

Now observe what it is that sinks them.

1. They are sensible that God is angry with them; The Lord our God has put us to silence, has struck us with astonishment, and given us water of gall to drink, which is both bitter and stupefying, or intoxicating; (Ps. i. 3.) "Thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. We had better sit still than rise up and fall; better say nothing than say nothing to the purpose. To what purpose is it to contend with our fate, when God himself is become our Enemy, and fights against us? Because we have sinned against the Lord, therefore we are brought to this plague." This may be taken as the language, (1.) Of their indignation. They seem to quarrel with God, as if he had dealt hardly with them; in his wrath he has done them to the uttermost, and provoked them to speak for themselves, and then telling them, that it was because they had sinned against him. Thus men's foolishness perverts their way, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Or, rather, (2.) Of their convictions. At length they begin to see the hand of God lifted up against them, and stretched out in the calamities under which they are now involved; and then they acknowledge that God has provoked him to contend with them. Note, Sooner or later, God will bring the most obstinate to acknowledge both his providence and his justice, in all the troubles they are brought into; to see and say, both that it is his hand, and that he is righteous.

2. They are sensible that the enemy is likely to be too hard for them, v. 16. They are soon apprehensive that it is to no purpose to make head against such a mighty force; they and their people are quite dispirited; and when the courage of a nation is gone, their numbers will stand them in little stead. The roaring of the horses was heard from Dan, the report of the formidable strength of their cavalry was soon carried all the nation over, and every body trembled at the sound of the neighing of his steeds; for they are come, and there is no opposing them; they have devoured the land, and all that is in the city; both town and country are laid waste before them, not only the wealth, but the inhabitants of both, those that dwell therein. Note. When God appears against us, every thing else that is against us appears very formidable; whereas if he be for us, every thing appears very despicable, Rom. viii. 31.

3. They are disappointed in their expectations of deliverance out of their troubles, as they had been surprised when their trouble came upon them: and this double disappointment very much aggra- vaed their calamity. (1.) The trouble came when they little expected it; (v. 15.) He looked for peace, the continuance of our peace, but no good came, no good news from abroad, no looking for any thing to the health and prosperity to our nation, but behold trouble, the alarms of war; for, as it follows, (v. 16.) the noise of the enemies' horses was heard from Dan. Their false prophets had cried, Peace, peace, to them, which made it the more terrible, when the scene of war opened on a sudden. This complaint will occur again, ch. xiv. 19. (2.) The deliverance
did not come, when they had long expected it; *(v. 20.) The harvest is past, the summer is ended; there is a great deal of time gone. Harvest and summer are parts of the year, and when they are gone, the year draws toward a conclusion; so the meaning is, "One year passes after another, one campaign after another, and yet our affairs are in as bad a posture as ever they were; no relief comes, nor is any thing done towards it: We are not saved." Nay, there is a great deal of opportunity lost, the season of action is over and slit, the summer and harvest are gone, and a cold and melancholy winter succeeds.

Note, The salvation of God's church and people often goes on very slowly, and God keeps his people long in the expectation of it, for why, and how can they otherwise hope, that their enemies should put a bar in their own door, and are not saved, because they are not ready for salvation.

4. They are deceived in those things which were their confidence, and which they thought would have secured their peace to them; *(v. 19.) The daughter of my people cries, cries aloud, because of them that dwell in a far country, because of the foreign enemy that invades them, that comes from a far country to take possession of ours; this occasionises the cry; and what is the cry? Is not the Lord in Zion? Is not her king in her? These were the two things that they had all along buoyed up themselves with, and depended upon. *(1.) That they had among them the temple of God, and the tokens of his special presence with them; the temple, which had a "fountain the Lord is in Zion; Whom duni-ger then need we fear?" and they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them; "Surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us?" But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves. *(2.) That they had the throne of the house of David, and his presence among them, so they had a "fountain the Lord is in Zion; Whom duni-ger then need we fear?" and they held by this when the trouble was breaking in upon them; "Surely we shall do well enough, for have we not God among us?" But when it grew to an extremity, it was an aggravation of their misery that they had thus flattered themselves.

III. We have here the prophet himself bewailing the calamity and ruin of his people; for there were with him all the lamentations of Jeremiah; but those we find in the book that bears that title. Observe here,

1. How great his griefs were. He was an eyewitness of the desolations of his country, and saw those things which by the spirit of prophecy he had foreseen. In the foresight, much more in the sight of them, he cries out, *(My heart is fain in me, my flesh is waxen small, because of all the calamities of it, v. 18.) When I would comfort myself against my sorrow, I do but labour in vain; nay, every attempt to alleviate the grief does but aggravate it." It is our wisdom and duty, under mournful events, to do what we can to comfort ourselves against our sorrow, by suggesting to ourselves such considerations as are proper to allay the grief, and balance the grievance. But sometimes the sorrow is such, that the more it is repressed, the more strongly it recoils. It may sometimes be the case of very good men, as of the prophet here, whose soul refused to be comforted, and fainted at the cordial, Ps. lxxvii. 2, 6. He says, *(v. 21.) what was the matter? It is for the hurt of the daughter of my people, that I am thus hurt; it is for their sin, and the miseries they have brought upon themselves by it; it is for this, that I am black, that I look black, that I go in black as mourners do, and that astonishment has taken hold on me, so that I know not what to do, nor which way to turn." Note, The miseries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A gracious spirit will be a public spirit, a tender spirit, a mourning spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to guide for the affliction of Joseph. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not retract in the proof of the truth of it by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting, as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated and reproached, and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought on the country, God's enemies, and his, plied his prophets cause; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies, and desire that God would forgive them.

2. How small his hopes were; *(v. 22.) Is there no balm in Gilead? No medicine proper for a sick and dying kingdom? Is there no physician there? No skillful, faithful hand to apply the medicine? If we find no physician here, we are at a great loss; the case is irreparable, and past relief. There is no balm in Gilead, that can cure the disease of sin; no physician there, that can restore the health of a nation quite over run by such a foreign army as that of the Chaldeans. The desolations made are irreparable, and the disease is presently come to such a height, that there is no checking it. Or, this verse may be understood as having the cause and consequences of their disease upon themselves; and so the question must be answered affirmatively: Is there no balm in Gilead? No physician there? Certainly there is; God is able to help and heal them, there is a sufficiency in him to redress all their grievances. Gilead was a place in their own land, not far off; they had among themselves God's law and his prophets, in the help of which they might have been brought to repentance, and their ruin might have been prevented; they had princes and priests, whose business it was to reform the nation, and redress their grievances. What could have been done more than has been done for their recovery?

Why then is not their health restored? Certainly it was not owing to God, but the same who were not physicians, but because they would not admit the application, nor submit to the methods of cure. The physician and physic were both ready, but the patient was willful and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humourous. Note, If sinners die of their wounds, their blood is upon their own heads. The blood of Christ is balm in Gilead, balm and medicine; but that is not so when they will not use it, nor submit to any thing that is suitable, as the physician and physic were both ready. And the patient was willing and irregular, would not be tied to rules, but must be humourous.

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In this chapter, the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin, and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejected at
Jeremiah, IX.

1. **Guilty, nor was glad at calamities.** He here expresses his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his detestation of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them, v. 1-11. He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them, v. 12, 16. He calls upon others to bewail the woful case of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 17, 23. IV. He shows them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only, v. 25, 26.

2. **O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears,** that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! 2. **Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people,** and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. 3. And they bend their tongue **like their bow for lies;** but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord. 4. **Take ye heed every one of his neighbour,** and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly suppress, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. 5. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. 6. Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the Lord. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people? 8. Their tongue is as an arrow shot out; it speaketh deceit: one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in heart he lavisheth his want. 9. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? 10. For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the habitations of the wilderness a lamentation, because they are burnt up, so that none can pass through them; neither can men hear the voice of the cattle: both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled; they are gone. 11. And I will make Jerusalem heaps, and a den of dragons; and I will make the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant.

The prophet, being commissioned both to foretell the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly: what he said of both came from the heart, and therefore one would have thought it should have reached to the heart.

1. **He abandons himself to sorrow, in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people, which he sadly laments, as one that preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy, and her grievances I fore his chief sorrows.**

1. He laments the slaughter of the persons; the bloodshed, and the lives lost; (v. 1.) "**O that my head were waters, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so mine eyes might be fountains of tears, weeping abundance, continually, and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears, as there still occur fresh occasions for them.**" The same word in Hebrew signifies both the eye and a fountain, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah was much more in grief at the sight of those things, that he might affect a stupid people, and raise them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us, while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate, and to sow in tears. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted hereafter; but let us expect that while they are here, the clouds will still rain upon them, and cause their sorrows; there is no climate so severe but men can suffer in it; and as the fountain of sin, so the fountain of tears is for all posterity, a lasting monument of the iniquity of man, and a monument of the grace of God in forgiving it.

2. **But the fountain of Jacob shall be dried up,** and the water thereof become hot. Note, The fountain of Jacob, or of the hills, was well known to the Israelites, as a symbol of their public prosperity; and it is now to be run dry of. Jeremiah deplores his nation's grief, and looks to God for comfort, as the fountain of Jacob would do in parching drought. But it is to be feared that the fountain of Jacob shall be dried up; and this shows us the nature of man, and that his happiness is in the highest degree precarious; and it shows us the nature of Providence, and its dispensations of it, for that which was nourish'd by the fountain of the heavens, is now to be cut off, and the Israelites reduced to a condition of wretchedness, to their own shame and the reproach of their God. The prophet puts it this way, as if he feared that the fountain of Jacob should be dried up. Note, The same event would be more grieved at, and more lamented, by those who are made to partake of it, than by many that never apprehend it, or believe it possible. 3. **Therefore, saith the Lord, the labour of Jacob shall be in vain,** and the recompense of Israel: but they shall return to the land of Egypt; they shall eat the bread of affliction, and drink the water of sorrow: they shall be filled with their shame, and also with the labours which they laboured therein; for the mountains of Sodom will not thresh them out, the beasts of the desert will not eat them, the birds of the heaven will not cast the remainder of them. Note, The desolations of God's people are more terrible, and more detestable, than any other calamity that has befallen the world. 4. **But I will make Jerusalem desolate,** and a spoil for all nations; **and I will utterly devour all the inhabitants thereof.** Note, The desolations of Jerusalem illustrate the desolation of the whole nation. This verse expatiates on the desolations of the country. He brings in, v. 10. (for impious mourners are not often very methodical in their discourses,) "Not for the towns and cities merely, but for the mountains, **will I take up a weeping and wailing,** not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judah abounded; and for the habitations of the wilderness, **or, rather, the features of the plain,** those used to be clothed with flocks, and covered over with corn; and a goodly sight it was; but now they are burnt up by the Chaldean army, which, according to the custom of war, destroyed the forage, and carried off all the cattle; so that no one dares to pass through them, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy; no one cares to pass through them, everything looks so melancholy and frightful; one has an hard business to pass through them, for they hear the noise of the horsemen, they hear the feet of them, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners; nay, both the fowl of the heavens, and the beasts, are fled, either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has in many ways of turning a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of his people.**

5. **Thus saith the Lord of hosts,** **behold, I will break his yoke of iron,** and his band of brass, and will make them perish together, and the havoc war makes in a country cannot but be for a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on. 11. **He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and conduct of his people.** Though he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where Psalms were, yet he is ready to confess that he is himself guilty of sin, and that he is like to be accounted one of the sinners. Ps. cxx. 5. While all his neighbours are fleeing to the defensive cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies' rage, (ch. iv. 6, &c.) he is contriving to retire into some desert, in desolation of his people's sins: (v. 2.) "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, where forlorners may repose themselves in, that I may leave my people, and go from them!" Not only because of the
They are not valiant for truth in the land, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth is fallen in the land, and they dare not bend a hand to help it up, Is. 1. 14, 15. We must answer, another day, not only for our triality in opposing truth, but for our cowardice in defending it. [2.] Go into their families, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren, (every brother will utterly supplant,) they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they be at the catch, to seek all advantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his whores from speaking, it is the word here used: they followed him with a word, but he was in his character, without guile. So very false are they, that you cannot trust in a brother, but must stand as much upon your guard, as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite that has balances of deceit in his hand. Things are come to an ill pass, indeed, when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother.

3.) Go into company, and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them; Nee hosheh ab hosheh tutus—The host and the guest are in danger from each other. The best advice a wise man can give you, is, to take heed every one of his neighbour, nay, of his friend, (some read it,) of whom he has had enemies, and who have deceived him, and who are not to be trusted. No man thinks himself bound to be either grateful or sincere. Take them in their converse; and every neighbour will walk with slander, they care not what ill they say one of another, though ever so false; that way that the slander goes they get: they will walk with it. They will walk about from house to house too, carrying slanders along with them, all the ill-natured stories they can pick up, or invent, to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining; and they will deceive every one his neighbour, will say any thing, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for they will not speak the truth, but will tell a deliberate lie, and laugh at it when they have done.

That which aggravates the sin of this false and lying generation, is, First, That they are ingenious to sin; They have taught their tongue to speak lies, implying, that, through the reluctance of natural conscience, they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongue would have spoken truth, but they taught it to speak lies, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it, that use has made it the second nature to them. They learned it when they were young, (for the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies, Ps. lxi. 3.) and now they are grown dexterous at it. Secondly, That they are industrious to sin; They weary themselves to commit iniquity; they put a force upon their consciences, to bring themselves to it; they tire out their conscience by one lie, and then proceed to another, and so take a great deal of pains, till they have even spied themselves in bringing about their malicious designs. They are weary with their sinful pursuits, and yet not weary of them. The service of sin is a perfect drudgery; men run themselves out of breath in it, and put themselves to a great deal of toil, to damn their own souls.

Thirdly, That they grew carnal and worldly, preferred a pretty show and form in religion to evil, from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with lesser sins; (Nimrod repente fit turpissimus—No one reaches the height of vice at once;) they began with equivocating and bantering, but at last came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, for they know not me, saith the Lord. Where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of
what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill conduct one towards another.

2. The prophet shows what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined to do against them.

(1.) God had marked their sin. He could tell the precise plot, (and he speaks of it with compassion,) what sort of people they were, that he had to deal with. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, Rev. ii. 13. So here, (v. 6.) "Thy habitations is in the midst of deceit, all about thee are addicted to it; therefore stand upon thy goads. It is meet for man to be wise as serpents. They are deceitful men, therefore there is little hope of thy doing any good among them; for make things ever so plain, they have some trick or other whereby to shuffle off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, v. 8.

Their tongue was a bow bent, (v. 3.) plotting and preparing mischief; here it is an arrow shot out, putting in execution what they had projected. It is as a slaying arrow; so some readings of the original have it: their tongue has been to many an instrument of death. They speak peaceably to their neighbours, against whom they are at the same time lying in wait: as Job kissed Abner, when he was about to kill him: and Cain, that he might not be suspected of any ill design, talked familiarly with his brother. Not so, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are deceivable, but when they are intended as a cloak and cover for wicked intentions, they are abominable. While they did all this injury to one another, they put a great contempt upon God; Not only they knew not me, but, (v. 6.) through deceit, through the deceptions of the false prophets, they did not know God; therefore so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they desire not the knowledge of my ways." Or, They are so wedded to this sinful course which they are in, and so bewitched with that, and its gains, that they will by no means admit the knowledge of God, because that it would be a check upon them in their sins. This is the ruin of sinners, they might be taught the go all knowledge of the Lord: and they will not learn it. Where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected? Hos. iv. 1.

(2.) He had marked them for ruin, v. 7, 9, 11. Those that will not know God as their Lawgiver, shall be made to know him as their Judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of some, and the ruin of the rest.

(1.) Some shall be refined, (v. 7.) "Because they are thus corrupt, behold, I will melt them, and try them, will bring them into trouble, and see what that will do toward bringing them to repentance; whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross, and whether, when they are melted, they will be new cast in a better mould."

He will make trial of lesser affictions, before he brings them to this. They then will be melted, for he does not the death of sinners. They shall not be rejected asprobable silver, till the Founder has melted in vain, ch. vi. 29, 30. For how shall I do for the daughters of my people? He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them, that might be for the best, and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off, and give them up to ruin, till he had first tried all means that he could to bring them to repentance. Or, How shall I do for them? They are grown so very corrupt, that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other course can I take with them? (Isa. v. 4, 5.) It is the daughter of my people, and I must do something to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I conive at their wickedness; I must do something to reduce and reform them." A parent corrects his own children because they are his own. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to modify and reduce them; but when he needs it, and when he knows it is the best method he can use.

(2.) The vast shall be ruined, (v. 9.) Shall I not visit for these things? Fraud and falsehood are sins which God hates, and which he will reckon for; Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this, that is so universally corrupt, and, by its impudence in sin, even thares and defies divine vengeance? The sentence is past, the decree is gone forth, v. 11. I will make Jerusalem heaps ofabal'ish, and lay it in such ruins, that it shall be fit for nothing but to be a den of dragons; and the cities of Judah shall be a desolation." God makes them so, for he gives the enemies warrant and power to do it; but why is the holy city made a heap? The answer is ready, Because it was become an unholy one.

12. Who is the wise man, that may understand this; and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth and is burnt up like a wilderness, that none passeth through? 13. And the Lord saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein; 14. But have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them: 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. 16. I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known; and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them. 17. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come; 18. And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters. 19. For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion, How are we spoiled! we are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land, because our dwellings have cast us out. 20. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O ye women, and let your ear receive the word of his mouth, and teach your daughters wailing, and every one her neighbour lamentation: 21. For death is come up into our windows, and is entered into our palaces, to cut off the children from without, and the young men from the streets. 22. Speak, Thus saith the Lord, Even the carcases of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the harvest-man, and none shall gather them.

Two things the prophet designs in these verses, with reference to the approaching destruction of
Jeremiah, IX.

1. To convince people of the justice of God in it, that they had by sin brought it upon themselves, and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who did them no wrong at all, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which did them all this mischief.

2. To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it, that by a terrible prospect of it they might be more influenced in their amendment and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or, at least, mitigate their own share in it. This being designed,

1. He calls for the thinking men, by them to show people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe; (v. 12.) *Where, is the wise man, or the prophet, to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken?* You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you; produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason, or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will soon understand this himself, and it will be so clear to him, that he will be ready to declare it to others, that there is just ground of God's controversy with this people.

Do these men inquire who has forgotten the people, and laid the burden on Jerusalem?* (v. 13.)* It is, that such a change is made with this land; it is used to be a land that God cared for, and he had his eyes upon it for good; (Deut. xi. 20.) but it is now a land that he has forsaken, and that his face is against; it is used to flourish as the garden of the Lord, and to be replenished with inhabitants; but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that none findeth it. All this has been by the judgment of God; (v. 14.) It was supposed, long ago, that it would be asked, when it came to this, Wherefore has the Lord done this unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger? (Deut. xxix. 24.) to which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produces out of the record,

I. The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, v. 13, 14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied, (1.) That they have revolted from their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign: therefore God has forsaken their land, and justly, because they have forsaken his laws, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently set before them, and had not observed his orders, nor obeyed his voice, nor walked in them. (v. 13.) They had been guilty of and wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God, and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them,

(2.) That they have entered themselves into the service of oppressors and usurpers, have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their Prince, but have taken upon arms against him. For, (v. 15.) They have acted according to the tradition received from their fathers; They have walked after Baalim; the word is plural; they had many Baals, Balaam, and Bala-bather, the Baal of this place, and the Baal of the other place; for they had birds many, which their fathers taught them to worship, but which the God of their fathers had laid and again slain. This was it which the Lord had punished. The King of kings might view them as upon his own subjects, but when they treacherously depast from him, and rebel against him, and it is become necessary by this means to chastise their rebellion, and reduce them to their allegiance; and they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them.

2. Th judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed, for it was righteous, and nothing could be moved in arrest of it: The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said it; (v. 15, 16.) and who can reverse it? (1.) That all their comfort at home shall be no comfort to them; it shall be a poison to them, if they shall be minded to it; I will feed them with worm wood; which is, for it signifies an herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is, though it be bitter, but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious; and I will give them water of gall, or juice of hemlock, or some other herb that is poisonous, to drink. Everything about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and overthrow to them, and they will curse their blessings. Mal. ii. 2. (2.) That their dispersion abroad shall be their destruction; (v. 16.) I will scatter them among the heathen. They are corrupted and drowned by their intimacy with the heathen, with whom they mingled themselves, and learned their works; and now they shall lose themselves there where they lost their virtue, and were among the heathen. They have forsaken the truth, which is the bond and cement of society and commerce, and addicted themselves to deceit and lying, and therefore are justly crumbled to dust, and scattered among the heathen. They set up gods which neither they nor their fathers had known, strange gods, new gods; (Deut. xxxiii. 17.) and now God will put them among neighbours which neither they nor their fathers have known, and they shall claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet, though they are scattered so as that they will not know where to find one another, God will know where to find them all out, (Ps. xxii. 8.) with that evil which still pursues imperious sinners: I will send a sword after them, some killing judgment or other, till I have consumed them; for when God judges, they will overcome, when he pursues, he will overtake. And now we see for what the land perishes; all this desolation is the desert of their deeds, and the performance of God's words.

II. He calls for the mourning women, and engages them with their arts to affect people, and move their passion, to lament these sad calamities befalling them, that they might themselves, and the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them. The Lord of hosts himself says, Call for the mourning women, that they may come, v. 17. The scope of this is to show how very woful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

1. Here is work for the counterfeit mourners: Send for the mourning women that know how to compose mournful discourses, or, at least, to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals to supply the want of true mourners. Let these take up a waiting for us, v. 18. The deaths and funerals were so many, that people wept for them till they had no more power to weep, as those, 1 Sam. xxx. 4. Let them therefore do it now, whose trade it is; or, rather, it intimates the necessity of some persons being appointed to laments, that the laid not to heart the judgments they were under, nor, even when there was so much blood shed, could find in their hearts to shed a tear. They cry not when God binds them, Job xxxvi. 13. God sent his mourning prophets to them, to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their flesh; rather therefore than they shall good advice to their mind, let the mourning women come, and try to work upon their fancy, that their eyes may at least run down with tears, and their eyelids gush out with waters. First of all, sinners must be weepers.
who might have been spared in policy, because capable of being serviceable to them, shall fall to
gether by the sword. It's usual now, even in the greatest military executions, to put many in the
sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were
sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

[2.] Those that are slain shall be left unburied; (v. 22.) Speak, Thus saith the Lord, (for the con-
firmation and aggravation of what was before said,) Even the careless of men shall fall as dung, ne-
glected, and trodden under foot, as by the mule, as the man is. Common humanity obliges the survivors to bury
the dead, even for their own sake; but here such numbers shall be slain, and those so dispersed all the
country over, that it shall be an endless thing to bury them all, nor shall there be hands enough to do
it, nor shall the conquerors permit it, and those that should do it, shall be overwhelmed with grief, so that
they shall have no heart to do it. The dead bodies even of the fairest and strongest, when they have lain awhile, become as dung, such vile bodies have we. And here such multitudes shall fall, that their
bodies shall lie as thick as heaps of dung in the fur-
rrows of the field, and no more notice shall be taken of them than of the handfuls which the harvestman
drops for the gleaners, for none shall gather them, but they shall remain in sight, monuments of divine vengeance, that the eye of the impudent survivors may affect their heart. Stay them not, bury them not, lest my people forget, Ps. lix. 11.

23. Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: 24. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.

25. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are re-un-
cised with the uncircumcised; 26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and his judg-
ments, to convince them both of sin and wrath; but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge in
other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction, and with which to excuse themselves in
their obstinacy and carelessness; he therefore sets himself here to drive them from these refuges of
lies, and to show them the insufficiency of them.

I. When they were told how inevitable the judg-
mens would be, they pleaded the defence of their
polities and powers, which, with the help of their
wealth and treasure, they thought made their city
impenetrable. In answer to this he shows them the
toll of trusting to, and boasting of, all these stays,
while they have not a God in covenant to stay them-
selves upon, v. 23, 24.

Here he shows, 1. What we may not depend upon in
day of distress; Let not the wise man glory in his
wisdom, as if with the help of that he could cut-
wit or counteract the enemy, or in the greatest
extremity find out some evasion or other; for a man's word may fail him when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own craftiness. Aithophel was befooled, and counsellors are often proved to spoil.

But if a man's policies fail him, yet surely he may gain his point by might, and dint of courage; n, let not the strong man glory in his strength, for the battle is not always to the strong: David the stripling proves too hard for Goliat the giant. All hope is to be set upon the Lord, for He can do nothing against him. But may not the rich man's wealth be his strong city? (Money answers all things.) No, Let not the rich man glory in his riches, for they may prove so far from sheltering him, that they may expose him, and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the wise men, and mighty men, and rich men that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans, because they have wise men to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of the war. Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money, for all these will prove but vain things for safety.

Let us see what we may depend upon in a day of distress. (1.) They may consider that we have done our duty. They that refused to know God, (v. 6.) will boast in vain of their wisdom and wealth; but they that know God intelligently, that understand aright that he is the Lord, that have not only right apprehensions concerning his nature, and attributes, and relation to man, but receive his word, who are the impressions of them, may glory in this, it will be their rejoicing in the day of their salvation, (v. 7.) (2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be, that, having through grace in some measure done our duty, we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may glory in this, that, wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with, and an interest in, a God that exercises loving-kindness, and judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; that is not only just to all his creatures, and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children, and will protect them, and provide for them. For in these things I delight. God delights to show kindness, and to execute judgment himself, and is pleased with those who herein are followers of him as dear children. Those that have such knowledge of the glory of God as to be changed into the same image, and to partake of his holiness, will have their perfection in glory; and the God they thus faithfully conform to, they may cheerfully confide in, in their greatest straits. But the prophet intimates that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their wisdom, and might, and riches, were their joy and hope, which would end in grief and despair. But those few among them that had the knowledge of God, might please themselves with his, and boast the blessings of his; it would stand them in better stead than thousands of gold and silver.

II. When they were told how provoking their sins were to God, they vainly pleaded the covenant of their circumcision. They were, undoubtedly, the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his children in their person and privileges. But this head of sins has laid such and such nations waste, because they were uncircumcised, and therefore not under the protection of the Divine Providence, as we are. To this the prophet answers, That the days of visitation were now at hand, in which God would punish all wicked people, without making any distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised, v. 25, 26. The prophet speaks with great pertinacy, in pointing out their peculiarity, and lived in common with the uncircumcised nations, and so had forfeited the benefit of that peculiarity, and must expect to fare never the better for it. God will punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised. As the ignorance of the uncircumcised shall not excuse their wickedness, so neither shall the privileges of the circumcised excuse theirs, but they shall be punished together. Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none shall fire the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, circumcised or uncircumcised, according to his works. The covenant being the same with the Gentiles, we must not be baptized, will be as sure as, no, and more severe than, that of impenitent sinners that are unbaptized. It would affect one to find here Judah industriously put between Egypt and Edom, as standing upon a level with them, and under the same doom, v. 26. These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews' privileges, Deut. xxxii. 3. But the Jews are here told that they shall share in their punishment. Those in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness, are supposed to be the Kedarenes, and those of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears by comparing ch. xlix. 28.—32. Some think they are so called, because they dwelt as it were in a corner of the world: others, because they had the hair of their head folded into corners. However that was, they were of those nations the more uncircumcised in flesh, and the Jews are ranked with them, and are as near to men for their sins as they; for all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart: they have the sign, but not the thing signified, ch. iv. 4. They are heathens in their hearts, strangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Their hearts are devoted to idols, as the hearts of the un- circumcised Gentiles are. Note, The seals of the covenant, though they dignify us, and lay us under obligations, will not save us, unless the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our lives, agree with the covenant. That only is circumcision, and that baptism, which is of the heart, Rom. ii. 28, 29. 

CHAP. X. 

We may conjecture that the prophecy of this chapter was delivered after the first captivity, in the time of Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon; for it has a double reference. 1. To those that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country notorious above any other for idolatry and superstition: they are here cautioned against the infection of the place, not to be carried away by the way of the heart, and lest their astrology and idolatry be both foolish things, (v. 3, 5.) and the worshippers of idols brutish, v. 8, 9. So it will appear in the day of their visitation, v. 14, 15. They are here exhorted to consider the God of Israel, for that there is none like him, v. 6, 7. He is the true God, lives for ever, and has the government of the world; (v. 10, 13.) and his people are happy in him, v. 16. To those that yet remained in their own land. They are cautioned against security, and bid to expect distress, (v. 17, 18.) and that by a foreign enemy, which God would bring upon them for their sin, v. 20—22. This calamity the prophet foretells, (v. 19.) and prays for the mitigation of it, v. 23—25.

1. HEAR ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: 2. Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. 3. For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest (the work of the hands of the workman) with the axe: 4. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not. 5. They are upright as the palm-tree, but speak not; they must needs be borne because they cannot go. Be not afraid of
them; for they cannot do evil, neither also is it in them to do good. 6. Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. 7. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain: forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. 8. But they are altogether brutish and foolish; the stock is a doctrine of vanities. 9. Silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish, and gold from Uphaz, the work of the workman, and of the hands of the founder: blue and purple is their clothing; they are all the work of cunning men. 10. But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King; at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. 11. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. 12. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. 13. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 14. Every man is brutish in his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. 15. They are vanity, and the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 16. The portions of Jacob is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the Lord of hosts is his name.

The prophet Isaiah, when he prophesied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings against idolatry, and largely exposed the sottishness of idolaters, not only because the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but because the afflictions in Babylon were designed to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people against the idolatrous usages and customs of the heathen, not only for the use of those that were gone to Babylon, but of those also that stood behind; that, being convinced and exclaimed by the word of God, the rod might be prevented, and it is written for our learning. Observe here, 1. A solemn charge given to the people of God, to turn not themselves to the heathen and customs of the heathen. Let the house of Israel hear and receive this word from the God of Israel; "Learn not the way of the heathen, do not approve of it, nor think idenitively concerning it, much less imitate it, or consecrate yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs stand among you, (as they are apt to do insensibly,) nor mingle yourselves with your religion." Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God, to learn the way of the heathen, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they use in the worship of their false gods. See Deut. xii. 29, 30. 2. Learn not the way of the heathen to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to them they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours, and therefore, according as the signs of heaven were, whether they were auspicious or ominous, they thought themselves countenanced or discouraged by their deities: which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling. Business was stopped, if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but thunder on their left hand, they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be dismayed at the signs of heaven; to reverence the stars as deities, or to frighten themselves with any presignifications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the stars in their courses fight not against any that are at peace with God. The heathen are dismayed at these signs, for they knew not the God of Israel, but they that are taught of God, be so. 3. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge. 1. The way of the heathen is very ridiculous and absurd, and is condemned even by the dictators of right reason, v. 3. The statutes and ordinances of the heathen are vanity itself; they cannot stand the test of a rational disquisition. This is again and again insisted upon here, as it was by Isaiah. The Chaldeans valued themselves on their wisdom, in which they thought that they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here shows that they, and all others that worshipped idols, and expected help and relief from them, were brutish and sottish, and had not common sense. (1.) Consider what the idol is that is worshipped; it is a tree cut out of the forest originally, it was fitted up by the hands of the workman, squared and sawed, and worked into shape; see Isa. xlv. 12, &c. But, after all, it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But to hide the wood, they deck it with silver and gold, they gild or lacquer it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. They fasten it to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, with nails and hammers, that it fall not, or be thrown down, or stolen away, v. 4. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it is upright as the palm-tree, (v. 5,) it looks stately, and stands up as if it were going to speak to you, but it cannot speak, it is a poor dumb creature; nor can it take one step toward your heart. The same is true of the idol of gold, its face is turned away from the sun, so that it cannot shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it cannot go. Very fitly does it come in here, "Be not afraid of them, any more than of the signs of heaven; be not afraid of incurring their displeasure, for they can do no evil; be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, for neither is it in them to do good. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you do to yourself, Idols of gold and silver are unworthy to be worshipped as wooden gods. The stock is a doctrine of vanities, v. 8. It teaches lies, teaches lies concerning God. It is an instruction of vanities, it is wood." It is probable that the idols of gold and silver had wood underneath for the substratum, and
then silver spread into plates is brought from Tur-"ship, imported from beyond sea, and gold from Udahz, or Phæz, which is sometimes rendered the fine gold, Ps. xxi. 3. A great deal of art is used and pains taken about it. They are not such ordinary, mechanical matters that are employed about these, as about the golden gods, v. 3. These cunning men, it is the work of the workman, the graver must do his part, when it has passed through the hands of the founder. Those were but decked here and there with silver and gold, these are silver and gold all over. And that these gods might be reverenced as kings, blue and purple are their clothing, the royal robes, (v. 2.) which seems, to use an ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter no better. For what is the idol when it is made, and when they have made the best they can of it? He tells us, (v. 14.) They are falsehood, they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world. They are worshipped as the gods that give us breath and life and sense, whereas they are lifeless, senseless things themselves, and there is no breath in them; there is no spirit in them, (so the word is,) they are not animated or inhabited, as they are supposed to be, by any divine spirit or name—divinity, they are so far from being gods, that they have not so much as the spirit of a beast that goes downward. They are vanity, and the work of errors, v. 15. Inquire into the use of them; ye shall find that these do nothing, no help is to be expected from them, nor any confidence put in them. They are a deceitful work, works of illusions, or mere mockerys; so some read the following clause. They delude those that put their trust in them, make fools of them, or, r. ther, they make fools of themselves. Inquire into the rise of them; they are the work of errors, gross errors, as bad as nonsense, that every age and every nation, who pretended to reason were guilty of. They are the creatures of a deceived fancy; and the errors by which they were produced, they propagate among their worshippers.

(2.) Inter hence what the idolaters are that worship these idols, (v. 8.) They are altogether brutish and foolish; they that make them are like unto them, senseless and stupid, and there is no breath in them, no use of reason, else they would never believe in such gods, no sense of honour, else they would never stoop to them, v. 14. Every man that makes or worships idols, is become brutish in his knowledge, brutish for want of knowledge, or brutish in that very thing which one would think they should be fully acquainted with; compare Jude 10. What they know naturally, what they cannot but know by the light of nature, in those things, as brute beasts, they corrupt themselves. Though in the works of creation they cannot but see the eternal power and godhead of the Creator, yet they are become vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge. See Rom. i. 21, 28. Nay, whereas they thought it a shame to worship beasts, this was next in order. The gods they made the greatest folly they could be guilty of. The world by wisdom knew not God, 1 Cor. i. 21. Rom. i. 22. Every founder is himself confounded by the graven image; when he has made it by a mistake, he is more and more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot disentangle himself from the snare; or it is he will one time or other, by the advice or counsel of some he trusts in, be led into a snare. Such things are there, he is the living God; he is Life itself, has life in himself, and is the Fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless, but ours is a living God, and hath immortality. (2.) Look upon him with relation to his creatures, he is a King, and absolute Monarch over all them, is their Owner and Ruler, has an immortal right to the whole earth and dispose of them; as a King, he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preserves peace among them. He is an everlasting King. The counsels of his kingdom were from everlasting, and the continuance of it will be to everlasting. He is a King of eternity. The idols whom they call their kings, are but of yesterday;
and will sort be abolished; and the kings of the earth that are with them shall bow down, and themselves be the first among the nations: but the Lord shall reign for ever, the God O Zion, unto all generations.

6. The heavens and the earth shall perish, and the sea; yet the word of our God shall stand for ever.

7. God glorifies in the treasures he has of these, Job xxxviii. 22, 23. This God can do; but which of the idels of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but what furnishes us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

(5.) This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the only God of Israel. The Lord his God, the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for, if they do, they certainly change for the worse, for (v. 16.) the Portion of Jacob is not like them; their rock is not as our Rock, (Deut. xxxii. 31.) nor our like their meale-hills. Note, [1.] They that have the Lord for their God, have a full and complete happiness in him. The God of Jacob is the Portion of Jacob; he is his all, and in him he has enough, and needs no more in this world or the other. In him we have a worthy portion, Ps. xvi. 5. [2.] If we have entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our Portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as the rod of his inheritance, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells and by whom he is served and honoured. [3.] It is the unspakable comfort of the Christian, that the Lord is the Former of all things, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of. Their help stands in his name who made heaven and earth. And he is the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts in heaven and earth, has them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people when there is occasion. This is the name by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of, and then take to themselves the comfort of. [4.] Herein God's people are happy above all other people, happy indeed, bona si sua norint—did they but know their blessedness. The gods which the heathen pride, and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but the Portion of Jacob is not like them.

8. The prophet, having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel, (between whom there is no comparison,) reads the doom, the certain doom, of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews in God's name, to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters; (v. 11.) Thus shall ye say unto them, and they shall be held in saying it, if the gods which have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are no gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only who did make heaven and earth, these shall perish; perish of course, 'because they are vanity; perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him, as gods they shall perish: from off the earth, even all those things on earth beneath, which they make gods; and from before these, even all things, which they make an ornament of heaven, under the highest heavens, which are defined, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew, like all the rest, but in the Chaldee dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language, when they tempted the Israelites to idolatry; to say, if ye serve other gods, your gods, or the gods of your gods. We will never do that; for," (1.) They are counterfeit deities; they are no gods, for they have not made the heavens and the earth, and therefore are not entitled to our homage; nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth, or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel." The primitive Christians would say, when they were
urged to worship such a god, Let him make a world, and he shall be my god. While we have him to worship, who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other. (2.) They are con
ducted deities; they shall perish, the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together; the earth shall no longer bear them, the heavens shall no longer cover them, but both shall abandon them. It is repeated, v. 15. In the time of their visitation.

When God comes to reckon with idolaters, he shall make them weary of their idols, and glad to be rid of them; they shall cast them to the moles and to the bats, Isa. ii. 20. Whatever runs against God and religion, will be run down at last.

17. Gather up thy wares out of the land, O inhabitant of the fortress: 18. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once, and will distress them, that they may find it so. 19. Wo is me for my hurt! my wound is grievous: but I said, Truly this is a grief, and I must bear it. 20. My tabernacle is spoiled, and all my cords are broken: my children are gone forth of me, and they are not; there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, and to set up my curtains. 21. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered. 22. Behold, the noise of the gruit is come, and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons. 23. O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. 24. O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing. 25. Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

In these verses,

I. The prophet threatens, in God's name, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 17, 18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves inhabitants of a fortress, their country was their strong hold, and, in their own conceit, impregnable; but they are hereby bid to think of leaving it; they must prepare to go to their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it; "Gather up thy wares out of the land; contract your affairs, and bring them into as little a compass as you can. Arise, depart, this is not your rest, Mic. ii. 10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners of them that must pass over up you, (v. 18.) Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once: they have hitherto dropt out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be stung out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain, they shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off, in a little time. See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, 1 Sam. xxxv. 29. Yet once more, God will shake their land, and shake the wicked out of it, II. b. xii. 26. He adds, And I will distress them, that they may find it so. He will not only throw them out hence, (that he may do, and yet they may be easy elsewhere;) but, wthithersoever they go, trouble shall follow them: they shall be continually perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves; and who or what can make these easy whom God will distress, whom he will distress, that they may find it so, that they may feel that which they would not believe? They were often told of the weight of God's wrath, and their own iniquity; yet make he lift up his hand against it, or bear up under it; they were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard or credit what was told them; but now they shall find it so; and therefore God will pursue them with his judgments, that they may find it so, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, Sooner or later, sinners will find it just so as the word of God has represented things to them, even as no better, and that the threatenings were not nugbears. 11. He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities; (v. 19.) Wo is me for my hurt! Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country. He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and since there were none that had so much sense as to join with them, he weeps in secret, and cries out, Wo is me! In mournful times, it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. The prophet puts into their mouths the words they should say; whether they would or not, he has so great a cause to say them. So among them would they be done by themselves, and all of them, at last, would be forced to do it.

1. They lament that the affliction is very great, and that it is very hard to them to bear it; the more hard because they had not been used to trouble, and now did not expect it: "Wo is me for my hurt, and for what I have done; but I am not as the hurt, no, as some are, worse frightened than hurt. Nor is it a slight hurt, but a wound, a wound that is grievous, very painful, and very threatening. 2. That there is no remedy but patience; they cannot help themselves, but must sit still, and abide it. But I said, when I was about to complain of my wound, To what purpose is it to complain? This is a grief, and I must bear it as well as I can. This is the language rather of a sufferer than of a gracious submission; of a patience for force, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction, I should say, "This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God that I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me, and his grace will make it work for good. This is the grieve-
ing part at the hand of God, Job ii. 10. But to say, "This is an evil, and I must bear it, because I cannot help it," is a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God, which we should always have, even under our afflictions; saying, not only, God can and will do what he pleases, but, Let him do what he pleases.

2. That the country was quite ruined and wasted; (v. 20.) My tabernacle is spoiled. Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle: their government is dissolved, and their state fallen to pieces, like a tabernacle or tent, when it is taken down, and all its cords, that should keep it together, are broken. Or, by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary,
which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country, and there were none to repair these desolations: "My children are gone forth of me, they are spoiled, they are carried into captivity, so that as to me they are not; I am likely to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, none of my children that used to do it for me, none to set up my curtains, none to do me any service." Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons, Isa. lli. 19.

And the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures, for the redress of their grievances, and the re-establishing of their ruined state; (v. 21.) The pastors are become brutish. When the tents, the shepherds' tents, were spoiled, (v. 20.) it concerned the shepherds to look after them; but they were foolish shepherds. Their kings and princes had no regard at all to the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite bewitched and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing toward the repair of it. They are brutish indeed, for they have not sought the Lord; they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence, in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judge, nor expected the deliverance, to come from his hand. Note, Those are brutish people, that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world; every man is either a saint or a brute. But it is sad indeed with a people, when their pastors, that should feed them with knowledge and understanding, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? Therefore they shall not prosper; none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper, who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And when the pastors are brutish, what else can be expected but that all their flocks should be scattered? For if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. The ruin of a people is often owing to the brutishness of their pastors and preachers.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful; (v. 22.) The noise of the brutish is come, of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation. It now proves too true. A great commotion arises out of the north country, which threatens to make all the cities of Judah desolate, and a den of dragons; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the cruelty and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect, but to be made a den of dragons, which has by sin made itself a den of thieves?

III. He turns to God, and addresses himself to him, finding it little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers, that, if men will not hear them, God will; and he, therefore, has plenty of this at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say that they have labour'd in vain.

1. The prophet here acknowledges the sovereignty and dominion of the divine providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs of men are fixed, and points them distinctly and determinedly. v. 23. This is an article of our faith, which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace, when we are complaining of an affliction, or suing for a mercy: "O Lord, I know, and believe, that the way of man is not in himself; Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine providence." We cannot of ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us, and command deliverance for us, for it is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps, Ps. lxxxv. 8. (2.) It is a prediction of God's judg-ments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of these that hear not his gospel? 1 Pet. iv. 17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be seen. (2.) It is a prediction of God's judg-ments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If judgment begin thus at the house of God, what shall be the end of these that hear not his gospel? 1 Pet. iv. 17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be seen.
ed out. [1.] They are strangers to God, and are of a content to be so. They know him not, nor desire to know him. They are families that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they call not on God's name. Those that restrain prayer, prove that they know not God; for they that know him will seek to him, and entertain his favour. [2.] They are persecutors of the people of God, and are ready to be his enemies. They have eaten up Jacob, with as much greediness, as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; nay, with more, for they never know when they have enough; they have devoured him and consumed him, and made his habitation desolate, that is, the land in which he lives, or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will, for that, make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from Ps. xxxix. 6, 7.

CHAP. XI.

In this chapter, 1. God by the prophet puts the people in mind of the covenant he had made with their fathers, and how that they had transgressed, and were not obedient to that covenant, that they should be obedient to him, v. 1, 7. 2. He charges it upon them, that they, in succession to their fathers, and in confederacy among themselves, had obstinately rebuked him, v. 7. 3. He threatens to punish them with utter ruin for their disobedience, especially for their idolatry; (v. 11, 13.) and tells them, that their idols should not save them, (v. 12.) that their prophets should not pray for them; (v. 14.) he also justifies his proceedings therein, they having brought all this mischief upon themselves by their own folly and willfulness, v. 15, 17. 4. Here is an account of a conspiracy formed against Jeremiah by his fellow-citizens, the men of Anathoth; God's discovery of it to him; (v. 18, 19.) his prayer against them, (v. 20.) and a prediction of God's judgments upon them for it, v. 21, 22. 29.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; 3. And say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, 4. Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; 5. That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O Lord. 6. Then the Lord said unto me, Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and do them. 7. For I earnestly protestted unto your fathers, in the day that I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, even unto this day, rising early and protesting, saying, Obey my voice. 8. Yet they obeyed not, nor inclined their ear, but walked every one in the imagination of their evil heart: therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant which I commanded them to do: but they did them not. 9. And the Lord said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 10. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant, which I made with their fathers.

The prophet here, as prosecutor in God's name, draws up an indictment against the Jews for idolatry and disobedience to the commands of their rightful Sovereign. For the more solemn management of this charge,

1. He produces the commission he had to draw up the charge against them; he did not take pleasure in accusing the children of his people, but God commanded him to speak it to the men of Judah; v. 1, 2. In the original it is plural; Speak ye this. For what he had to say was of such a nature that he had no charge to make to all his servants the prophets. They none of them said any other than what Moses, in the law, had said; to that therefore they must refer themselves, and direct the people; "Hear the words of this covenant; turn to your Bibles, be judged by them." Jeremiah must now proclaim this in the name of Judah and the men of Jerusalem, and may hear, for all concerns. All the words of reproof and conviction, which the prophets spake, were grounded upon the words of the covenant, and agreed with that; "And therefore hear these words, and understand by them what terms you stood with God at first; and then, by comparing yourselves with the covenant, you will soon be aware upon what terms you now stand with him."

1. This was the original contract between God and them, when he first formed them into a people. It was what he commanded their fathers, when he first brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. He never intended to take them under his guidance and protection upon any other terms. This was it that he required from them, in gratitude for the great things he did for them when he brought them from the iron furnace. Therefore he redeemed them out of the service of the Egyptians, which was perfect slavery, that he might take them into his own service, which is perfect freedom, Luke 1, 74, 75.

2. This was not only laid before them then, but it was with the greatest importunity imaginable pressed upon them, v. 7. God not only commanded
it, but earnestly protected it, to their fathers, when he brought them into covenant with himself. Moses inculcated it again and again, by precept upon precept, and line upon line.

3. This was the condition of the relation between them and God, which was so much their honour and privilege; "So shall ye be my people, and I will be your God; I will own you for mine, and you shall be my sons and daughters," which intimates that if they refused to obey, they could no longer claim the benefit of the relation.

4. It was upon these terms that the land of Canaan was given them for a possession; "Obey my voice, that I may perform the oath sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey," v. 3. God was ready to fulfil the promise, but then they must fulfil the condition: if not, the promise is void, and it is just with God to turn them out of it. Being brought in upon their good behaviour, they had no wrong done them if they were turned out upon their ill behaviour. Obedience was the rent reserved by the lease, with a power to re-center for non-payment.

5. This obedience was not only made a condition of the blessing, but was required under the penalty of a curse. This is mentioned first here, (v. 5.) that they might, if possible, be awaked by the terrors of the Lord; Cursed be the man, though it were but a single person, that obeys not the words of this covenant. Much more when it is the body of the nation, that rebels. There are curses of the covenant as well as blessings; and Moses set before them not only life and good, but death and evil; (Deut. xxx. 13.) so that they fear warning given them of the fatal consequences of disobedience.

6. Last this covenant should be forgotten, and, because out of mind, should be thought out of date. God had from time to time called to them to remember it, and by his servants the prophets had made a continual claim of this rent; so that they could not plead, in excuse of their non-payment, that it had never been demanded; from the day he brought them out of Egypt to this day, (and that was near one thousand years,) he had been, in one way or other, at sundry times and in divers manners, pro- testing to them the necessity of obedience. God keeps an account how long we have enjoyed the means of grace, and how powerful these means have been; how often we have been not only spoken to, but threatened with the curse.

7. This covenant was consented to; (v. 5.) Then answered I, and said, Amen, so be it, O Lord. These are the words of the prophet, expressing either, (1.) His own consent to the covenant for himself, and his desire to have the benefit of it. God promised Canaan to the obedient; "Lord," says he, "I take thee at thy word, I will be obedient; let me be permitted to concern myself in thy bounty; of which Canaan am a type." Or, (2.) His own will, and good wish, that his people might have the benefit of it; "Amen; Lord, let them still be kept in possession of this good land, and not turned out of it; make good the promise to them." Or, (3.) His people's consent to the covenant; "Then answered I, in the name of the people, So be it." Taking it in his sense, it refers to the declared consent which the people gave to the type, and which God will give to the importations of it, when they said, All that the Lord shall say unto us we will do, and will be obedient, but to the penalties, when they said Amen to all the curses upon mount Ebal. The more solemnly we have engaged ourselves to God, the more reason we have to hope that it will be perpetual; and yet here it did not go on.

II. He charges them with breach of covenant, such a breach as amounted to a forfeiture of their charter, v. 8. God had said again and again, by his law and by his prophets, "Obe, my voice, do as you are bidden, and all shall be well;" yet they obeyed not; and because they were resolved not to submit thir souls to God's commandments, they would not so much as incline their ears to them, but got as far as they could cut of call: They caused every one in the imagination of their evil hearts, fol- lowed their own inventions; every man did as his fancy and humour led him, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, and the thoughts of the times, which had no conversations; see ch. viii. 24. What then can they ex- pect, but fall under the curse of the covenant, since they would not comply with the commands and conditions of it; Therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, all the threatenings contained in it, because they did not what they were commanded. Note, The words of the covenant will not find fault with God, but with ourselves: our obedience qualify ourselves for the blessings of it, we shall by our disobedience bring ourselves under the curses of it.

That which aggravated their defection from God, and rebellion against him, was, that it was general, and as it were by consent, v. 9, 10. Jeremiah himself saw that many lived in open disobedience to God, and the worst of them were worse than he thought of; A conspiracy is found among them, by him whose eye is upon the hidden works of darkness. There is a combination against God and religion, a dangerous design formed to over- throw God's government, and bring in the pretenders, the counterfeit deities. This intimates that they were wilful and deliberate in wickedness; they rebelled against God, not through incoignity, but presumptuously, and with a high hand; that they were subtle and ingenious in wickedness, and car- ried on their plot against religion with a great deal of art and management; that they were linked to- gether in the design, and, as is usual among conspirators, engaged to stand by one another in it, and to live and die together; they were resolved to go through with it. A cursed conspiracy! O that there were not the like in our day! Observe, 1. What the conspiracy was; they designed to overthrow divine revelation, and set that aside, and persuade people not to hear, not to heed, the words of God. They did all they could to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to lessen the value of them; they designed to draw people after other gods to serve them, to consult them as their oracles, and make appeal to their consciences; they would, if they could, be their god, a light within their god, an infallible judge their god, saints and angels their gods, the god of this or the other nation shall be theirs; thus, under several disguises, they are in the same confederacy against the Lord and against his anointed. 2. Who were in the conspiracy: one would have expected to find some foreigners ringleaders in it; but not so, even the children of Jerusa- lem are in conspiracy with the men of Judah; city and country agree in this, however they may differ in other things. (2.) Those of this generation seem to be in conspiracy with those of the foregoing gen- eration, to carry on the war from age to age against religion; They are turned back to the iniquities of their forfathers, and are rising up in their stead, a head of evil things. No, (4.) The unfaithful of Jerusa- lem xxxii. 14. In Josiah's time there had been a refor- mation, but after his death they returned to the idolatries which then they had renounced. (3.) Judah and Israel, the kingdom of the ten tribes and the two that were often at daggers-drawing one with another, were yet in a conspiracy to break the covenant God had made with their fathers, even with the heads of all the twelve tribes. The king- dom of Israel began the revolt, but the house of Judah soon came into the conspiracy. Now what else could
be expected, but that God should take severe methods, both for the chastising of these conspirators, and the crushing of this conspiracy; for none ever hardened his heart thus against God, and prospered. He that rolls this stone, it will return upon him.

11. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. 12. Then shall the cities of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, go and cry unto the gods unto whom they offer incense: but they shall not save them at all in the time of their trouble. 13. For according to the number of the cities were thy gods, O Judah; and according to the number of the streets of Jerusalem have ye set up altars to that shameful thing, even altars to burn incense unto Baal. 14. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. 15. What hath my beloved to do in my house, seeing she hath wrought lewdness with many, and the holy flesh is passed from thee? when thou dost evil, then thou rejoicest. 16. The Lord called thy name, A green olive-tree, fair, and of goodly fruit; with the noise of a great tumult he hath kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. 17. For the Lord of hosts that planted thee hath pronounced evil against thee, for the evil of the house of Israel, and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves, to provoke me to anger, in offering incense unto Baal.

This paragraph, which contains so much of God’s wrath, might very well be expected to follow upon that which goes next before, which contained so much of his people’s sin. When God found so much evil among them, we cannot think it strange if it follows, Therefore I will bring evil upon them, (v. 11.) the evil of punishment for the evil of sin; and there is no remedy, no relief, the decree is gone forth, and the sentence will be executed.

1. They cannot help themselves, but shall be found too weak to contest with God’s judgment; it is evil which they shall not be able to escape, or to go forth out of, by any evasion whatsoever. Note, Those that will not submit to God’s government, shall not be able to escape his wrath. There is no fleeing from his justice, no avoiding his cognizance. Evil pursues sinners, and entangles them in snares out of which there is no escape.

2. Their God will not help them, his providence shall no way favour them; Though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them. In their affliction they will seek the God whom before they slighted, and cry to him whom before they would not vouchsafe to speak to. But how can they expect to speed? For he has plainly told us, that he will turn away his ears from hearing the low, as they did, (v. 8.) for they inclined not their ear, even his prayer shall be an abomination to him, as the way of the Lord was now to them a reproach.

3. Their idols shall not help them, v. 12. They shall go and cry to the gods to whom they now offer incense, and put them in mind of the costly services wherewith they had honoured them, expecting they should now have relief from them, but in vain: they shall be sent to the gods whom they served; (Judg. x. 4. Deut. xxxii. 37, 38.) and what the better? They shall not save them at all, shall do nothing for them in their distress: nor give them any prospect of it; they shall not afford them least relief, nor mitigation of their trouble. It is God only that is a Friend at need, a present powerful Help in time of trouble. The ideas cannot help themselves; how then should they help their worshippers? Those that make holes in the world and the flesh, will in vain have recourse to them in a day of distress, (v. 11.) their idols shall have done any real kindness to their worshippers, they would have done it for this people, who had renounced the true God to embrace him, had multiplied them according to the number of their cities, (v. 13.) in Jerusalem, according to the number of their streets, suspecting both their sufficiency and their readiness to help them, they must have many, lest a few would not be enough. So that the altar of Baal is dispersed in every corner, lest they should be out of the world when they had occasion for them. In Jerusalem, the city which God had chosen to put his name there, publicly in the streets of Jerusalem, in every street, they had altars to that shameful thing, that shame, even to Baal, which they ought to have been ashamed of, with which they did reproach the Lord, and bring confusion upon themselves. But now in their distress, their minds wander, and they stand in no stead. Note, Those that will not be ashamed of their commission of sin as a wicked thing, will be ashamed of their expectations from sin as a fruitless thing.

4. Jeremiah’s prayer shall not help them; (v. 14.) what God had said to him before, (ch. vii. 16.) he says again, Pray not thou for this people. This is not designed for a command to the prophets so much as for a threatening to the people, that they should have no benefit by the prayers of their friends for them. God would give no encouragement to the prophets to pray for them, would not stir up the Spirit of prayer, but cast a damp upon it; would put it into their hearts to pray, not for the body of the people, but for the remnant among them, to pray for their election, not for any deliverance, but from the temporal judgments that were coming upon them; and what other prayers were put up for them, should not be heard. Those are in a sad case indeed, that are cut off from the benefit of prayer. I will not hear them when they cry, and therefore do not thou pray for them.” Note, Those that have so far thrown themselves out of God’s favour, that he will not hear their prayers, cannot expect benefit by the prayers of others for them.

5. The profession they make of religion shall stand them in no stead, v. 15. They were originally God’s beloved, his spouse, he was married to them by the covenant of peculiarity; even the unbelieving Jews are said to be beloved for the fathers’ sake, Rom. xi. 28. As such, they had a place in God’s house, they heard his prayer to worship in the courts of his temple, they partook of God’s altar, they ate of the flesh of his peace-offerings, he called the holy flesh, which God had the honour of, and they had the comfort of. This they gloried in, and trusted to. What harm could come to those who were God’s beloved, who were under the protection of his house? Even when they did evil, yet in the minds and hearts of them, this, made a glympe of the halcyon days of this. And when their evil was, (so the margin reads it,) when trouble came upon them, they rejoiced in this, and made this their confidence; but their confidence would deceive them, for God has rejected it.
they themselves have forfeited the privileges they so much boasted of. They have wrought lewdness with many, have been guilty of spiritual whoredom, have worshipped many idols. And therefore, (1.) God's temple will yield them no protection; it is fit that the adulteress, especially when she has so often repeated her whoredoms, and is grown so impatient in them, and irreclaimable, should be put away, and turned out. 

(2.) What (asks the prophet) is my house to do in my house? She is a scandal to it, and therefore it shall no longer be a shelter to her. 

(2.) God's altar will yield them no satisfaction, nor can they expect any comfort from that; The holy flesh is passed from thee, an end will soon be put to thy sacrifices, when the temple shall be laid in ruins; and where then will the holy flesh be, that thou art so proud of? A holy heart will be a comfort to us when the holy flesh is passed from us; an inward principle of grace will make up the want of the outward means of grace. But wo unto us if the departure of the holy flesh be accompanied with the departure of the holy Spirit. 

6. God's former favours to them shall stand them in no stead, v. 16, 17. Their remembrance of them shall do them no good in their troubles, and God's remembrance of them shall be no armament for their relief. (1.) It is true, God had done great things for them; that people had been favourites above any people under the sun, they had been the darlings of heaven, God had called Israel's name a green olive-tree, and had made them so, for he miscalls nothing; he had planted them, (v. 17.) had formed them into a people, with all the advantages they could have to make them a fruitful and flourishing people, so good was their law, and so good was their land. One would think no other, than that a people so planted, so watered, so cultivated, should be, as the olive-tree is, ever green, in respect both of piety and prosperity, Ps. lii. 8. God called them fair, and of goodly fruit; both good for food, and pleasant to the eye; both amiable and serviceable to God and man, for with the greenness and fruitfulness of the olive both are honoured, Judg. ix. 9. (2.) It is as true, that they have done evil things against God; he had planted them a green olive, a good olive, but they were degenerate into a wild olive, Rom. xi. 17. Both the house of Israel and the house of Judah had done evil, and had provoked God to anger in burning incense unto strange gods and mediating for them, and the supreme God besides the promised Messiah; nay, setting up other gods in competition with the true and living God, for they had gods many, as well as lords many. (3.) When they have conducted themselves so ill, they can expect no other than that, notwithstanding what good he has done to them, and designed for them, he should now bring upon them the plagues he had threatened them. He that made them will not save them. He that planted this green olive-tree, and expected fruit from it, finding it barren and grown wild, has kindled fire upon it, to turn it as it stands; for, being without fruit, it is twice dead, plucked up by the roots. (Jude 12.) It is cut down, and cast into the fire, the fiest place for trees that cumber the ground, Matthew vi. 19. brethren of blessedness, brethren of death, lefty boughs, (so the word signifies,) are broken, are broken down, both princes and priests cut off. And thus it proves, that the evil done against God, to provoke him to anger, is really done against themselves, they wrong their own souls; God is out of their reach, but they ruin themselves. See ch. vii. 19. 

And the Lord hath given me knowledge of it, and I know it, then thou shewest me their doings. 19. But I was like a lamb, or an ox, that is brought to the slaughter: and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered. 20. But, O Lord of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them; for unto thee have I revealed my cause. 21. Therefore thus saith the Lord of the men of Anathoth that seek thy life, saying, Prophecy not in the name of the Lord, that thou die not by our hand; 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will punish them; the young men shall die by the sword, their sons and their daughters shall die by famine; 23. And there shall be no remnant of them, for I will bring evil upon the men of Anathoth, even the year of their visitation. 

The prophet Jeremiah has much in his writings concerning himself, much more than Isaiah had, the times he lived in being very troublesome; here we have grave charges, as well as inducements of his corruptions, which arose from those of his own city, Anathoth, a priest's city, and yet a malignant one. Observe here, 

1. Their plot against him, v. 19. They devised devices against him, laid their heads together to contrive how they might be in the most plausible and effectual manner the death of him. Malice is infectious in its devices, as well as injurious of his prosecutions. They said concerning Jeremiah, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, a proverbial expression; "Let us utterly destroy him, root and branch. Let us destroy both the father and the family." (Is, when Nabal was put to death for treason, his sons were put to death with him;) or, rather, "Both the prophet and the prophecy; let us cut him off from the house of the living, as a false prophet, and load him with ignominy and disgrace, that his name may be no more remembered with respect. Let us sink his reputation, and spoil the credit of his predictions." This was their plot; and, (1.) It was a barbarous one; but so cruel have the persecutors of God's prophets been. They hunt for no less than the present life, and very precious the lives are, that they hunt for. But (2.) It was a baffled one. They thought to put an end to his days, but he survived most of his enemies; they thought to blast his memory, but it lives to this day, and will be blessed while time lasts. 

2. The information which God gave him of this conspiracy against him. He knew nothing of it himself, so artfully had they concealed it; he came to Anathoth, meaning no harm to them, and therefore fearing no harm from them, like a lamb or an ox, that thinks he is driven as usual to the field, when he is brought to the slaughter; so little did poor Jeremiah dream of the design his citizens that hated him had upon him. None of his friends could, and none of his enemies would, give him any notice of his danger. He must shift for his own safety; as Paul's sister's son gave him intelligence of the Jews that were lying in wait for him. There is but a step between Jeremiah and death; but then, Lord gave him knowledge of it, by dream or vision.
understanding their inhibition, he should die by their hand; this would be accusers, judges, executioners, and all. It used to be said, that a prophet could not perish but at Jerusalem; for there the great council sat; but so bitter were the men of Anathoth against Jeremiah, that they would undertake to be the death of him themselves. A prophet then shall find not only no honour, but no favour, in his own country.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this crime, v. 17. 18. God will set them to deal with him, I will visit this upon them; so the word is: God will inquire into it, and reckon for it. Two of God’s four sore judgments shall serve to ruin their town. The sword shall devour their young men, though they were young priests, not men of war; their character shall not be their protection; and famine shall destroy the children, sons and daughters, that there was at Anathoth; which is a more grievous death than that by the sword, Lam. iv. 9. The destruction shall be final, (v. 23.) There shall be no remnant of them left, none to be the seed of another generation; they sought Jeremiah’s life, and therefore they shall die; they would destroy him, root and branch, that his name might be no more remembered, and therefore there shall be no remnant of them: and herein the Lord is righteous. Thus evil is brought upon them, even the year of their visitation; and that is evil enough, a recompense according to their deserts. Then shall Jeremiah see his desire upon his enemies. Note, Their condition is sad, who have the prayers of good ministers and good people against them.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The prophet’s humble complaint to God of the success that wicked people had in their wicked practices, (v. 1, 2.) and his appeal to God concerning his integrity, 10. 11. How God would have suffered, and would have forebore, and would have done more, than he did; and this in the place of audience of iniquity; that God would not have taken upon him to be a judge of his people, nor to be a witness against them, nor to deal with them; because of the multitude and greatness of the iniquities of his people, in this generation. 2. His answer to the prophet’s complaint, and his word to comfort and encourage him, 12. 13. IV. An intimation of mercy to God’s people, in a denunciation of wrath against their neighbours that helped forward their affliction, that they should be plucked out, and with a promise, that if they would at last join themselves with the people of God, they should come in sharers with them in their privileges, v. 14. 17.

1. Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? 2. Thou hast planted them; yea, they have taken root; they grow; yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. 3. But thou, O Lord, knowest me; thou hast seen me, and tried my heart toward thee; pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter. 4. How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He shall not see our last end. 5. If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied
JEREMIAH, XII.

three, then how will thou do in the swelling of Jordan? 6. For even thy brethren, and the house of thy father, even they have dealt treacherously with thee; yea, they have called a multitude after thee: believe them not, though they speak fair words unto thee.

The prophet doubts not but it would be of use to others, to know what had passed between God and his soul; what temptations he had been assaulted with, and how he had got over them; and therefore he here tells us,

1. What liberty he humbly took, and was graciously allowed him, to reason with God concerning his judgment, v. 1. He is about to plead with God, not to quarrel with him, or find fault with his providence; he brings a truth of nature, a principle, which he resolves to abide by in managing this argument; Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee. Thus he arms himself against the temptation wherewith he was assaulted, to envy the prosperity of the wicked, before he entered into a parley with it. Note, When we are most in the dark concerning the meaning of God's dispensations, when our hands are still to keep up right thoughts of God, and must be confident of this, that he never did, nor ever will do, the least wrong to any of his creatures; even when his judgments are unsearchable as a great deep, and altogether unaccountable, yet his righteousness is as conspicuous and unmeaning as the great mountains, Ps. xxxvi. 6. Though sometimes clouds and darkness are round about him, yet justice and judgment are always the habitation of his throne, Ps. xcviii. 2. When we find it hard to understand particular providences, we must have recourse to general truths as our first principles, and abide by them; however it be, the Lord is righteous; see Ps. lxiii. 1. And we must acknowledge it to him, as the prophet here, even when we plead with him, as those that have no thoughts of contending, but only in love longing hither, in faith, that he be exalted when he speaks. Note, However we may see cause for our own information to plead with God, yet it becomes us to own that, whatever he says or does, he is in the right.

II. What it was in the dispensations of Divine Providence, that he stumbled at, and that he thought would bear a debate. It was that which has been a temptation to many wise and good men, and such a one as they had hardly got over. 1. They see the designs and projects of wicked people successful: The way of the wicked provers; they compose their malicious designs, and gain their point. 2. They see their affairs and concerns in a good posture; They are happy, happy as the world can make them, though they deal treacherously, very treacherously, very treacherously. Events are chiefly meant, (as appears, v. 2.) who dispose in their good professions, and depart from their good beginnings and good promises, and in both they deal treacherously, very treacherously. It has been said, that men cannot expect to prosper who are unjust and dishonest in their dealings; but these they dealt treacherously, and yet they are happy.

1. He shows (v. 2.) both their prosperity, and their abuse of their prosperity. (1.) God had been very indulgent to them, and they were got beforehand in the world: "They are planted in a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and thou hast planted them; now, thou didst cast out the heathen to plant them," Ps. xlv. 2.—lxxxv. 8. Many a tree is planted, that yet never grows, or comes to any thing; but they have taken root, their prosperity seems to be confirmed and settled; they take root in the earth, for there they fix themselves, and thence they draw the sap of all their satisfaction. Yet all was not treacherous; they were, seamen, in these grow, yea, they bring forth fruit; their families are built up, they live high, and spend at a great rate; and all this was owing to the benignity of the Divine Providence, which smiled upon them, Ps. lxxiii. 7. (2.) Thus God had favored them, though they had dealt treacherously with him: Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins. This is a paradox, a speech phrase for the Spirit of prophecy, without which it is not safe to charge men with hypocrisy, whose appearances are plausible. Observe, [1.] Though they cared not for thinking of God, nor had any sincere affection to him, yet they could easily persuade themselves to speak of him frequently, and with an air of seriousness. Piety from the teeth outward is so difficult the one to be found, that men can ensnare those that are not Israelites indeed. [2.] Though they had on all occasions the name of God ready in their mouth, and accustomed themselves to those forms of speech that savored of piety, yet they could not persuade themselves to keep up the fear of God in their hearts. The form of godliness should engage us to keep up the power of it; but with them it did not so.

III. What comfort he had in appealing to God concerning his own integrity; (v. 5.) But thou, O Lord, knowest me. Probably, the wicked men he complains of were forward to reproach and censure him, (ch. xviii. 18.) in reference to which, this was his comfort, that God was a Witness of his integrity. God knew he was not such a one as they were, who had God near in their mouths, but far from their reins; nor such a one as they took to be, and represented him, a deceiver and false prophet; they that thus abused him did not know him; (1 Cor. ii. 8.) "But thou, O Lord, knowest me, though they think me not worth their notice." 1. Observe what the matter is, concerning which he appeals to God, Thou knowest my heart toward thee. Note, We are as our hearts are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are, or are not, toward God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. 2. The cognizance to which he appeals; "Thou knowest me better than I know myself, not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me, not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried me;" God's knowledge of us is as clear and exact and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our hearts are toward him. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.

IV. He prays that God would turn his hand against these wicked people, and not suffer them to prosper always, though by our hearts we are, and our hearts are good or bad, according as they are, or are not, toward God; and this is that therefore concerning which we should examine ourselves, that we may approve ourselves to God. 2. The cognizance to which he appeals; "Thou knowest me better than I know myself, not by hearsay or report, for thou hast seen me, not with a transient glance, but thou hast tried me;" God's knowledge of us is as clear and exact and certain, as if he had made the most strict scrutiny. Note, The God with whom we have to do, perfectly knows how our hearts are toward him. He knows both the guile of the hypocrite, and the sincerity of the upright.
I would be pulled out of their land, because they had brought ruin upon the land, and the longer they continued in it, the more they were planted, and the more the judgment was increased upon them; (v. 4.) "How long shall the land mourn (as it does under the judgments of God inflicted upon it) for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? Lord, shall they prosper themselves, that ruin all about them?" 1 See here what the judgment was, which the land was now groaning under; The herbs of every field wither, the grass is burnt up, and all the princes of the children of Israel, the priests and the kings, the nobles, and the great men, the princes of Jerusalem, and the people, whose wickedness was their great misfortune; now, why was it that this fruitful land was turned into barrenness, but for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? Ps. c.iii. 34. Therefore the prophet prays that these wicked people might die for their own sin, and that the whole nation might not suffer for it. 2 See here what was the language of their wickedness. They said, He shall not see therein, (as the prophet foretold, there should be shook, as great an earthquake, as any before,) The roof of hypocrisy; therefore God is far from their reins, though near in their mouth, because they say, How doth God know? Ps. lxviii. 11. Job xxiii. 13. He knows not what way we take, nor what it will end in. Or, Jeremiah shall not see our last end; whatever he pretends, when he asks us what shall be in the end hereof, he cannot himself foresee it. They thought they had him as a false prophet. Or, "Whatever it is, he shall not live to see it, for we will be the death of him," ch. xi. 21. Note, (1.) Men's setting their latter end at a great distance, or looking upon it as uncertain, is at the bottom of all their wickedness, Lam. i. 9. (2.) The whole creation groans under the burden of the sin of man, Rom. viii. 22. It is for this, that the earth mourns; (so it may be read,) cursed be the ground for thy sake.

V. He acquaints us with the answer God gave to those complaints of his, v. 5, 6. We often find the prophets admonished, whose business it was to admonish others, as Isa. viii. 11. Ministers have lessons to learn, as well as lessons to teach, and must themselves hear God's voice, and preach to themselves. Jeremiah complained much of the wicked dealing of them, and that notwithstanding, that, notwithstanding, they prospered. Now this seems to be an answer to that complaint. 1. It is allowed that he had cause to complain; (v. 6.) "Thy brethren, the priests of Anathoth, that are of the house of thy father, who ought to have protected thee, and pretended to do so, even they have dealt treacherously with thee, have been false to thee, have done thee mischief they could; they have called a multitude after thee, raised the mob upon thee, and incensed the common people against thee, to whom they have endeavoured, by all arts possible, to render thee despicable or odious, while at the same time they pretend that they had no design to persecute thee, or deprive thee of tliy property, out of their own consciences believe, though they speak fair words to thee. They seem to be thy friends, but are really thine enemies." Note, God's faithful servants must not think it at all strange, if their foes be those of their own house, (Matth. x. 36.) and if those they expect kindness from, prove such as they can put no confidence in, Mic. vii. 5. 2. Yet he is told that he carried the matter too far. (1.) He laid the unkindness of his countrymen too much to heart. They weared him, because it was in a land of peace wherein he trusted, v. 5. It was very grievous to him to be thus hated and abused by his own kindred. He was now raised upon high, his spirit was sunk and overwhelmed with it, so that he was in great agitation and distress about it. Nay, he was discouraged in his work by it, begun to be weary of prophesying, and to think of giving it up. (2.) He did not consider that this was but the beginning of his sorrow, and that he had sorcerer trials yet before him; and whereas he should endeavour by a constant bearing his cross a little, to get himself farther for greater, by his unseasonableness under this he did but unfit himself for what further lay before him: If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, and run thee quite out of breath, then how wilt thou contend with horses? If the injuries done him by the men of Anathoth made such an impression upon him, what would he do when the princes and chief priests at Jerusalem should set upon him with their power, as they did afterward, ch. xx. xxxiii. 2. If he was so soon tired in a land of peace, where there was little noise or peril, what would he do in the swellings of Jordan, when that overflows all its banks, and frets and burns out of its thickets? ch. xlix. 19. Note, (1.) While we are in this world, we must expect troubles and difficulties, and the greater the victors, the more the danger of being run down. (2.) God's usual method being to begin with lesser trials, it is our wisdom to expect greater than any we have yet met with. We may be called out to contend with horsemen, and the sons of Anak may perhaps be reserved for the last encounter. (3.) It highly concerns us to prepare for such trials, and to consider what we should do in them. How shall we preserve our integrity and peace, when we come to the swellings of Jordan? (4.) In order to our preparation for greater and further trials, we are concerned to approve ourselves well in present lesser trials, to keep up our spirits, keep hold of the promise, keep our way, with our eye upon the prize, so run that we may obtain it. Some good interpreters understand this as spoken to the people, who were very secure, and fearless of the threatened judgments. If they have been so humbled and impoverished by lesser calamities, wasted by the Assyrians; if the Ammonites and Moabites, who were their brethren, and with whom they were in league, if these proved false to them, (as undoubtedly they would,) then how would they be able to deal with such a powerful adversary as the Chaldeans? One would think, when they would bear up their head against that invasion which should come like the swellings of Jordan?

7. I have forsaken my house, I have left my heritage; I have given the dearly-beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. 8. My heritage is unto me as a lion in the forest; it crieth out against me: therefore have I hated it. 9. My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her; come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour. 10. Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. 11. They have made it desolate, and being desolate it mourned unto me; the whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart. 12. The spoilers are come upon all high places
JEREMIAH, XII.

through the wilderness: for the sword of the Lord shall devour from the one end of the land even to the other end of the land: no flesh shall have peace. 13. They have sown wheat, but shall reap thorns; they have put themselves to pain, but shall not profit; and they shall be ashamed of your revenues, because of the fierce anger of the Lord.

The people of the Jews are here marked for ruin. 1. God is here brought in, falling out with them, and leaving them desolate; and they could never have been under them, had not God provoked toexecute. It is a terrible thing, as the Prophet here says, (v. 7.) I have forsaken my house, the temple, which had been his palace, they had polluted it, and so forced him out of it: I have left mine heritage, and will look after it no more; his people that he has taken such delight in, and care of, are now thrown out of his protection. They had been the dearly beloved of his soul, precious in his sight, and he had been; but now, was forsaken, and appointed to aggravate their sin, in returning him hatred for his love, and their misery, in throwing themselves out of the favour of one that had such a kindness for them, and to justify God in his dealings with them: he sought not occasion against them, but if they would have conducted themselves tolerably, he would have made the best of them, for they were the dear children of his soul; but they had conducted themselves so that they had provoked him to give them into the hand of their enemies, to leave them unguarded, an easy prey to those that bore them ill will. But what was the quarrel God had with a people that had been so long dear to him? Why, truly, they were degenerated. 1. They were become like beasts of prey, which nobody loves, but every hand avails and gets as far off from as possible: (v. 8.) Mine heritage is unto me a lion in the forest. Their sins cry to heaven for vengeance as loud as a lion roars. Nay, they cry out against God in the threatenings and slaughter which they breathe against his prophets that speak to them in his name: and what is said and done against them, God takes as said and done against himself. They blaspheme his name, oppose his authority, and bid defiance to his justice, and so cry out against him, as a lion in the forest. They that were the sheep of God's pasture, are become barbarous and ravenous, and as un Governable as lions in the forest, therefore I hated them: for what delight could the God of love take in a people that were now become as roaring lions and raging beasts, fit to be taken and shot at, as a vexation and torment to all about them? 2. They were become like birds of prey, and therefore are worthy a place in God's house, where neither beasts nor birds of prey were admitted to be offered in sacrifice; (v. 9.) Mine heritage is unto me as a bird with talons; (so some read it, and so the margin:) they are continually pulling and pecking at one another, they have by their unnatural contumies made their country a cock-pit. Or, as a speckled bird, dide, or crippled, or old and weak, with the bill of her prey; the shining of intense blood was Judas's measure-filling sin, and bastained their ruin, not only as it provoked God against them, but as it provoked their neighbours likewise; for those that have their hand against every man, shall have every man's hand against them; (Gen. xvi. 12.) and so it follows here, the birds round about which are against him. Some make her a speckled, bird, or motley bird, upon the account of their mixing the superstitious customs and usages of the heathen with divine institutions in the worship of God; they were fond of a party-coloured religion, and thought it made them fine, when really it made them odious. God's turtle-dove is no speckled bird. 11. The enemies are here brought in falling upon them, and laying them desolate. And some think it is upon this account that they are compared to a speckled bird, because fowls make a noise about a bird of an odd, unusual colour. God's people are among the birds of the field, the beast of the field, the fowl of heaven, but very much greater was the misery of Judah and Jerusalem, that the desolation brought upon them was by order from heaven. The birds and beasts are perhaps called to feast upon the bodies of the slain, as in St. John's vision, Rev. xix. 17.

The utter desolation of the land by the Chaldean army is here spoken of as a thing done; so sure, so near, the unwatching, unfeared desolation which God had appointed to be done, and yet which he had no pleasure in, any more than in the death of other sinners. 1. See with what a tender affection he speaks of this land, notwithstanding the sinfulness of it, in remembrance of his covenant, and the tribute of honour and glory he had formerly had from it; it is his vineyard, my portion, my pleasant possession. 10. Note, God has a kindness and concern for his church, though there be much amiss in it; and his correcting of it will every way consist with his com placency in it.

2. See with what a tender compassion he speaks of the desolations of this land; Many pastors, the Chaldean generals that made themselves masters of the country, and ate up with their armies as easily as the Arabian shepherds with their flocks eat up the fragments of a piece of ground that lies common; they have destroyed my vineyard, without any consideration had either of the value of it, or of my interest in it; they have with the greatest insolence and indignation trodden it under foot; and that which was a pleasant land they have made a desolate wilderness. The destruction was universal: The whole land was made desolate; (v. 11.) It is made so by the sword of war; the spoilers, the Chaldean soldiers, are come through the plain upon all high places; they have made themselves masters of all the natural fastnesses and artificial fortresses, v. 12. The sword devours from one end of the land to the other; all places he exposed, and the numerous army of the invaders disperse themselves into every corner of that fruitful country, so that no flesh shall have peace, none shall be exempt from the calamity, nor be able to enjoy any tranquillity. When all flesh have corrupted their way, no flesh shall have peace; those only have peace, that walk after the Spirit.

3. See whence all this misery comes. (1.) It comes from the displeasure of God. It is the sword of the Lord that devours from one end of the land to the other; All the Lord, who keep close to him, the sword of their protectors and deliverers is the sword of the Lord, witness that of Gideon; but when they have forsaken him, so that he is become their Enemy, and fights against them, then the sword of their invaders and destroyers is become the sword of the Lord; witness this of the Chaldeans. It is because of the fierce anger of the Lord, which kindled this fire among them, and made their enemies so furious. And who may stand before him, when he is angry? (2.) It is their sin that has
made God their Enemy, particularly their incorrigible ones under former rebukes; (v. 11.) The land mourns unto me, the country that lies desolate does, as it were, pour out its complaint before God, and hems itself under its hand; but the inhabitants are so senseless and stupid, that none of them lays it to heart; they do not mourn to God, but are unaffected with his displeasure, while they get ground that their sin is not their own. Note, When God's hand is lifted up, and men will not see, it shall be laid on, and they shall be made to feel, Isa. xxxvi. 11.

4. See how unble they should be to fence against it; (v. 13.) "They have sown wheat, they have taken a deal of pains for their own security, and promised themselves great matters from their endeavours, but it is all in vain; they shall reap thorns, that which shall prove very grievous and vexatious to them; instead of helping themselves, they shall but make themselves more uneasy: they have put themselves to pain, both with their labour, and with their expectations, but it shall not profit; they shall not prevail to extricate themselves out of the difficulties into which they have plunged themselves. They shall be ashamed of your revenues, that they have devoted to their own purposes, and have made preparations for war, and particularly upon their ability to bear the charges of it." Money is the sinsews of war; they thought they had enough of that, but shall be ashamed of it; for their silver and gold shall not profit them in the day of the Lord's anger.

14. Thus saith the Lord against all mine evil neighbours, that touch the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit; Behold, I will pluck them out of their land, and pluck out the house of Judah from among them. 15. And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out, I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land. 16. And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, The Lord liveth; (as they taught my people to swear by Baal;) then shall they be built in the midst of the land. 17. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the Lord.

The prophets sometimes, in God's name, delivered messages both of judgment and mercy to the nations that bordered on the land of Israel; but here is a message to them all in general, who had in their turns been one way or other injurious to God's people, had either oppressed them, or triumphed in their being oppressed. Observe,

1. What the quarrel was that God had with them. They were his evil neighbours, v. 14. evil neighbours to his church, and what they did against it he took as done against himself, and therefore called them his evil neighbours, that should have been neighbourly to Israel, but were quite otherwise. Note. It is often the lot of good people to live among bad neighbours, that are unkind and provoking to them; and it is bad indeed when they are all so. These evil neighbours were the Moabites, Ammonites, Sodomites, Egyptians, that had been evil neighbours to Israel in helping to devil them, and draw them from God; therefore God calls them his evil neighbours, and now they helped to make them desolate, and joined with the Chaldeans against them. It is just with God to make those the instruments of trouble to us, whom we have made instruments of sin. That which God lays to their charge, is, that they have meddled with the inheritance which I have caused my people Israel to inherit, they unjustly seized that which was none of their own: nor, they sacrilegiously turned that to their own use, which was designed to be the peculiar people. He says, Touch not my inheritance; it is at your peril if you do. Not only the persons, but the estates, of God's people are under his protection.

11. What course he would take with them. 1. He would break the power they had got over his people, and force them to make restitution; I will pluck out the house of Judah from among them, and cause it to be a great favour to God's people, who had either been taken captive by them, or, when they fled to them for shelter, had been detained and made prisoners; but it would be a great mortification to their enemies, who would be like a lion disappointed of his prey. The house of Judah either cannot, or will not, make any bold struggles toward the revenge of their injuries against God's people. The Lord will pluck them out, will by his Spirit compel them to come out, and by his power compel their taskmasters to let them go, as he plucked Israel out of Egypt. 2. He would bring upon them the same calamities that they had been instrumental to bring upon his people; I will pluck them out of their land. Judgment began at the house of God, which they did not love there. He had wasted the land of Israel, turned his hand against their evil neighbours, and was a scourge to them.

111. What mercy God had in store for such of them as would join themselves to him, and become his people, v. 15, 16. They had drawn in God's backsliding people to join them in the service of idols; and now they would lie drawn by a returning people to join with them in the service of the true and living God, they should not only have their enmity to the people of God forgiven them, but the distance which they had been kept at before should be removed, and they should be received to stand upon the same level with the Israel of God; this had its accomplishment in part, when, after the return of captivity, many of the people of the lands that had been evil neighbours to Israel, became Jews; and was to have its full accomplishment in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. Let not Israel, though injured by them, be incapable toward them, for God is not; After that I have plucked them out in justice for their sins, and injealou sy for the honour of Israel, I will return, will change my way, and have compassion on them. Though, being heathen, they can lay no claim to the mercies of the covenant, yet they shall have benefit by the compassions of the Creator, who will notwithstanding look upon them as the work of his hands. Note, God's controversies with his creatures, though they cannot be disputed, may be accommodated. Those who (as these here) have not only strangers, but enemies in their minds, by wicked works, may be reconciled. Observe here,

1. What were the terms on which God would show favour to them. It was always provided, that they will diligently learn the ways of my people. That is, in general, the ways that they walk in, when they believe, as my people, not the wicked ways into which they have turned aside, the ways which my people are directed to take. Note, (1.) There are good ways that are peculiarly the ways of God's people, which, however they may differ in the choice of their paths, they are all agreed to
walk in. The ways of holiness and heavenly-mindedness, of love and peaceableness, the ways of prayer and sabbath-sanctification, and diligent attendance on instituted ordinances—these, and the like, are the ways of God's people. (2.) Those that would have their lot with God's people, and their last end and bliss, must learn these ways, and walk in them; must observe the rule they walk by, and conform to that rule, and the steps they take by that rule, and go forth by those footsteps. By an intimate conversation with God's people they must learn to do as they do. (3.) It is impossible to learn the ways of God's people as they should be learned, without a great deal of care and pains; we must diligently observe these ways, and diligently go ourselves in them; look diligently, (Heb. xii. 15.) and work diligently, Luke xiii. 24.

In particular, they must learn to give honour to God's name, by making all their solemn appeals to him. They must learn to say, The Lord liveth, to own him, and to adore him, and to abide by his judgment; as they taught my people to swear by Baal. It was bad enough that they did themselves swear by other names; they taught others, and worst of all that they taught God's own people, who had been better taught: and yet, if they will at length reform, they shall be accepted. Observe, [1.] We must not despair of the conversion of the worst; no, not of those who have been instrumental to pervert and debauch others; even they may be brought to repentance, and, if they be shall be accepted. [2.] Those whom we have been industrious to draw to that which is evil, when God opens their eyes and ears, we should be as industrious to follow in that which is good. It will be a holy revenge upon ourselves to become pupils to those in the way of duty, to whom we have been tutors in the way of sin. [3.] The conversion of the deceived may prove a happy occasion of the conversion of the deceivers. Thus they who fell together into the ditch, are sometimes plucked together out of it.

2. What should be the tokens and fruits of this favour, when they return to God, and God to them. (1.) They shall be restored to, and re-established in, their own land; (v. 15.) I bring them again, every man to his heritage. The same hand that plucked them up, shall plant them again. (2.) They shall have been delivered to the spiritual privileges of God's Israel; if they will be towrdily, and learn the ways of my people, will conform themselves to the rules, and confine themselves to the restraints, of my family, then shall they be built in the midst of my people. They shall not only be brought among them, to have a name and a place in the house of the Lord, where there was a court for Gentiles, but they shall be built among them, they shall unite with them, the former enmities shall be slain, they shall be both edified and settled among them. See Isa. lxi. 5.—7. Note, They that diligently learn the ways of God's people, shall enjoy the privileges and comforts of his people.

IV. What should become of those that were still weekly to their own evil ways, yea though of these evidences, but they are the Lord: (v. 17.) If they will not obey, if any of them continue to stand out, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, that family, that particular person, saith the Lord. Those that will not be ruled by the grace of God, shall be ruined by the justice of God. And disobedient nations shall be destroyed, much more disobedient churches, from whom better things are expected.

CHAP. XIII.

The prophet is attempting to awaken this sordid and stubborn people to repentance, by the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them.

1. Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and get thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, and put it not in water. 2. So I got a girdle, according to the word of the Lord, and put it on my loins. 3. And the word of the Lord came unto me the second time, saying, Take the girdle that thou hast got, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and hide it there in a hole of the rock. 5. So I went, and hid it by Euphrates, as the Lord commanded me. 6. And it came to pass after many days, that the Lord said unto me, Arise, go to Euphrates, and take the girdle from thence, which I commanded thee to hide there.

7. Then I went to Euphrates, and digged, and took the girdle from the place where I had hid it; and, behold, the girdle was marred, it was profitable for nothing. 9. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, After this manner will I mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. 10. This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing. 11. For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel, and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

Here is,

1. A sign, the marrying of a girdle which the prophet had worn for some time, by hiding it in a hole of a rock, near the river Euphrates. It was usual with the prophets to teach by signs, that a stupid, unthinking people might be brought to consider and believe, and be affected with what was thus set before them. 1. He was to wear a linen girdle for some time, v. 1, 2. Some think he wore it under his clothes, because it was linen, and it is said to cleave to his loins, v. 11. It should rather seem to be worn upon his clothes, for it was worn for a name and a praise, and probably was a fine sash, such as officers wear, and such as are commonly worn at this day in the eastern nations. He must not put it in water, but wear it as it was, that it might be the stronger, and less likely to rot linen wastes almost as much as with washing as with wearing. Being wet, it was the more stiff, and less apt to ply; yet he must make a shift to wear it. Probably, it was very fine linen, which will wear long without washing. The prophet, like John Baptist, was none of those that were soft clothing.
and therefore it would be the more strange to see him with a linen girdle on, who probably used to wear a leathern one. 2. After he had worn this linen girdle for some time, he must go and hide it in a hole of a rock, (v. 4.) by the water's side, where, when the water was high, it would be wet, and when it fell, would grow dry again, and by that means would serve not, so as not to be taken at all. 3. After many days, he must look for it, and he should find it quite spoiled, gone all to rags, and good for nothing, v. 7. It has been of old a question among interpreters, whether this was really done, so as to be seen and observed by the people, or only in a dream or vision, so as to go no farther than the prophet's own mind. It seems hard to imagine, that the prophet should be sentenced to take two long journeys as to the river Euphrates, each of which would take him up some weeks time, when he could so ill be spared at home; for that reason, most incline to think the journey, at least, was only in vision, like that of Ezekiel, from the captivity in Chaldea to Jerusalem, (Ezek. viii. 3.) and from thence back to Chaldea, ch. xi. 24. The explanation of this sign is given only to the prophet himself, (v. 8.) not to the people, the sign not being public. But there being, it is probable, at that time, great conjunctions of travelling between Jersalem and Babylon, and some part of Euphrates being not so far off, but that it was the utmost wonder of the kind of promise, (Josh. i. 4.) I see no inconvenience in supposing the prophet to have made such journeys, and that they were very frequent, for he did as the Lord commanded him: and thus gave a signal proof of his obsequiousness to his God, to shame the stubbornness of a disobedient people; the toil of his journey would be very proper to signify both the pains they took to corrupt themselves with their idolatries, and the sad fatigue of their captivity; and Euphrates being the river of Babylon, to which Jews were the place of their bondage, was a particular circumstance in this sign.

II. The thing signified by this sign. The prophet was willing to be at any cost and pains to affect this people with the word of the Lord: ministers must spend, and be spent, for the good of souls. We have the explanation of this sign, v. 9.—11.

1. The people of Israel had been to God as this girdle, in two respects. (1.) He had given them the girdle of his own by sending them a king himself; As the girdle cleaves very close to the loins of a man, and surrounds it, so have I caused to cleave to me the houses of Israel and Judah. They were a people near to God; (Ps. exlviii. 14.) they were his own, a peculiar people to him, a kingdom of priests that had access to him above other nations. He caused them to cleave to him by the law he gave them, the prophets he sent among them, and the favours which in his providence he showed them. He required their stated attendance in the courts of his house, and the frequent ratification of their covenant with him by sacrifices: thus they were made so to cleave to him, that one would think they could never have parted. (2.) He had herein designed his own honour: when he took the time to him for a people, it was that they might be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory; as a girdle is an ornament to a man, and particularly the curious girdle of the ephod was to the High Priest for glory and for beauty. Note, Those whom God takes to be to him for a people, he intends to be to him for a name, and for a praise. [1.] It is their duty to honour him by observing his institution, and inwardly therein his glory, and thus adorning their profession. [2.] It is their happiness that he reckons himself honoured in them and by them. He is pleased with them, and glories in his relation to them, while they behaved themselves as becomes his people. He was pleased to take it among the titles of his honour to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, 1 Chron. xxvii. 24. In vain do we pretend to be to God for a people, if we be not to him for a praise.

2. They had by their idolatries and other iniquities besieged themselves from him, thrust themselves into distant places in the land, buried themselves in the earth, and foreign earth too, mingled themselves among the nations, and were so spoiled and corrupted, that they were good for nothing; they could no more be to God, as they were designed, for a name and a praise, for they would not hear either their duty to do it, or their privilege to value it; They refused to hear the voice of the Lord, their prophets have been kept still cleaving close to him; They walked in the imagination of their heart, wherever their fancy led them; and denied themselves no gratification they had a mind to, particularly in their worship; They would not cleave to God, but walked after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them; they detested upon the gods of the heathen nations that lay towards Euphrates, so that they were quite spoiled for the service of their own God, and were as this girdle, this rotten girdle, a disgrace to their profession, and not an ornament. A thousand pities it was, that such a girdle should be so spoiled, that such a people should be so wretchedly degenerate.

3. God would by his judgments separate them from him, send them into captivity, detach all their mind in their own glory, and to their own excellency, so as it should be like a fine girdle gone to rags, a worthless, useless, despicable people. God will after this manner mar the pride of Judah, and the great pride of Jerusalem. He would strip them of all that which was the matter of their pride, of which they boasted, and in which they trusted; it should not only be sullied and stained, but quite destroyed, like this fine girdle. He speaks of the pride of Judah; the country people were proud of their holy land, their good land, but it is the great pride of Jerusalem, there the temple was, and the royal palace, and therefore those citizens were more proud than the inhabitants of other cities. God takes notice of the degrees of men's pride, the pride of some, and the great pride of others; and he will mar it, he will mar the pride of Judah. He will have a fall, for God resists the proud. He will either mar the pride that is in us, that is, mortify it by his grace, make us ashamed of it, and, like Hezekiah, humble us for the pride of our hearts, the great pride, and cure us of it, great as it is; (and this marring of the pride will be the making of the soul; happy for us, if by humiliating providences our hearts be humbled;) or else, he will mar the thing we are proud of. Parts, gifts, learning, power, external privileges if we are proud of these, it is just with God to blast them; even the temple, when it became Jerusalem's pride, was marred and laid in ashes. It is the honour of God to look upon every one that is proud, and abase him.

12. Therefore thou shalt speak unto them this word, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine; and they shall say unto thee, Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? 13. Then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, with drunkenness. 14. And I will dash them one against another,
even the fathers and the sons together, saith the Lord; I will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy them. 15. Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. 16. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. 17. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive. 18. Say unto the king and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down; for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory. 19. The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them; Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried captive. 20. Lift up your eyes, and behold them that come from the north; where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock? 21. What will thou say when he shall punish thee? (for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee;) shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail?

Here is,

1. A judgment threatened against this people, that would quite intoxicate them. This doom is pronounced against them in a figure, to make it the more taken notice of, and the more affecting. (v. 12.) Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Every bottle shall be filled with wine; those that by their sins have made themselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, shall be filled with the wrath of God, as a bottle is with wine, and as eyes with tears. Mercy expected for glory shall be filled with mercy and glory, so they shall be full of the fury of the Lord, (Isa. li. 20.) and they shall be brittle as bottles; and as old bottles into which new wine is put, they shall burst and be broken to pieces; (Matt. ix. 17.) or, They shall have their heads as full of wine as bottles are; for so it is explained, v. 13. They shall be filled with drunkenness; (as compare Isa. ii. 17.) It is probable that this was a common proverb among them, applied divers ways; but they, not being aware of the prophet's meaning in it, ridiculed him for it: Do we not certainly know that every bottle shall be filled with wine? What strange thing is there in that? Tell us something that we did not know before. Perhaps they were thus touchy with the prophet, because they thought him so bold as to be a reflection upon them for their drunkenness and probably, it was in part so intended. They love flagons of wine, Hos. iii. 1. They made their king sick with bottles of wine, Hos. vii. 5. Their watchmen were all for wine, Isa. liv. 15. They love their false prophets, that prophesied to them of wine, (Mic. ii. 11.) that bid them be merry; for that they should never want their bottle to make them so. "Well," says the prophet, "you shall have your bottles full of wine, but not such wine as you desire." They suspected that he had some mystical meaning in it, which prophesied no good concerning them, but evil; and he owns that so he had. What he meant was this,

1. That they should be as giddy as men in drink. A drunken man is fitly compared to a bottle or cask full of wine; for when the wine is in, the wit, and wisdom, and virtue, and all that is good for any thing, are out. Now God threatens, (v. 13.) that they shall all be filled with drunkenness; they shall be as full of confusion in their counsels, shall flatter in all their talk, and stagger in all their motions; they shall not know what they say or do, much less what they should say or do. They shall be sick of all their enjoyments, and throw them up as drunken men do, Job xx. 15. They shall fall into a slumber, and be utterly unable to help themselves, and, like men that have drunk away their reason, shall lie at the mercy, and subject themselves to the designs of all about them. And this shall be the condition not of some among them; (if any had been sober, they might have helped the rest;) but even the kings that sit upon the throne of David, that should have been like their father David, who was wise as an angel of God, shall be thus intoxicated. Their priests and prophets too, their false prophets, that pretended to guide them, were as indulgent of their lusts, and therefore were just as much deprived of their senses, as any other. Nay, and all the inhabitants both of the land and of Jerusalem were as far gone as they. Whom God will destroy, he infatuates.

2. That, being giddy, they should run upon one another. The cup of the wine of the Lord's fury shall throw them not only into a lethargy, so that they shall not be able to help themselves one another, but into a perfect frenzy, so that they shall do mischief to themselves and one another; (v. 14.) I will dash a man against his brother. Not only their drunken follies, but their drunken fray, shall help to ruin them. Drunken men are often quarrelsome, and upon that account they have wine and sorrow; (Prov. xxii. 29, 30.) so their sin is their punishment; for it was so here. God sent an angel of his spirit into families and neighbourhoods, (as Judg. ix. 23.) which made them jealous of, and spiteful towards, one another; so that the fathers and sons went together by the ears, and were ready to pull one another to pieces, which made them all an easy prey to the common enemy. This decree against them being gone forth, God says, I will not pity, (v. 15.) I will not spare, I will destroy them; for they will not pity, nor spare, nor have mercy, but destroy one another; see Hab. ii. 15, 16.

II. Here is good counsel given, which, by being taken, might prevent this desolation. It is, in short, to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. If they will hearken and give ear, this is that which God has to say to them, Be not proud, v. 15. This was one of the sins for which God had a controversy with them; (v. 9.) let them mortify and forsake this sin, and God will let fall his controversy. Be not proud; when God speaks to you by his prophets, do not think yourselves too good to be taught; be not scornful, be not willful, let not your hearts rise against the word, nor slight the messengers that bring it you. When God is coming forth against us, he will not speak without an answer; (as he speaks,) be not secure when he threatens, be not impatient when he strikes, for pride is at the bottom of both. It is the great God that has spoken, whose authority is incontestable, whose power is irresistible; therefore bow to what he says, and be not proud, as you have been.

They must not be proud, for they must confess God and study how to do him honour; "Give glory to the Lord your God, and not to your idols, nor to other gods. Give him glory, by confessing your sins, owning yourselves guilty before him, and accepting the punishment of your iniquity, v. 16. Give him glory by a sincere repentance and reformation." Then, and not till
then, we begin to live as we should, and to some
good purpose, when we begin to give glory to the
Lord our God; to make his honour your chief end,
and to seek it accordingly. "Do this quickly, while
your space to repent is continued to you; before he
cause darkness, before he bring his judgments upon
you, which you will see no way of escaping." Note,
Darkness and calamity are the effects of sin, and
receive glory to God. When those that by
the fourth vial were scorched with heat, requisite
not, to give glory to God, the next vial filled them
with darkness, Rev. xvi. 9, 10. The aggravation
of the darkness here threatened, is, (1.) That their
attempts to escape shall hasten their ruin; Their
foot shall stumble when they are making all the
haste they can to the end, the devil and God shall
shall, and be unable to get up again. Note,
Those that think to outrun the judgment of God, will
find their road impassable; let them make the best
of their way, they can make nothing of it, the judg-
ments that pursue them will overtake them; their
way is dark and shifty, Ps. xxxvi. 6. And there-
fore, before it comes to that extremity, it is our wis-
dom to give glory to him, and so make our peace
with him; to fly to his mercy, and then there will
be no occasion to fly from his justice. (2.) That
their hopes of a better state of things will be disapp-
inted; While ye look for light, for comfort and
relief, he will turn it into the shadow of death,
which is very dismal and terrible, and make it gross
darkness, like that of Egypt, when Pharaoh con-
tinued to flee from his God. Let us hate that,
so that might be felt. The expectation of impenitent
sinners perishes, when they die, and think to have
it satisfied.
2. They must abuse themselves, and take shame
to themselves; the prerogative of the king and queen
will not exempt them from this; (v. 18.) "Say to
the king and queen, that, great as they are, they
must humble themselves by true repentance, and so
give both glory to God and a good example to their
subjects." Note, Those that are exalted above
others in the world, must humble themselves be-
fore God, who is higher than the highest, and to
whom kings and queens are accountable. They
must humble themselves, and sit down; sit down,
and consider what is coming; sit down in the dust,
and lament; let God have his own way. God will
otherwise take an effectual course to humble them.
"Your principalities shall come down," the honour
and power on which you value yourselves, and in which you confide, even the
 crown of your glory, your goodly or glorious
crown; when you are led away captives, where will
your principality and all the badges of it be then?
Blessed be God, there is a crown of glory, which
they shall inherit who do humble themselves, that
shall never come down.
III. This counsel is enforced by some arguments,
if they continue proud and unhumbled.
1. It will be the prophet's unspeakable grief; (v.
15.) "If you will not hear it, will not submit to the
word, but continue refractory, not only mine eye,
but my soul, shall see you in secret places." Note,
The obstinacy of people, in refusing to hear the
word of God, will be a heart-breaking to their
poor ministers, who know something of the terrors
of the Lord and the worth of souls, and are so far
from desiring, that they tremble at, the thoughts
of the death of sinners. "His grief for it was undis-
sembled, his soul wept;" and void of affectation, for
he saw his masters in secret places, where no eye saw
him but his who is all eye. He would mingle his
tears not only with his public preaching, but with
his private devotions. Now, thoughts of their case
would make him melancholy, and he would become a
perfect reclus. It would grieve him, (1.) To see
their sins unrepent of: "My soul shall weep for
your pride, your haughtiness, and stubbornness,
and vain confidence." Note, The sins of others should
be matter of sorrow to us. We must mourn for that
which we cannot understand, and mourn the more for it,
because we cannot mend it. (2.) To see their ca-
mutiny past redress and remedy; "Mine eyes shall
shed tears, they shall flow not in number; so much
not so much as in my relations, friends, and
near neighbours, are in it." Note, We see, that the
Lord's flock, his people, and the sheep of his pæ-
ture, are carried away captive." That should al-
ways grieve us most, by which God's honour suf-
ers, and the interest of his kingdom is weakened.
2. It will be their own inevitable ruin, v. 19. — 21.
(1.) The land shall be laid waste; The cities of
the south shall be laid waste. The cities of Judah lay
in the southern part of the land of Canaan. It shall
be woe to the inhabitants, that shall be none to go in
and out. Some understand it of the cities of Egypt,
which was south from Judah; the places there,
whence they expected succours, shall fail them,
and they shall find no access to them.
(2.) The inhabitants shall be carried away into
a foreign country, there to live in slavery; Judah
shall be carried away captive. Some were already
carried off, which they hoped might serve to an-
swer the prediction, and that the residue should
still be left; no, it shall be carried away all of it;
God will make a full end with them, it shall be
wholly carried away. See it was in the last captivity
under Zedekiah, because they rejected God's coun-
try. (3.) The enemy was now at hand, that should do
this; (v. 20.) "Lift up your eyes, I see them upon
their march, and you may, if you will, behold them
that come from the north, from the land of the
Chaldeans; see how fast they advance, how fierce
they appear." Upon this, he addresses himself to
the king and his court, and tells them, that the
enemy were coming; and that this was in the last captivity
under Zedekiah, because they rejected the God
of their fathers. "What will you do now with the people which is committed to
your charge, and which you ought to protect?
Where is the flock that was given thee, thy beau-
tiful flock? Whither canst thou take them now for
shelter? How can they escape these raving
wolves? Magistrates must look upon themselves
as shepherds, and those that are under their charge
as their flocks, and they shall be their care of, and must give an account of; they must take
delight in them as their beautiful flock, and consi-
der what to do for their safety in times of public
danger. Masters of families, who neglect their
children, and suffer them to perish for want of a
good education, and ministers who neglect their people,
should think, that God hearing putting this question to
them, Where is the flock that was given you? and,
that beautiful flock? It is starved, it is left exposed
to the beasts of prey. What account will they give
of them when the Chief Shepherd shall appear?
(2.)"What have you to object against the equity
of God's proceedings? What will thou say when he
shall visit upon thee the former days? Then canst
not thou say when he shall bring upon thee what
they that flatter them selves say, with hopes of impunity, what will they say! What con-
fusion will cover their faces, when they shall find
themselves deceived, and that God punishes them!
(3.) "What thoughts will you now have of your
own folly, in giving the Chaldeans such power over
you, by seeking to them for assistance, and joining
in league with them? Think it not, but believe that
you are brought against yourselves to be captives, and to become
the head." Hezekiah began, when he showed his trea-sures
to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon,
tempting him thereby to come and plague him.
Those who, having a God to trust in, court foreign
fore am I in affliction? Why doth God contend with me? God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that, sin being discovered, it may be expiated of.

III. An answer to this inquiry. God will be justified when he speaks, and will oblige us to justify him; and therefore will set the sin of sinners in order before them. Do they ask, Wherefore come these things upon us? Let them know, it is all owing to themselves.

1. It is for the greatness of their iniquities, v. 22. God does not take advantage against them for small faults; no, the sins for which he now punishes them are of the first rate, very heinous in their own nature, and highly aggravated; for the multitude of those iniquity; so it may be read. Sins of every kind, and in such a manner that aggravates them, and think we are more in danger from the multitude of our lesser sins than from the heinousness of our greater sins; of both we may say, Who can understand his errors?

2. It is for their obstinacy in sin; their being so long accustomed to it, that there was little hope left of their being reclaimed from it, v. 2. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil. 24. Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. 25. This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from me, saith the Lord; because thou hast forgotten me, and trusted in falsehood. 26. Therefore will I discover thy skirts upon thy face, that thy shame may appear. 27. I have seen thine adulteries, and thy neighings, the lewdness of thy whoredom, and thine abominations on the hills in the fields. Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem! wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?

II. An iniquity made by the people into the cause of this ruin, v. 22. Thou wilt sin in thine heart, (and God knows how to give a proper answer to what men say in their hearts, though they do not speak it out; Jesus knowing their thoughts, replied to them, Matth. ix. 4.) Wherefore came these things upon me? The question is supposed to come into the heart. 1. Of a sinner quarrelling with God, and refusing to receive correction; they could not see that they had done any thing which might justly provoke God to be thus angry with them. They durst not speak it out; but in their hearts they thus charged God with unrighteousness, as if he had laid upon them more than was meet. They seek for the cause of their calamities, when, if they had not been wilfully blind, they might easily have seen it. Or, 2. Of a sinner returning to God. If there come but a penitent thought into the heart at any time, (saying, What have I done? ch. viii. 6. Wherefore am I in affliction? Why doth God contend with me?) God takes notice of it, and is ready by his Spirit to impress the conviction, that, sin being discovered, it may be expiated of.

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4. It is for their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, that sin which is of all other most provoking to the jealous God. Therefore they are exposed to a shameful calamity, (v. 26.) because they have been guilty of a shameful iniquity, and yet are shameless in it; (v. 27.) I have seen thine adulteries, thine inordinate fancy for strange gods, which thou hast been impotent for the gratification of, but even weighed after it; even the lewdness of thy whoredoms, thine impudence and insatiableness in them, thy eager worshipping of idols on the hils in the fields, upon the high places. This is that for which a rod is denounced against thee, O Jerusalem; nay, and many woes.

V. 5. Here is an affectionate expostulation with them, to clear the whole matter. Though it was adjusted next to impossible for them to be brought to do good, (v. 23.) yet, while there is life there is hope, and therefore still be reasons with them, to bring them to repentance, v. 27. 1. He reasons with them concerning the thing itself; Will thou not be made clean? Note, It is the great concern of those who are polluted by sin, to be made clean in repentance and faith, and universal reformation. The reason why sinners are not made clean, is, because they will not be made clean; and herein act most unreasonably. 

"Wilt thou not be made clean? Surely thou wilt at length be persuaded to wash thee, and make thee clean, and be so wise for thyself." 2. Concerning the time of it: When shall it once be? Note, It is an instance of the wonderful grace of God, that he desires the return of sinners, and the change and conversion of sinners, and thinks the time long till they are brought to it; but it is an instance of the wonderful folly of sinners, that they put that off from time to time, which is of such absolute necessity; that, if it be not done some time, they are certainly undone for ever. They do not say that they will never be cleansed, but not yet; they will defer it to a more convenient season, but cannot tell us when it shall once be.

CHAP. XIV.

This chapter was penned upon occasion of a great drought, for want of rain. This judgment began in the latter end of Josiah's reign, but, as it should seem, continued in the beginning of Jehoiakim, for longer judgments are seen to have been of greater coming, if not prevented by repentance. This calamity was mentioned several times before, but here, in this chapter, more fully. Here is, 1. A melancholy description of it, v. 1. 6. A people are found to be dying the death of a calf, and to turn in mercy to their land, v. 7. 9. 11. A severe threatening, that God would proceed in his controversy, because they proceeded in their iniquity, v. 10. 12. The prophet's accusing the people, by laying the blame on their false prophets; and the dung passed both on the deceivers and the deceived, v. 13. 16. V. Direction given to the prophet, instead of interceding for them, to lament them, yet he continued to intercede for them, v. 17. 22.

THE word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought. 2. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. 3. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with the vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. 4. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plougmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. 5. Yea, the hind also calved in the field, and forsook it, because there was no grass. 6. And the wild asses did stand in the high places, they staid upon the wind like dragons; their eyes did fail, because there was no grass. 7. O Lord, though our inequities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee. 8. O the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turnest aside to tarry for a night? 9. Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

The first verse is the title of the whole chapter: it does indeed all concern the drought, but much of it is the prophet's prayers concerning it; yet these are not unholy said to be. The word of the Lord which came to him concerning it; for every acceptable prayer is that which God farts into our hearts; nothing is our word that comes to him, but what is first his word that comes from him. In these verses, we have,

I. The language of nature lamenting the calamity. When the heavens were as brass, and distiled no dew, the earth was as iron, and produced no fruits; and then the grief and confusion were universal.

1. The people of the land were all in tears. Destroy their vines and their fig-trees, and ye cause all their mirth to cease, Hos. ii. 11. 12. All their joy fails with the joy of harvest, with that of their corn and wine, v. 2. Judah mourns, not for the sin, but for the trouble; for the withholding of the rain, not for the withdrawing of God's favour. The gates thereof, all that go in and out at their gates languish, look pale, and grow feeble, for want of the necessary supports of life, and for fear of the further fatal consequences of this judgment. The gates, through which supplies of corn formerly used to be brought into their cities, now look melancholy; when, instead of that, the inhabitants are departing through them to seek for bread in other countries. Even those that sit in the gates languish; they are black unto the ground, they are black as mourning persons, and sit on the ground; as the poor beggars at the gates are black in the face, for want of food, blacker than a coal, Lam. iv. 8. Famine is represented by a black horse, Rev. vi. 5. They fall to the ground through weakness, not being able to go along the streets. The cry of Jerusalem (that is, of the inhabitants) is gone up; for the city is served by the fields; or, of people in all parts of the land, do come to pray at Jerusalem to try met at Jerusalem to pray for rain; so some. But I feared it was rather the cry of their trouble, and the cry of their sin, than the cry of their prayer.

2. The great men of the land felt from this judgment; (v. 3.) The nobles sent their little ones to the water, perhaps their own children, having been forced to part with their servants, because they had not wherewithal to keep them; and being forced to train up their children, when they were little, to labour, especially in a case of necessity, as this was. We find Ahab and Obadiah, the king and the lord chamberlain of his household, in their own persons, seeking for water in such a time of distress as this was, 1 Kings xviii. 5. 6. Or, rather, their maidservants, their servants, and small officers; these they sent to seek for water, which there is no living without; but there was none to be found, they returned.
with their vessels empty, the springs were dried up, when there was no rain to feed them; and then they (their masters that sent them) were ashamed and confounded at their disappointment. They would not be ashamed of their sins, nor confounded at the sense of them, but were unhumbled under the reproaches of the word, thinking their wealth and dignity set them above repentance; but God took a contrary method; he did not despise their pride, but he was so proud of them, when they found that even on this side bell their nobility would not purchase them a draft of water to cool their tongue. Let our reading the account of this calamity make us thankful for the mercy of water, that we may not by the feeling of the calamity be taught to value it. What is most precious is most plentiful.

1. The beast of grace, from the language of grace, felt most sensibly and immediately from it; (v. 4.) The ploughmen were ashamed, for the ground was so parched and hard, that it would not admit the plough, even when it was so chatt and cleft, that it seemed as if it did not need the plough. They were ashamed to be idle, for there was nothing to be done, and therefore nothing to be expected. The sluggard, that will not labour for his victual, is cold blooded folly; but the diligent husbandman, that cannot plough by reason of heat, is ashamed of his own affliction. See what an immediate dependence husbandmen have upon the Divine Providence, which therefore they should always have an eye to, for they cannot plough or sow in hope, unless God water their furrows. Ps. Ixiv. 10.

2. Man's sin brings those judgments upon the earth, which make even the inferior creatures groan; and the prophet takes notice of this as a plea with God for mercy; Judah and Jerusalem have sinned, but the hinds and the wild asses, what have they done? The hinds are pleasant creatures, lovely and loving, and particularly tender of their young; and yet such is the extremity of the case, that, contrary to the instinct of their nature, they leave their young, even when they are newly calved, and most need them, to seek for grass elsewhere; and if they can find none, they abandon them, because not able to suckle them. It grieved not the hind so much, that she had no grass for herself; as that she had none for her young; which will shame those who spend that upon their lusts, which they should provide for their children. The proggy has brought forth her young, is said to have cast forth her sorrows, (Job xxxix. 3.) and yet she continues her cares; but, as it follows there, she soon sees the good effect of them, for her young ones in a little while grew up, and trouble her no more, (v. 4.) But here the great trouble of all is, that she has nothing for them. Nay, one would be sorry even for the wild ass (though they are creatures that have none any great affection for,) for though the barren land is made their dwelling at the best, (Job xxxix. 5, 6.) yet even that is now made too hot for them, so hot, that they cannot breathe in it, but they get to the highest places they can reach, where the air is coolest, and snuff up the wind like dragons, like those creatures which, being very hot, are not able for their condition (though they are creatures and so does their strength, because there is no grass to support them. The same ass, that serves her owner, is welcome to his crib, (Isa. i. 3.) and has her keeping for her labour; when the wild ass that swarmeth the crying of the driver, is forced to live upon air, and is well enough served for not serving: he that will not labour, let him not eat.

3. The people are not forward to pray, but the prophet here prays for them, and so exciteth them to pray for themselves, and puts words into their mouths, which they may make use of, in hopes to speed, v. 7.—9. In this prayer,

1. Sin is humbly confessed. When we come to pray for the preventing or removing of any judgment, we must always acknowledge that we deserve it, and a thousand times worse. We cannot hope by extenuating the crime to obtain a mitigation of the punishment; for the iniquities of the people are iniquities that testifie against us. Our sins are witnesses against us, and true penitents see them to be such. They testify, for they are plain and evident, we cannot deny the charge; they testify against us, for our conviction; which tends to our present shame and confusion, and our future condemnation. They disprove and overthrow all our pleas for ourselves; and not only accuse us, but answer against us. Our boast of our own excellencies, and trust to our own righteousness, our iniquities testify against us, and prove us perverse. If we quarrel with God as dealing unjustly or unkindly with us in afflicting us, our iniquities testify against us, that we do him wrong; for our backslidings are many, and our revolts are great, whereby we have sinned against thee; too numerous for us, for they are many, too numerous to be excused, for they are against thee.

2. Mercy is earnestly begged; "Though our iniquities testify against us, and against the granting of the favour which the necessity of our case calls for, yet do thou it." They do not say particularly what they would have done; but, as becomes penitents and beggars, they refer themselves to God; "Do with us as these; but every thing in thee." Not, do thou it in this way, or at this time, but, "Do thou it for thy name's sake; do that which will be most for the glory of thy name." Note, Our best pleas in prayer are those that are fetched from the glory of God's own name; "Lord, do it, that thy mercy may be magnified, thy promise fulfilled, and thine interest in the world kept up; we have nothing to plead in ourselves, but every thing in thee." There is another petition in this prayer, and it is a very modest one, (v. 9.) "Leave us not, withdraw not thy favour and presence." Note, We should dread and deprecate God's departure from us, more than the removal of any of all our creature-comforts. 3. Their relation to God, their interest in him, and their expectations from him grounded thereupon, are most pathetically pleaded with him, (v. 8, 9.)

1. They look upon him as one they have reason to think should deliver them when they are in distress, yea, though their iniquities testify against them; for in him mercy has often rejoiced against judgment. The prophet, like Moses of old, is willing to make the best he can of the case of his people, and therefore, though he must own that they have sinned many times before, (Exod. xxxii. 31.) yet he pleads, Thou art the Hope of Israel. God has encouraged his people to hope in him; in calling himself so often the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel, and the Holy One of Israel, he has made himself the Hope of Israel. He has given Israel his word to hope in, and caused them to hope in it; and there are those yet in Israel, that make God their hope in, and expect he will be their Saviour in time of trouble, and they look not for salvation in any other; "Thou hast many a time been such, in the time of their extremity." Note, Since God is his people's all-sufficient Saviour, they ought to hope in him, in their greatest straits; and since he is their only Saviour, they ought to place all hope in him; they plead likewise, we are the special tokens of thy presence with us, the temple, thine ark, thine cherubs, and we are called by thy name, the Israel of God; and therefore we have reason to hope thou wilt not leave us; we are
three, save us. Thy name is called upon us, and because what evils we are under reflect dishonour upon thee, as if thou wert not able to relieve thee own." The prophet had often told the people, that their profession of religion would not protect them from the judgments of God; yet here he pleads it with God, as Moses, Exod. xxxii. 11. Even this may go far as to temporal punishments with a God of mercy. Valeat quantum valete foris.—Let the plea of the prophet for his flock be heard.

(23) It therefore grieves them to think that he does not appear for their deliverance; and though they do not charge it upon him as unrighteous, they humbly plead it with him why he should be gracious, for the glory of his own name. For otherwise he will seem, [1.] Unconcerned for his own people; What will the Egypians say? They say, their Hope and Saviour does not mind them, he is become as a stranger in the land, that does not at all interest himself in its interests; his temple, which he called his rest for ever, is no more so, but he is in it as a wayfaring man, that turns aside to tarry but for a night in an inn, which never inquires into the affairs of, nor is in any care about. Though God never is, yet he seems to be, as he was of a man, yet becoming a God, Christ slept when his disciples were in a storm. [2.] Incapable of giving them any relief; the enemies once said, Because the Lord was not able to bring his people to Canaan, he let them perish in the wilderness; (Numb. xiv. 16.) so now they will say, "Either his wisdom or his power fails him; either he is as a man astonished, who, though he has the features of a man, yet being astonished, is quite at a loss and at his wit's end; or, as a mighty man, who is overpowered by such as are more mighty, and therefore cannot save, though mighty, yet a man, and therefore having his power limited." Either of these would be a most insufferable reproach to the divine perfections; and therefore, why is the God that we are sure is in the midst of us become as a stranger? Why does the almighty God seem as if he were no more than a mighty man; who, when he is astonished, though he would, yet cannot save? It becomes us in prayer to show ourselves concerned more for God's glory than for our own comfort: Lord, what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

10. Thus saith the Lord unto this people, Thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet; therefore the Lord doth not accept them: he will now remember their iniquity, and visit their sins. 11. Then said the Lord unto me, Pray not for this people for their good. 12. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt-offering and an oblation, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. 13. Then said I, Ah, Lord God! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place. 14. Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart. 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed. 16. And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem, because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters; for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

The dispute between God and his prophet, in this chapter, seems to be like that between the owner and the dresser of the vineyard concerning the barren fig-tree, Luke xiii. 7. The justice of the owner condemns it to be cut down, the clemency of the dresser intercedes for a reprieve; Jeremiah had been earnest with God, in prayer, to return in mercy to this people. Now here,

1. God overrules the plea which he had offered in their favour, and shows him that it would not hold. In answer to it, he says, Concerning this people, 10. He does not say, Concerning my people, for he owns them, because they had broken covenant with him. It is true, they were called by his name, and had the tokens of his presence among them; but they had sinned, and provoked God to withdraw. This the prophet had owned, and hoped to obtain mercy for them, notwithstanding this, through intercession and sacrifice; therefore God here tells him,

4. That they were not duly qualified for a pardon. The prophet had owned that their backslidings were many; and though they were so, yet there was hopes for them if they returned; but they show no disposition at all to return; they have wandered, and they have loved to wander; their backslidings have been their choice and their pleasure, which should have been their shame and pain, and therefore they will be their ruin. They cannot expect God should take up his rest with them, when they take such delight in going astray from him after their idols. It is not through necessity or inadvertency that they wander, but they love it. Sinners are wanderers from God; their wanderings forfeit God's favour, but it is their loving to wander, that quite cuts them off from it. They were told what their wanderings would come to, what the Lord would have by them in the land, and all to ruin; and yet they have not taken warning, and refrained their feet. So far were they from returning to their God, that neither his prophets nor his judgments could prevail with them to give themselves the least check in a sinful pursuit.

This is that for which God is now reckoning with them; when he denies them rain from heaven, he is remembering their iniquity and visiting their sins; that is it for which their fruitful land is thus turned into barrenness.

2. That they had no reason to expect that the God they had rejected should accept them; no, not though they betook themselves to fasting and prayer, and put themselves to the expense of burnt-offering and an oblation, which was designed to be an expression of faith in a Mediator; though their prayers be thus enforced, and offered up in those vehicles that used to be acceptable, yet, because
they do not proceed from humble, penitent, and renewed hearts, but still they love to wander, therefore I will not hear their cry, be it ever so loud; nor will I accept them, either their persons, or their performances. It had been long since declared, The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; and those only are accepted that do well, Gen. iv. 7. Since then Jeremiah had been in vain to the prophet’s prayers for them, because they had not regarded his preaching to them. This is the meaning of that repeated prohibition given to the prophet, (v. 11.) Pray not thou for this people for their good, as before, ch. xi. 14.—vii. 16. This did not forbid him thus to express his good will to them, (Moses continued to intercede for Israel, after God had declared that he would not go with them, Exod. xxxiii. 11.) but it forbade them to expect any good effect from it, as long as they turned away their ear from hearing the law. Thus was the doom of the inimical ratified, as that of Saul’s rejection was by that word to Samuel, When wilt thou cease to mourn for Saul? It therefore follows, (v. 12.) I will consume them, not only by this famine, but by the further sore judgments of sword and pestilence; for God has thrust them in his quiver, and those that will not be convinced and reclaimed by one, shall be consumed by another.

II. The prophet offers another plea, in excuse for the people’s obstinacy, and it is but an excuse, but he was willing to say whatever their case would bear; it is this, That the prophets, who pretended and conspired in false prophecies, have now flattered them with assurances of peace, that they went on in their sinful way, v. 13. He speaks of it with lamentation, ‘Ah, Lord God, the poor people seem willing to take notice of what comes in thy name, and there are those who in thy name tell them that they shall see the sword or famine; and they say it as from thee, with all the gravity and solemnity of prophets. I will continue upon this place, and will give you assured peace here, peace of truth; I tell them the contrary, but I am one against many, and every one is apt to credit that which makes for them; therefore, Lord, pity and spare them, for their leaders cause them to err.’ This excuse had been of some weight if they had not had warning given them before, of false prophets, and ruin by which to discover them; so that it was not so much deceived, it was entirely their own fault. But this teaches us, as far as we can with truth, to make the best of bad, and judge as charitably of others as their case will bear.

III. God not only overlooks this, but condemns both the blind leaders and the blind followers to fall together into the ditch. 1. God disowns the flatterers; (v. 14.) They prophesy in my name. They had no commission from God to prophesy at all; I neither sent them, nor commanded them, nor spake unto them. They never were employed to go on any errand at all from God, he never made himself known to them, much less by them to the people; never any word of the Lord came to them, no call, no warrant, no instruction, much less did he send them on this errand to rock them asleep in security. No men may flatter themselves, and Satan may flatter them, but God never does. It is a false vision, and a thing of naught. Note, What is false and groundless is vain and worthless. The vision that is not true, be it ever so pleasing, is good for nothing; it is the deceit of their heart, a spider’s web spun out of their own bowels, in it they will shelter themselves, but it will be swept away in a moment, and prove a great cheat. They that oppose their own thoughts to God’s word, (God indeed says so, but they think otherwise,) walk in the deceit of their heart, and it will be their ruin.

2. He passes sentence upon the flatterers; (v. 15.) As for the prophets who put this abuse upon the people, by telling them they shall have peace, and this affiant upon God by telling them so in God’s name; let them know that they shall have no peace themselves. They shall fall first by those very judgments which they have flattered others with the hope of an exemption from. They undertook to warrant people, that sword and famine should not be in the land; but it shall soon appear how little their warrants are good for, when they themselves shall be cut off by sword and famine. How should they secure others, or foretell peace to them, when they cannot secure themselves, nor have such a foresight of their own calamities, as to get out of the way of them. Note, The sorest punishments await those who promise sinners impunity in their sinful ways.

3. He lays the flattered under the same doom, v. 16. The people to whom they prophesy lies, and who willingly suffer themselves to be thus imposed upon, they shall die by sword and famine. Note, The unbelief of the deceived, with all the falsehood of the deceivers, shall not make the divine threatenings of no effect; sword and famine will come, whatever they say to the contrary; and those will be least safe that are most secure. Impenitent sinners will not escape the damnation of hell, by saying that they can never believe there is such a thing; but will feel what they will not fear. It is threatened that this people shall not only fall by sword and famine, but that they shall be hanged up in chains, as monuments of that divine justice which they set at defiance; their bodies shall be cast out, even in the streets of Jerusalem, which of all places, one would think, should be kept clear from such nuisances: there they shall lie unburied; their nearest relations, who should do them that last office of love, being either so poor that they cannot afford it, or were weakened with hunger that they are not able to attend it, or so overwhelmed with grief, that they have no heart to it, or so destitute of natural affection, that they will not pay them so much respect. Thus will God pour their woe to the woe upon them, the punishment of their wickedness; the full vials of God’s wrath shall be poured on them, to which they have made themselves obnoxious. Note, When sinners are overwhelmed with trouble, they must in it see their own wickedness poured upon them. This refers to the wickedness both of the false prophets and of the people; the blind lead the blind, and both fall together into the ditch, where they will be miserable comforters one to another.

17. Therefore thou shalt say this word unto them, Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease; for the virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow. 18. If I go forth into the field, behold the slain with the sword! and if I enter into the city, behold them that are sick with famine! yea, both; the prophet and the priest go about into a land that they know not. 19. Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble! 20
We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against thee. 21. Do not abhor us, for thy name’s sake; do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. 22. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou, O Lord our God: therefore we will wait upon thee; for thou hast made all these things.

The present deplorable state of Judah and Jerusalem is here made the matter of the prophet’s lamentation, (v. 17, 18,) and the occasion of his prayer and intercession for them; (v. 19,) and I am willing to hope that the latter, as well as the former, was by divine direction, and that these words, (v. 17,) Thus shalt thou say unto them, (or concerning them, or in their hearing,) refer to the intercession, as well as to the lamentation, and then it amounts to a revocation of the directions given to the prophet not to pray for them, v. 11. However, it is plain, by the prayers we find in these verses, that the prophet did not understand it as a prohibition, but only as a discouragement, like that, I John v. 16. I do not say he shall pray for that.

Here, 1. The prophet speaks as if he already saw the miseries attending the descent which the Chaldeans made upon them; The virgin daughter of my people, that is as dear to me as a daughter to her father, is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous breach, v. 17. And though they have now returned, he has yet sustained for, (v. 18,) in the field multitudes lie dead that were slain by the sword, and in the city multitudes lie dying for want of food. Doleful spectacles! The prophets and the priests, the false prophets that flattered them with their lies, and the wicked priests that persecuted the true prophets, these are now expelled their country, and go abroad either as priests and captives, whithersoever their conquerors lead them, or as fugitives and vagabonds, wherever they can find shelter and relief. in a land that they know not. Some understand it of the true prophets, Ezekiel and Daniel, that were carried to Babylon with the rest. The prophet’s eyes must run down with tears day and night, in prospect of this, that the people might be convinced, not only that this and all those miseries were sent upon them, but that he was far from desiring it, and would as gladly have brought them messages of peace as their false prophets, if he might have had warrant from heaven to do it. Note. Because God, though he inflicts death on sinners, yet delights not in it, it becomes his ministers, though in his name they proclaim the death of sinners, yet sadly to lament it.

II. He stands up in the intercession for them; for who knows but God will yet return and repent? While there is life, there is hope, and room for prayer. And though there were many among them, who neither prayed themselves, nor valued the prophet’s prayers, yet there were some who were better affected, would join with him in his devotions, and set the seal of their Amen to them. 1. He humbly expostulates with God concerning the present deplorableness of their case, v. 19. If it be very sad, for, (1.) Their expectations from their God have been disappointed; a very hard case: we did not expect Judah to be his, but now, it seems, he has utterly rejected it, and cast it off; will not own any relation to it, or concern for it. However, they thought Zion was the beloved of his soul, was his rest for ever; but now he’s soul even loathes Zion, loathes even the services there performed, for the sake of the sins there committed. (2.) Then no marvel that all their hopes of peace were blasted, and that they were smitten, and their wounds were multiplied, but there was no healing for them; they looked for peace, because after a storm there usually comes a calm, and fair weather after a long fit of wet, but there was no good, things went still worse and worse. They looked for a healing time, but could not gain so much as a breathing time; Behold, trouble at the door, by which we hoped peace would enter. And is it so then? How then indeed rejected Judah? Justly then mightest thou. Has thy soul loathed Zion? We deserve it should. But wilt thou not at length in wrath remember mercy?

2. He makes a penitent confession of sin, speaking that language which they all should have spoken, though but few did; (v. 20,) We acknowledge our iniquity, the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

3. He deprecates God’s displeasure, and by faith appeals to his mercy; the abounding wickedness of our land, and the iniquity of our fathers, which we have imitated, and therefore justly smart for. We know, we acknowledge, that we have sinned against thee, and therefore thou art just in all that is brought upon us; but, because we confess our sins, we hope to find thee faithful and just in forgiving our sins.

{v. 21.} Do not abhor us, though thou wilt afflict us, do not abhor us; though thy hand be turned against us, let not thy heart be so, nor let thy mind be alienated from us. They own God might justly abhor them, they had rendered themselves odious in his eyes; yet when they pray, Do not abhor us, they mean, Receive us into favour again. Let not thy soul loathe Zion, v. 19. Let not our incontinence be our misfortune. There is another sense of this verse, which is, If we have made God’s honor, the honor of his scriptures, by which he has made himself known; his word, which he has magnified above all his name; Do not abhor us for thy name’s sake, that name of thine by which we are called, and which we call upon. The honor of his sanctuary is pleaded; Lord, do not abhor us, for that will disgrace the throne of thy glory. (The temple, which is called a glorious high throne from the beginning, ch. xvii. 12,) let that not which has been the joy of the whole earth, be made a hissing and an astonishment; we desire to have disgrace put upon us, but let it not be so as to reflect upon thyself; let not the desolations of the temple give occasion to the heathen to reproach him that used to be worshipped there, as if he could not, or would not, eschew, or permit it, seeing the avenging designs had been too hard for him. Note, Good men lay the credit of religion, and its profession in the world, nearer their hearts than any private interest or concern of their own; and those are powerful pleads in prayer, which are fetched from thence, and great supports to faith. We may be sure that God will not disgrace the throne of his glory, on earth; nor will he give occasion to the heathen, and especially to his own providence, without some making it shine forth, and more brightly than before, by another. God will be no loser in his honour at the long run. (2.) To the promise of God of this he is humbly bold
to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity. 3. And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the Lord; the sword to slay, and the dogs to tear, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy. 4. And I will cause them to be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, because of Manasseh the son of Hezekiah king of Judah, for that which he did in Jerusalem. 5. For who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan thee? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest? 6. Thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch out my hand against thee, and destroy thee; I am weary with repenting. 7. And I will fan them with a fan in the gates of the land; I will bereave them of children I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways. 8. Their widows are increased to me above the sand of the seas: I have brought upon them, against the mother of the young men, a spoiler at noonday; I have caused him to fall upon it suddenly, and tears upon the city. 9. She that hath borne seven languished; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down while it was yet day; she hath been ashamed and confounded: and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the Lord.

We scarcely find any where more pathetic expressions of divine wrath against a provoking people than we have here in these verses. The prophet had prayed earnestly for them, and found some among them to join with him; and yet not so much as a reprove was given, or the least mitigation of the judgment; but this answer is given to the prophet's prayers, that the decree was gone forth, irrecoverable, and would shortly be executed. Observe here,

I. What the sin was, upon which this severe sentence was grounded. 1. It is in remembrance of a former iniquity; it is because of Manasseh, for that which he did in Jerusalem. v. 4. What that was, we are told, and that it was for that Jerusalem's destruction, v. 5. But the sins of Manasseh were the sins of his idolatry, and the innocent blood which he shed, which the Lord would not pardon. He is called the son of Hezekiah, because his relation to so good a father was a great aggravation of his sin, so far was it from being an excuse of it. The greatest part of a generation was worn off since Manasseh's time, yet his sin is brought into the account; as in Jerusalem. He does not say God's justice, but his righteousness; and God's righteousness is the innocent blood shed on the earth, to show how heavy the guilt of blood will weigh and lie somewhere, sooner or later, and that reproves are not pardons. It is in consideration of their present impenitence. See how their sin is described; (v. 6.) Thou hast forsaken me, my services and thy duty to me; thou art gone backward into the ways of contradiction, art become the reverse of what thou

Chap. XV.

When we left the prophet, in the close of the foregoing chapter, so pathetically pouring out his prayers before God, we had reason to hope that in this chapter we should find God reconciled to the land, and the prophet brought into a quiet, composed frame; but, to our great surprise, we are here informed, notwithstanding the prophet's prayers, God here ratifies the sentence given against the people, and abandons them to ruin, turning a deaf ear to all the intercessions made for them, v. 1. 2. The prophet himself, notwithstanding the satisfaction he had in communion with God, still finds himself uneasy and out of temper. 1. He complains to God of his continual struggle with his persecutors, v. 10. 2. God assures him that he shall be taken under special protection, though there was a general desolation coming upon the land, v. 11. 14. 3. He appeals to God concerning his sincerity in the discharge of his duties as a prophet, and thinks it may be well for others to be strengthened thereby; he should not have more of the comfort of it, v. 15. 18. 4. Fresh security is given him, that upon condition he continue faithful, God will continue his care of him and his favour to him, v. 19. 21. And thus, at length, we hope he regained the possession of his own soul.

Then said the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people; cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth. 2. And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them, Thus saith the Lord; Such as are for death,
shouldst have been, and of what God by this law would have led thee forward to." See how the impiety is described; (v. 7.) They return not from their ways, the ways of their own hearts, into the ways of God's commandments again. There is mercy for those who have turned aside; if they will return; but what favour can they expect, that persist in their apostasy?

II. What the sentence is. It is such as denotes no lesser than an utter ruin.

1. God himself abandons and abhors them; My mind cannot be toward them. How can it be thought that the holy God should have any remaining complacency in those that have such roused antipathy to him? It is not in a passion, but with a just and holy indignation, that he says, "Cast them out of my sight, as that which is in the highest degree odious and offensive; and let them go forth, for I will be troubled with them no more."

2. He will not admit of any intercession to be made for them; (v. 1.) "Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, by prayer or sacrifice to reconcile me to them, yet I could not be prevailed with to admit them into favour." Moses and Samuel were two as great favourites of Heaven, as ever were the blessings of this earth, and were particularly famed for the success of their mediation between God and his offending people; many a time they succeeded in saving Israel, if Moses had not stood before him in the breach; and to Samuel's prayers they owed their lives; (1 Sam. xii. 19.) yet even their intercessions should not prevail, no, not though they were now in a state of perfection, much less Jeremiah's, who was now subject to like passions as others. The putting of this as a case, Though they should stand before me, supposes that they do not, and that their intercessions are rejected. But it points to intercessors for saints on earth. It is the prerogative of the Word, to be the only Mediator in the other world, whatever Moses and Samuel and others were in this.

3. He condemns them all to one destroying judgment or other. When God casts them out of his presence, whither shall they go forth? v. 2. Certainly no whither, to be safe or easy, but to be met by one judgment, while they are pursued by another, till they find themselves surrounded with mischief on all hands, so that they cannot escape; Such as are for death, to death. By death here is meant the pestilence, (Rev. vi. 8.) for it is death without visible means. Such as are for death, to death, or for the sword, to the sword; every man shall fall upon his brother, and every one upon his neighbour, as God has appointed; the law that appoints the malefactor's death, determines what death he shall die. Or, He that is by his own choice for this judgment, let him take it, or for that, let him take it, but by the one or the other they shall all fall, and none shall escape. It is a choice like that which David was put to, and was thereby put into a great strait, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. Can we wish any other way but that God has appointed? And the sorest judgment of all, being both a complication and continuation of miseries. That of the sword is again repeated, (v. 3.) and is made the first of another four frightful set of destroyers, which God will appoint over them, as officers over the soldiers to do what they please with them. As those that escape the sword shall be cut off by pestilence, (v. 1.) so those that escape the sword, the sword shall be cut off by divine vengeance, which pursues sinners on the other side death; there shall be dogs to tear in the city, and fowls of the air and wild beasts in the field to devour. And if there be any that think to extrate justice, they shall be made the most public monuments of it; They shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth, (v. 4.) like Cain, who, that he might be made a spectacle of horror to all, became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.

4. They shall fall without being relieved. Who can do any thing to help them? When (1.) God, when they turned away, (vi. 1.) appears against them; I will stretch out my hand against them, which denotes deliberate, determined stroke, which will reach far, and wound deep, v. 6. I am weary of repenting, it is a strange expression; they had behaved so provokingly, especially by their treacherous professions of repentance, that they had not even infinite patience itself to the stretch. God is often: with patience, when it is ready to break forth against them; he now will manifest no more pity. Miserable is the case of those who have sinned so long against God's mercy, that at length they have sinned it away. (2.) Their own country expels them, and is ready to slue them out, as it had done the Canaanites that were before them; for so it was threatened, (Lev. xviii. 28.) I will slue them with a fan in the gates of the land, in their own gates, through which they shall be scattered; or, into the gates of the earth, into the cities of all the nations about them. (3.) Their own children, that should assist them when they speak with the enemy in the gate, shall be cut off from them; (v. 7.) I will bereave them of children; so that they shall have little hopes that the next generation will preserve the remembrance of their name. And when and while the inhabitants are slain, the land will soon be desolate. This melancholy article is enlarged upon, v. 8, 9. where we have,

[1.] The destroyer brought upon them. When God has bloody work to do, he will find out bloody instruments to do it with. Nebuchadnezzar is here called a spoiler at noon-day; not a thief in the night that is afraid of being discovered, but one that without fear shall break through and destroy all the fences of rights and properties, and this in the face of the sun, and in defiance of its light; I have brought against the mother, a young man, a spoiler; (so some read it;) for Nebuchadnezzar, when he first invaded Judah, was but a young man, in the first year of his reign. We read it, I have brought upon them, even against the mother of the young man, a spoiler, against Jerusalem, a mother-city, that had a very numerous family of young men; or, that invasion was in a particular manner terrible to those mothers who had many sons fit for war, who must now jeopard their lives in the high places of the field: and, being an unequal match for the enemy, would be like to fall there, to the inexpressible grief of their poor mothers, who had nursed them up with a deal of tenderness. The same God that brought the spoiler upon them, caused him to fall upon it, upon the spoil delivered to him, suddenly and by surprise; and then terrors came upon the city. The original is very abrupt, the city and terrors. Of the city, what a consternation will it then be in? O the terrors that shall then seize it! which is enough to be told in the case of the terrors that seemed at a distance from each other. I will cause suddenly to fall upon her (upon Jerusalem) a watcher and terrors; so Mr. Gataker reads it, for the word is used for a watcher, (Dan. iv. 13, 23.) and the Chaldean soldiers were called watchers, ch. iv. 16.

[2.] The destruction made by this destroyer. A dreadful slaughter is here described. First, The wives are deprived of their husbands; Their widows are increased above the sand of the seas, so numerous are they now grown. It was promised that the men of Israel (for those only were numbered) should be as the sand of the sea for multitude; but now they shall be cut off, and their widows shall be so. But observe, God says, They are increased to me. Though the husbands were cut off by the sword of his jour-
tice, their poor widows were gathered in the arms of his mercy, who has taken it among the titles of his honour to be the God of the widows. Widows are said to be taken into the number, the number of those whom God has pitied, provided for, and comforted. Secondly, The parents are deprived of their children; She that has borne seven sons, whom she expected to be the support and joy of her age, now languishes, when she has seen them all cut off by the sword in one day, who had been many years her burden and care. She that had many children is waxen feeble, 1 Sam. ii. 5. See what uncertain comforts children are; and let us therefore rejoice in them, as though we rejoiced not. When the children are slain, the mother gives up the ghost, for her life was bound up in theirs: Her sun is gone down while it was yet day: she is bereaved of all her comforts then when she thought herself in the midst of the enjoyment of them. She is now ashamed and confounded: to think how proud she had been of her sons, how fond of them, and how much she promised herself from them. Some understand by this languishing mother, Jerusalem lamenting the death of her inhabitants as passionately as ever poor mother bewailed her children. Many are cut off already, and the residue of them, who have yet escaped, and, as was hoped, were reserved to be the seed of another generation, even them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, (as the condemned malefactor is delivered to the sheriff, to be executed, with the Lord, the Judge of heaven and earth, who, we are sure, herein judges right, though the judgment seem severe. 5. They shall fall without being pitied; (v. 5.) “For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem? When thy God has cast thee out of his sight, and his compassions fail, and are shut up from thee, neither thine enemies nor thy friends shall have any compassion on thee. They shall have no sympathy with thee, they shall not bemoan thee, or be sorry for thee, they shall have no concern for thee, shall not go a step out of their way to ask how thou dost.” For, (1.) Their friends, who were expected to do these friendly offices, were all involved with them in the calamities, and had enough to do to bemoan themselves. (2.) It was plain to all their neighbours, that they had brought all this upon themselves by their obstinacy in sin, and that they might have easily prevented it by repentance and reformation, which they were often in vain called to; and therefore who can pity them? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself. Those will perish for ever unpitied, that might have been saved upon such easy terms, and would not. (3.) God will thus complete their misery, he will set his face against them, as he did Job’s, at a distance from them; and his hand, his righteous hand, is to be acknowledged in all the unkindnesses of our friends, as well as in all the injuries done us by our foes.

14. And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not; for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.

Jeremiah is now returned from his public work, and is retired into his closet; what passed between him and his God there, we have an account of in these and the following verses, which he published afterward, to affect the people with the weight and importance of his messages to them. Here is,

1. The complaint which the prophet makes to God of the many discouragements he met with in his work, v. 10.

1. He met with a great deal of contradiction and opposition. He was a man of strife and contention to the whole land; (so it might be read, rather than to the whole earth, for his business lay only in that land;) both city and country quarrelled with him, and set themselves against him, and said and did all they could to thwart him. He was a peaceable man, gave no provocation to, nor was apt to resent the provocations given him, and yet a man of strife, not a man striving, but a man striving with; he was for peace, but, when he spoke, they were for war. And, whatever they pretended, that which was the real cause of their quarrels with him, was, his faithfulness to God and to their souls. He showed them how they were all suffered to be led into want, to be kept in a way to prevent that ruin, which was the greatest kindness he could do them; and yet this was it for which they were incensed against him, and looked upon him as their enemy. Even the Prince of peace himself was thus a man of strife, a sign spoken against, continually enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself. And the gospel of peace brings division, even to form itself to the Lord’s account, as it did to Jeremiahs. Matt. x. 34, 55. Luke xii. 49, 51. Now this made Jeremiah very uneasy, even to a degree of impatience; he cried out, Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me. As if it were his mother’s fault, that she bore him, and he had better never have been born, than be born to such an uncomfortable life; nay, he is angry that she had borne him a man of strife; as if he had been fatally determined to this by the stings of conscience that were ever present at his birth.

If he had any meaning of this kind, doubtless it was very much his infirmity; we rather hope it was intended for no more than a pathetic lamentation of his own case. Note, (1.) Even those who are most quiet and peaceable, if they serve God faithfully, are often made men of strife. We can but follow peace; we have the making only of one side of the bargain, and that we can but, as much as in us lies, live peaceably. (2.) It is very uncomfortable to those who are of a peaceable disposition, to live among those who are continually picking quarrels with them. (3.) Yet, if we cannot live so peaceably as we desire with our neighbours, we must not be so disturbed at it as thereby to lose the repose of our own minds, and put ourselves upon the fret.

10. Wo is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury: yet every one of them doth curse me. 11. The Lord said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant, verily I will cause the enemy to entertain thee well in the time of evil, and in the time of affliction. 12. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? 13. Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders.
cution, else he could not have lost himself thus: not
not the least; I have neither lent money, nor bor-
rowed money; have been neither creditor nor debtor;
for so general is the signification of the words here.
(1.) It is implied here, that those who deal much in
the business of this world, are often involved in
it by strife and contention; mean and tuum—mine and thine are the great makebeats, lenders and
borrowers, sue and are sued, and great dealers often
get a deal of ill-will. (2.) It was an instance of
Jeremiah's great prudence, and it is written for our
learning, that, being called to be a prophet, he
entangled not himself in the affairs of this life, but
kept clear from them, that he might employ himself
the more closely to the business of his profession,
and might not give the least shadow of suspicion
that he aimed at secular advantages in it, nor any
occasion to his neighbours to contend with him. He
put out no money, for he was no usurer, nor indeed
had he any money to lend; he took in no money,
for he was no purchaser, no merchant, no spec-
thrift. He was perfectly dead to this world, and
the things of it: a very little served to keep him,
and we find (ch. xvi. 2.) that he had neither wife
nor children to keep. And yet, (3.) Though he
behaved thus discreetly, and so as one would have
thought should have gained him universal esteem,
yet he lay under a general odium, through the
iniquity of the times. Blessed be God, had as things are,
he had saved himself for the sake of his people,
those with whom virtue has its praise; yet let those
who behave most prudently, think it strange
if they have not the respect and esteem they de-
serve. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate
you.

II. The answer which God gave to this complaint.
Though there was in it a mixture of passion and
infuriation, yet it was not so much an imperious
command, as a religious answer, because it was for his sake that the prophet suffered reproach. In this answer,
1. God assures him that he should weather the
storm, and be made easy at last, v. 11. Though
his neighbours quarrelled with him for what he did
in the discharge of his office, yet God accepted him,
and promised to stand by him. It is in the original
expressed in the form of an oath; If I take not care
of thee, let me never be counted faithful; verily, it
shall go well with thy remnant, with the remainder
of thy life; for so the word signifies. The residue
of thy days shall be more comfortable to thee than
those hitherto have been. Thy end shall be good;
so the Chaldee reads it. Note, It is a great and
sufficient support to the people of God, that, how
troublesome soever their way may be, it shall be
well with them in their latter end, Ps. xxxvii. 37.
They have still a remnant, a residue, something
behind, and left in reserve, which will be sufficient
to balance all their grievances, and the hope of
it may serve to make them easy. It should seem that
Jeremiah, besides the vexation that his people gave
him, was uneasy at the apprehension he had of shallafter, which was not unforseen by him; and though
he mentioned not this, God replied to his thought of it, as to Moses, Exed.
v. 19. Jeremiah thought, "If my friends are thus
abusive to me, what will my enemies be?" And
God had thought fit to awaken him in an expecta-
tion of this kind, ch. xii. 5. But here he quits his
mind with this promise, "Verily, I will cause the
enemy to treat thee well, and the time of evil, all
about thee shall be laid waste." Note, God has
all men's hearts in his hand, and can turn those to
favour his servants, whom they were most afraid of.
And the prophets of the Lord have often met with
farther and better treatment among open enemies
than among those that call themselves his people.
When we see trouble coming, and it looks very
threatening, let us not despair, but hope in God,
because it may prove better than we expect. This
promise was accomplished, when Nebuchadnezzar,
having taken the city, charged the captain of the
guard to be kind to Jeremian, and let him have
every thing he had a mind to, ch. xxxix. 11, 12.
The following words, Shall iron break the northern
iron, and the steel, or brass? (v. 12.) being com-
pared with the promise of God made to Jeremiah,
(ch. i. 18.) that he would make him an iron pillar
and broken walls, seem intended for his comfort.
They were continually clashing with him, and wor-
rownd and hard as iron; but Jeremiah, being armed
with power and courage from on high, is an north-
ern iron, which is naturally stronger, and as steel,
which is hardened by art; and therefore they shall
not prevail against him; compare this with Ezek.
i. 6.—iii. 8, 9. He might the better bear their
quarrelling with him, when he was sure of the vic-
tory.

2. God assures him that his enemies and persecu-
tors should be lost in the storm, should be ruined
at last, and that therein the word of God in his
mouth should be accomplished, and he proved a true
prophet, v. 13, 14. God here turns his speech
from the prophet to the people. To them also, v.
12. may be applied; Shall iron break the northern
iron, and the steel? Shall their courage and strength,
and the meat hardly and vigorous of their eff ft s,
be able to contend with evil? No, nor so much as in
combat with the army of the Chaldeans, which are as
subtle, as invincible, as the northern iron, and the
steel. Let them therefore hear their doom; Thy
substance and thy treasure will I give to the spoil,
and that without price; the spoilers shall have it
greatly, it shall be to them a cheap and easy prey.
Observe, The prophet was poor, he neither lent
nor borrowed; yet God assured him of an eternal
stance nor treasure, and therefore the enemy will
treat him well, Cantabit vacuus coram latrovi
rior—The traveller that has no property about him,
will congratulate himself, when accosted by a rob-
ber. But the people that had great estates in money
and land, would be slain for what they had, or the
enemy, finding they had much, would use them
hardly, to make them confess more. And it is their
own iniquity that herein corrects them: It is for all
thy sins, even in all thy borders. All parts of the
country, even those which lay most remote, had
contributed to the national guilt, and all shall now
be brought to account. Let not one tribe lay the
blame upon another, but each take shame to itself:
It is for all thy sins in all thy borders. Thus shall
they stay at home till they see their estates ruin-
ded, and then they shall be carried into captivity, to
spread the sad remains of a miserable life in slavery:
"I will make thee to pass with thine enemies, who
shall lead thee in triumph, into a land thou knowest
not, and therefore cannot expect to find no comfort
in it." All this is the fruit of God's wrath: "It is a
fire kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon
them, and, if not extinguished in time, will burn
eternally."

15. O Lord, thou knowest: remember me,
and visit me, and revenge me of my
persecutors; take me not away in thy long-
suffering: know that for thy sake I have suf-
fered rebuke. 16. Thy words were found,
and I did eat them; and thy word was
unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart: for
I am called by thy name, O Lord God of
hosts. 17. I sat not in the assembly of the
mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone, because

Vol. iv.—3 E
of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation: 18. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. 20. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. 21. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible.

Here, as before, we have,

1. The prophet's humble address to God, containing a representation both of his integrity, and of the hardships he underwent notwithstanding. It is matter of comfort to us, that whatever ails us, we have a God to go to, before whom we may spread our case, and to whose omniscience we may appeal, as the prophet here, "O Lord, thou knowest; thou knowest my sincerity, which men are resolved they will not acknowledge; thou knowest my distress, which men disdain to take notice of." Observe here,

1. What it is that the prophet prays for, v. 15. (1) That God would consider his case, and be mindful of him; "O Lord, remember me; think upon me for good." (2) That God would communicate strength and comfort to him; Visit me; not only remember me, but let me know that thou rememberest me, that thou art nigh unto me." (3) That he would appear for him against those that did him wrong: "Revenge me of my persecutors, or, rather, "Vindicate me from my persecutors; give judgment against them, and let that judgment be executed so far as is necessary for my vindication, and to compel them to acknowledge that they have done me wrong. Further than this, a good man will not desire that God would revenge him; but that the power of God be shown upon them to convict them, and that (whatever blasphevers say to the contrary) Jeremiah is a righteous man, and the God whom he serves is a righteous God. (4) That he would yet spare him and continue him in the hand of the living: "Take me not away by a sudden stroke, but in thy long-suffering lengthen out my days." The best men will own themselves so obnoxious to God's wrath, that they are indebted to his patience for the continuance of their lives. Or, "While thou exercisest long-suffering toward my persecutors, let them prevail to take me away." Though in compassion he complained of his birth, (v. 10.) yet he desires here that his death might not be hastened; for life is sweet to nature; the life of a useful man is so to grace. I pray not that thou shouldst take them away, but that thou shouldst frustrate the plot of them.

2. What it is that he pleads with God for, mercy and relief against his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers.

(1) That God's honour was interested in his case; Know, and make it known, that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Those that lay themselves open to reproach by their own fault and folly, have great reason to bear it patiently, but no reason to expect that God should appear for them. But if it is doing well that we suffer ill, and for righteousness' sake that we have all manner of evil said against us, we may hope that God will vindicate our honour with his own. To the same purport, (v. 16.) I am called by thy name, O Lord of hosts; it was for that reason that his enemies hated him, and therefore for that reason he premised himself that God would own him, and stand by him.

(2) That the word of God, which he was employed to preach to others, he had experienced the power and preciety of in his own person. He had the graces of the Spirit to qualify him for the divine favour, as well as his gifts. We find some rejected of God, who yet could say, Lord, we have professed in thy name. But Jeremiah could say more, (v. 16.) "Thy words were found, found by me," (he searched the scriptures, diligently studied the word, and found that in it which was reviving to him. If not so, we shall find." (and find it,)" the words which he was to deliver to others, were laid ready to his hand, were brought to him by inspiration; "and I did not only taste them, but eat them, received them entirely, conversed with them intimately; they were welcome to me, as food to one that is hungry; I entertained them, digested them, turned them in succus et sanguinem—into blood and spirits, as myself also the minister of those truths which I was to deliver to others." The prophet was bid to eat the roll, Ezek. ii. 8. Rev. x. 9. I did eat it, that is, as it follows, it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart, nothing could be more agreeable. Understand it, [1.] Of the message itself which he was to deliver. Though he was to foretell the ruin of his country, which was then denounced to him, and in the name of which he spoke (v. 18.) not but have a deep share, yet all natural affections were swallowed up in zeal for God's glory, and even these messages of wrath, being divine messages, were a satisfaction to him. He also rejoiced, at first, in hope that the people would take warning, and prevent the judgment. Or, [2.] Of the commission he received to deliver this message. Though the work he was called to was not attended with any secular advantages, but, on the contrary, exposed him to contempt and persecution, yet, because it put him in a way to serve God, and do good, he took pleasure in it, was glad to be so employed, and it was his meat and drink to do the will of him that sent him, John iv. 34. Or, [3.] Of the promise God gave him, that he would assist and comfort him in it; (v. 20.) he was satisfied in that, and depended upon it, and therefore hoped it should not fail him.

(3) That he had applied himself to the discharge of his office with all possible gravity, seriousness, and self-denial, though he had had of late but little satisfaction in it, v. 17. [1.] It was his comfort, that he had given up himself wholly to the business of his office, and had done nothing in his heart, but what he comprehended to be the duty of his cries to divert himself from it, or divest himself for it. He kept no unsuitable company, denied himself the use even of lawful recreations, abstained from every thing that looked like levity, lest thereby he should make himself mean and less regarded. He sat alone, spent a deal of time in his closet, because of the hand of the Lord that was strong upon him to carry on his office, and to make the object of the prophet was, (v. 10.) but to the pleasures of it too, as here. But, [2.] It is his complaint, that he had had but little pleasure in his work. It was at first the
rejoicing of his heart, but of late it had made him melancholy; so that he had no heart to sit in the mourning of those that make merry; he cared not for company, for indeed no company cared for him; he sat alone, fretting at the people's obstinacy, and the little success of his labours among them; this filled him with a holy indignation. Note, It is the folly and infirmity of some good people, that they lose much of the pleasantness of their religion by the freedom and awkwardness of their manner of thinking and acting, and thereby make themselves the more hateful and contemptible in the sight of those that have not their degree of grace. 

(4.) He throws himself upon God's pity and promise in a very passionate expostulation; (v. 18.) "Why is my pain perpetual, and nothing done to case it? Why are the wounds which my enemies are continually giving me both to my soul and to my credit, not healed; and my wound is not obliterated?" [2.] He must closely adhere to his instructions, and not in the least vary from them; let them return to thee, but return not thou to them. That is, he must do the utmost he can, in his preaching, to bring people up to the mind of God; he must tell them they must, at their peril, comply with that. They that had flown off from him, that did not like the terms upon which God's favour was offered to them, "Let them return to thee, and, upon second thoughts, let them return with thee;" but do not thou return to them, do not compliment them, or comply with them, or think to make the matter easier to them than the word of God has made it. Men's hearts and lives must come up to God's law, and comply with that, for God's law will never come down to them, or comply with them.

21. What he here promises them, upon the performance of these conditions. If he approve himself well,

(1.) God will quiet his mind, and pacify the present tumult of his spirits; If thou return, I will bring thee again; will restore thy soul, as Ps. xxiii. 3. The best and strongest saints, if at any time they have gone aside out of the right way, and are determined to return, need the grace of God to bring them again.

(2.) God will employ him in his service as a prophet, whose work, even in these bad times, had comfort and honour enough in it to be its own wages; Thou shalt stand before me, to receive instructions from me, as a servant from his master; and thou shalt be as my mouth to deliver my messages; and to the people, as an ambassador is the mouth of the prince that sends him. Note, Faithful ministers are God's mouth to us; they are so to look upon themselves, and to speak God's mind, and as becomes the oracles of God; and we are so to look upon them, and to hear God speaking to us by them. Observe, If thou keep close to thine instructions, thou shalt be as my mouth, not otherwise; so far and no further, God will stand by ministers, as they go by the written word; Thou shalt be as my mouth, what thou savest shall be made good, as if I myself had said it." See Isa. xliv. 26. 1 Sam. iii. 19. 

(3.) He shall have strength and courage to face the difficulties he meets with in his work, and his spirit shall not fail again, as now it does; (v. 20.) I will make thee unto these people a fenced broken wall; that is, I will set up a firm and strong barrier against the wicked, and against the broad way, against men, and against falling upon, but cannot slike. Return not thou to them, by any sinful compliances, and then trust thy God to arm thee by his grace with holy resolutions. Be not cowardly, and God will make thee daring. He had complained that he was made a man of strife; "Expect (says God) that they will fight against thee; they will still continue their opposition; but I will make thee so strong, and will make the enemies of all sorts to fear thee, that thou mayest live off from thy work, or to cut thee off from the hand of the living." 

(4.) He shall have God for his Protector and mighty Deliverer; I am with thee, to save thee. These that have God with them, have a Saviour with them, who has wisdom and strength enough to deal with the most formidable enemy; and these are very sharp and strong arrows, as much as the wicked, (v. 21.) either from trouble or through it. They may perhaps fall into the hand of the wicked, and they may appear terrible to them, but God will rescue them out of their hands. They shall not be able to kill them, till they have finished their testimony; they shall not prevent their happiness. God will so deliver them as to preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, and preserve those that are of exacting nature, "There are many things that appear very frightful, that yet do not prove at all hurtful to a good man."
CHAP. XVI.

In this chapter, I. The greatness of the calamity that was coming upon the Jewish nation, is illustrated by prohibitions given to the prophet, neither to set up a house of his own, v. 1-4, nor to go into the house of mourning, v. 5-7. II. God is justified in these severe proceedings against them, by an account of their great wickedness, v. 10, 13. III. An intimation is given of mercy in reserve, v. 14, 15. IV. Some hopes are given that the punishment of the sin should prove the reformation of the sinners, and that they should return to God at length in a way of duty, and so be qualified for his returns to them in a way of favour, v. 16-21.

1. The word of the Lord came also unto me, saying, Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons nor daughters in this place. For thus saith the Lord concerning the sons, and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; 4. They shall die of grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 5. For thus saith the Lord, Enter not into the house of mourning, neither go to lament nor beweep them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even loving-kindness and mercies. 6. Both the great and the small shall die in this land: they shall not be buried, neither shall mourn for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them: 7. Neither shall men bear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother: 8. Thou shalt not also go into the house of feasting, to sit with them to eat and to drink. 9. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will cause to cease out of this place in your eyes, and in your days, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride.

The prophet is here for a sign to the people; they would not regard what he said, let it be tried whether they will regard what he does. In general, he must conduct himself so, in every thing, as became one that expected to see his country in ruins very soon. This he would do as a mark of his self-denying and self-denying, and therefore for his sons, marriage, mourning for the dead, and mirth. Note, Those that would convince others of, and affect them with, the word of God, must make it appear, even in the most self-denying instances, that they do believe it themselves, and are affected with it.

If we would persuade others out of their security, and persuade them to sit loose to the world, we must ourselves be mortified to present things, and show that we expect with them, a more immediate and a more decisive difference of affairs in a short time. 1. Jeremiah must not marry, nor think of having a family, and being a housekeeper; (v. 2.) Thou shalt not take thee a wife, nor think of having sons and daughters in this place, in the land of Judah, not in Jerusalem, not in Anathoth. The Jews, more than any people, valued themselves on their early marriages, and their numerous offspring. But Jeremiah must not only refrain from marrying, but from the due exercises of that of virginity, as in diminution of it; by this it appears that it was advisable and seasonable only in calamitous times, and times of present distress, 1 Cor. vii. 26. That it is so, is a part of the calamity. There may be a time when it will be said, Blessed is the womb that bare not, Luke xxiii. 29. When we see such times at hand, it is wisdom for all, especially for prophets, to keep themselves as much as may be from being entangled with the affairs of this life, and encumbered with that which, the dearer it is to them, the more it will be the matter of their care, and fear, and grief, at such a time. The reason here given, is, because the fathers and mothers, the sons and the daughters, shall die of grievous deaths, Hos. iii. 4. As for those that have wives and children, (v. 3.) They shall not be cut off in such a clear manner, that they cannot flee from those deaths. A single man may make his escape, and shift for his own safety, when he that has a wife and children, can neither find means to convey them with him, nor find in his heart to go and leave them behind him. (4.) They will be in continual terror for fear of those deaths; and the more they have to lose by them, the greater terror and consternation be, when death appears everywhere in its triumphant power and might. (5.) The death of every child, and the aggravating circumstances of it, will be a new death to the parent. Better have no children than have them brought forth, and bred up, for the murderer, (Hos. ix. 13, 14.) than see them live and die in misery. Death is grievous, but some deaths are more grievous than others, both to them that die and to their relations that survive them; hence we read of so great a death, 2 Cor. i. 10. Two things are used a little to palliate and alleviate the terror of death, as to this world, and to sugar the bitter pill; bewailing the dead, and burying them; but to make these deaths grievous indeed, these are denied; They shall not be lamented, but shall be consigned over to the beasts of the earth for food of them, nay, they shall not be buried, but left exposed, as if they were designed to be monuments of justice. They shall be as dung upon the face of the earth, not only despicable, but detestable, as if they were good for nothing but to measure the ground; being consumed, some by the sword, and some by famine, their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 

2. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mourning, upon occasion of the death of any of his neighbors or relations; (v. 5.) Enter thou not into the house of mourning. It was usual to condescend with those whose relations were dead, to bemoan them, to cut themselves, and make themselves bald, which, it seems, was commonly practised, as an expression of mourning, though forbidden by the law, Deut. xiv. 1. Nay, sometimes, in a passion of grief, they tore themselves for them; (v. 6, 7.) partly in honor of the deceased, thus signifying that they thought...
there was a great loss of them; and partly, in compassion to the surviving relations, to whom the burden then
would be made lighter, by their having sharers with them in their grief. They used to mourne with them, and so to comfort them for the dead, as Job's friends with him, and the Jews with Martha and Mary: and it was a friendly office to give them a cup of consolation to drink, to provide contentions for them, and press this conveyance for the sake of them, for the support of their spirits; give wine to that they are of heavy heart, for their father or mother, that it may be some comfort to them to find that, though they have lost their parents, yet they have some friends left, that have a concern for them. Thus the usage stood, and it was a laudable usage; it is a good and pleasant manner, as well for the sake of them to comfort them, as the conveyance to ease the going to the house of mourning. It seems the prophet Jeremiah had been wont to abound in good offices of this kind, and it well became his character, both as a pious man and as a prophet; and one would think it should have made him better beloved among his people, than it should seem he was.

But now God bids him not lament the death of his friends, as Job, v. (1.) His sorrow for the destruction of his countrymen, must swallow up his sorrow for particular deaths. His tears must now be turned into another channel; and there is occasion enough for them. (2.) He had little reason to lament those who died now just before the judgments entered, which he saw at the door; but rather to think them happy, who were seasonably taken away, for then he did not come with his sorrow, to be a type of what was coming, when there should be such universal confusion, that all neighbourly, friendly offices should be neglected. Men shall be in deaths so often, and even dying daily, that they shall have no time, no room, no heart, for the ceremonies that used to attend death; the sorrows shall be so ponderous as not to admit relief; and every one so full of grief for his own trouble, (3.) that he shall have no thoughts of his neighbour's. All shall be mourners then, and no comforters; every one will find it enough to bear his own burden; for, (v. 5.)

"I have taken away my peace from this people, put a full period to their prosperity, deprived them of health, and wealth, and quiet, and friends, and every thing wherewith they might comfort themselves. Whatever comfort it is, which we call joy, it is God's peace; it is his gift, and if he gives quietness, who then can make trouble? But if we make not a good use of his peace, he can and will take it away; and where are we then? Job xxxiv. 29. I will take away my peace, even my loving-kindness and mercies; these shall be shut up and restrained, which are the fresh springs from which all their fresh streams flow, and then farewell all good. Note, Those have cut themselves off from all true peace, that have thrown themselves out of the favour of God. All is gone, when God takes away from us his loving-kindness and his mercies. Then it follows, (v. 6.) Both the great and the small shall die, even in this land, the land of Canaan, that used to be called the land of the living. God's favour is our life; take away that, and we die, we perish, we all perish.

3. Jeremiah must not go to the house of mirth, any more than to the house of mourning, v. 1. It had been his custom, and it was innocent enough, when any of his friends made entertainments at their houses, and invited him to them, to go and sit with them, not merely to drink, but to eat and to drink, soberly and cheerfully. But now he must not take that liberty. (1.) Because it was unreasonable, and inconsistent with the providences of God that fell upon the land and nation. God called loud to weeping, and mourning, and fasting; he was coming forth against them in his judgments, and it was time for them to humble themselves; and it well became the prophet, who gave them the warning, to give them an example of taking the warning, and complying with it, and so to make it appear that he did himself believe it. Ministers ought to be examples of self-denial and mortification, and to show themselves affected with these terrors of the Lord, with which they desire to affect others. And it becomes all the sons of Zion to sympathize with her in her afflictions, and not to be merry with her, as is here commanded, Amos vi. 6. (2.) Because he must thus shew the people what sad times were coming upon them. His friends wondered that he would not meet them, as he used to do, in the house of feasting. But he lets them know, it was to intimate to them all that their feasting would be at an end shortly; (v. 9.) I will cause to cease the voice of mirth. You shall have nothing to feast on, nothing to rejoice in, but be surrounded with calamities that shall mar your mirth, and cast a damp upon it." God can find ways to tame the most jovial.

This shall be done in this place, in Jerusalem, that used to be the jovious city, and thought her joys were all secure to her; it shall be done in your eyes, in your sight, to be a reproach and a wonder, so saucy, and so merry; it shall be done in your days, you yourselves shall live to see it." The voice of mirth they had made to cease by their iniquities and idolatries, and therefore justly God made to cease among them the voice of mirth and gladness. The voice of God's prophets was not heard, was not heeded, among them, and therefore no longer shall the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride, of the songs that used to grace the nuptials, be heard among them. See ch. vii. 34.

10. And it shall come to pass, when thou shalt shew this people all these words, and they shall say unto thee, Wherefore hath the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity, or what is our sin, that we have committed against the Lord our God? 11. Then shalt thou say unto them, Because your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my law: 12. And ye have done worse than your fathers; (for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:) 13. Therefore will I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not shew you favour.

Here is,

1. An inquiry made into the reasons why God would bring those judgments upon them; (v. 10.) When thou shalt show this people all these words, the words of this curse, they will say unto thee, Wherefore has the Lord pronounced all this great evil against us? One would hope that there were some among them that asked this question with a humble, penitent heart, desiring to know what was the sin for which God contended with them, that they might cast it away, and prevent the judgment; "Show us the Jonah that raises the storm, and we will throw it overboard." But it seems here to be the language of those who quarrelled at the word of God, and challenged him to show what they had
done, which might deserve so severe a punishment; 'What is our iniquity? Or, what is our sin? What crime have we ever been guilty of, proportionable to such a sentence?' Instead of humbling and condemning themselves, they stand upon their own justification; they were not guilty. They did them wrong, in pronouncing this evil against them, that he laid upon them more than was right, and that they had reason to enter into judgement with God, Job xxxiv. 25. Note, It is amazing to see how hardly sinners are brought to justify God, and judge themselves, when they are in trouble, and to own the iniquity and the sin that have procured them their miseries.

2. A plain and full answer given to this inquiry. Do they ask the prophet why, and for what reason, God is thus angry with them? He shall not stop their mouths by telling them that they may be sure there is a sufficient reason, the righteous God is never angry without cause, without good cause; but he must tell them particularly what is the cause, that they may be convinced and humbled, or, at least, that God may be justified. Let them know then,

(1.) That God visited upon them the iniquities of their fathers; (v. 11.) Your fathers have forsaken me, and have not kept my law; they shook off divine institutions and grew weary of them, they thought them too plain, too mean, and then they walked after other gods, to whose worship they were prone; being a land of variety and novelty, they served them and worshipped them; and this was the sin which God had said, in the second commandment, he would visit upon their children, who kept up these idolatrous usages, because they received them by tradition from their fathers, 1 Pet. i. 18.

(2.) That God reckoned with them for their own iniquities; (v. 12.) 'You have made your fathers' sin your own, and are become obnoxious to the punishment which in their days was deferred, for you have done worse than your fathers.' If they had made a good use of their fathers' reprove, and had been led by the patience of God to repentance, they should have fared better for it, and the judgment should have been prevented, the reprove turned into national pardon; but, making an ill use of it, and being hardened by it in their sins, they fared the worse for it, and the reprove being expired, an addition was made to the sentence, and it was executed with the more severity. They were more impudent and obstinate in sin than their fathers, walked every one after the imagination of his heart, made that their guide and rule, and were resolved to follow that on purpose that they might not hearken to God and his prophets. They designedly suffer their own lusts and passions to be noisy, that they might drown the voice of their consciences. No wonder then that God has taken up this resolution concerning them, (v. 13.) 'I will cast you out of this land, this land of light, this valley of vision; since you will not hearken to me, you shall not hear me, you shall be hurried away, not into a neighboring country which you have formerly had some acquaintance and correspondence with, but into a far country, a land that ye know not, neither you nor your fathers; in which you have no interest, nor can expect to meet with any comfortable society, to be an abode to your misery.' Justly were they punished into a strange land, which doted upon strange gods, which neither they nor their fathers knew, Deut. xxxii. Two things were made their case there very miserable, and both of them relate to the soul, the better part; the greatest calamities of their captivity were those which affected that, and debarring them from its bliss. (1.) It is the happiness of the soul to be employed in the service of God; but there shall you serve other gods day and night, you shall be in continual temptation to serve them, and perhaps compelled to do it by your cruel taskmasters; and when you are forced to worship idols, you will be as averse to it as ever you were of it when it was forbidden you by your gloomy kings. See how God often makes men's sin their punishment, and fills the backslider in heart with his own ways. 'You shall have no public worship at all, but the worship of idols, and then you will think with regret how you slighted the worship of the true God.' (2.) It is the happiness of the soul to have some tokens of the love and kindness of God, but you shall go to a strange land, where I will not show you favour.' If the Jews had had God's favour, that would have made even the land of their captivity a pleasant land; but, if they lie under his wrath, the yoke of their oppression will be intolerable to them.

14. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 15. But, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whether he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers. 16. Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. 17. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. 18. And first will I recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things. 19. O Lord, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanities, and things wherein there is no profit. 20. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no gods! 21. Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know my hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is the Lord.

There is a mixture of mercy and judgment in these verses, and it is hard to know to which to apply some of the passages here, they are so interwoven; and some seem to look as far forward as the times of the gospel. 1. God will certainly execute judgment upon them for their idolatries. Let them expect it, for the decree is gone forth. 2. God sees all their sins, though they commit them ever so secretly, and palliate them ever so artfully; (v. 17.) Mine eyes are upon all their ways. They have not their eye upon God, have no regard to him, stand in no awe of him; but he has his eye upon them, neither they nor their sins are hid from
his face, from his eyes. Note, None of the sins of sinners either can be concealed from God, or shall be overlooked by him, Prov. v. 21. Job xxxiv. 21. Ps. xxv. 4. God is highly displeased, particularly at their idolatries, v. 18. As his omniscience convicts them, so his justice condemns them; I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; not double to what it deserves, but double to what they expect, and to what I have done formerly. Or, I will recompense it abundantly, they shall now pay for their long reprieve, and the divine patience they have had, or, the sin for which God has an exception with them, is, their having defied God's land with their idolatries, and not only alienated which he was entitled to as his inheritance, but polluted that which he dwelt in with delight as his inheritance, and made it offensive to him with the carcases of their detestable things, the gods themselves which they worshipped, the images of which, though they were of gold and silver, were as loathsome to God as the putrid carcases of men or beasts are to us; idols are carcases of detestable things, God hates them, and so should we. Or, he might refer to the sacrifices which they offered to these idols, with which the land was filled; for they had high places in all the coasts and corners of it. This was the sin which, above any other, incensed God against them.

3. He will find out and raise up instruments of his wrath, that shall cast them out of their land, according to the sentence passed upon them, (v. 16.) I will send for many fishers, and many hunters, the Chaldean army, that shall have many ways of insuring and destroying them, by fraud as fishers, by force as hunters; they shall find them out wherever they are, and shall chase and pursue them, to their ruin; they shall discover them wherever they are hid, in hills or mountains, or holes of the rocks, and shall drive them out. God has various ways of prosecuting a people with his judgments, that avoid the convictions of his word. He has men at command fit for his purpose; he has them within call, and can send for them when he pleases.

4. Their bondage in Babylon shall be sorer and much more grievous than that in Egypt, their taskmasters more cruel, and their lives made more bitter. This is implied in the promise, (v. 14, 15.) that their deliverance out of Babylon shall be more illustrious in itself, and more welcome to them, than that out of Egypt. Their slavery in Egypt came upon them gradually and almost insensibly, the galling yoke was laid upon them by degrees, and the heavier burdens were laid upon them at once, to all the aggravating circumstances of terror. In Egypt they had a Goshen of their own, but none such in Babylon. In Egypt they were used as servants that were useful; in Babylon, as captives that had been hateful.

5. They shall be warned, and God shall be glorified by these judgments brought upon them. These judgments, in some ways, shall prove a conviction and destruction to them; when God chastens them he teaches them. By this red God expostulates with them, (v. 20.) "Shall a man make gods to himself? Will any man be so perfectly void of all reason and consideration, as to think that a god of his own making can stand him in any stead? Will you ever again be such fools as you have been, to make to yourselves gods, which will not only enslave you, but destroy you, and make you call upon God whom you may call your own, who made you, and is himself the true and living God!" (2.) Honour to God; for he will be known by the judgments which he executeth. He will first recompense their iniquity, (v. 18.) and then he will this once, (v. 21.) this once for all, not by many interruptions of their peace, but this one desolation and destruction of it; or, This once and no more, I will cause them to know my hand, the length and weight of my punishing hand, how far it can reach, and how deep it can wound. And they shall know that my name is Jehovah, a God with whom there is no controul, who gives being to threatenings, and puts life into them as well as promises.

6. Yet he has mercy in store for them, intimations of which come in here for the encouragement of the prophet himself, and of these few among them that trembled at God's word. It was said, with an air of severity, (v. 13.) that God would banish them into a strange land; but that thereby they should not be altogether cut off, but should in due time, by a small company, return, there follow, immediately, words of comfort:

1. The days will come, the joyful days, when the same hand that dispeered them, shall gather them again, v. 14, 15. They are cast out, but they are not cast off; they shall be brought up from the land of the north, the land of their captivity, where they are held with a strong hand, and from all the lands whither they are driven, and where they seemed to be lost and buried in the crowd; and I will bring them again into their own land, and settle them there. As the foregoing threatenings agreed with what was written in the law, so does this promise, (Lev. xxvi. 44.) Yet will I not cast them away, Deut. xxxv. 4. Thence will the Lord thy God gather thee. And the following words (v. 16.) may be ascribed to the God who speaks, God will send for fishers and hunters, the Medes and Persians, that shall find them out in the countries where they are scattered, and send them back to their own land; or, Zerubbabel, and others of their own nation, who should fish them out, and hunt after them, to persuade them to return; or whatever instruments the Spirit of God made use of to stir up their spirits to work, which at first they were backward to. They began to nestle in Babylon; but as an eagle stirrith up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, so God did by them, Zech. ii. 7.

2. Their deliverance out of Babylon should, upon some accounts, be more illustrous and memorable than their deliverance out of Egypt was. Both were the Lord's doing, and marvellous in their eyes, both were proofs that the Lord liveth, and were to be kept in everlastings remembrance, to his honour, as the living God; but the fresh mercy shall be so surprising, so welcome, that it shall even abolish the memory of the former. Not but that new mercies should put us in mind of old ones, and give us occasion to renew our thanksgivings for them; yet, because we are apt to think that the former were better than these, and to ask, Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? as if God's arm were waxen short; and to cry up the age of miracles above the later ages, when mercies are wrought in a way of common providence; therefore we are allowed here comparatively to forget the bringing of Israel out of Egypt as a deliverance out of the hand of the Egyptians, that they were done by might and power, this by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, Zech. iv. 6. In this there was more of pardoning mercy (the most glorious branch of divine mercy) than in that; for their captivity in Babylon had more in it of the punishment of sin than their bondage in Egypt; and therefore that which comforts Zerubbad in her deliverance out of Babylon, is this, that though it was their own fault, yet that the God who glorifies himself, and we must glorify him, in those mercies that have no miracles in them, as well as in those that have. And though the favours of God to our fathers must not be forgotten, yet these to ourselves in our own day we must especially give thanks for.

3. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be accompanied with blessed reformation, and they
one the children of God that were scattered abroad. And this is that which so far outsighes the deliberance out of Egypt, as even to eclipse the histrice of it, and make it even to be forgone. To some apply this of the many Fishers and hunters, the preachers of the gospel, who were Fishers of men, to enlose them with the suggestiout to fish out in every mountain and hill, and secure them for Christ. Then the Gentiles came to God, some from the ends of the earth, and turned to the worship of him from the service of dumb idols.

CHAP. XVII.

In this chapter, 1. God convicts the Jews of the sin of idolatry by the notorious evidence of the fact, and condemns them to captivity for it, v. 1—4. II. He shows them the folly of all their carnal confidences, which should stand them in no stead, when God's time was to contend with them; and that this was one of the sins upon which his controversy with them was grounded, v. 5—11. III. The prophet makes his appeal and address to God, upon occasions of the midst of his enemies against him, committing himself to the divine protection, and begging of God to appear for him, v. 12—18. IV. God, by the prophet, warns the people to keep holy the sabbath-days, assuring them that, if they did, it should be the lengthening out of their tranquillity; but that, if not, God would be some desolating judgment assert the honour of his sabbaths, v. 19—27.

1. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altar; 2. Whilst their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. 3. O my mountain in the field, I will give thy substance and all thy treasures to the spoil, and thy high places for sin, throughout all thy borders. 4. And thou, even thyself, shalt discontinue from thy heritage which I gave thee; and I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not; for ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever.

The people had asked, (ch. xiv. 10.) What is our iniquity, and what is our sin? As if they could not be charged with any thing worth speaking of, for which God should enter into judgment with them; their challenge was answered there, but here we have a further reply to it; in which,

1. The indictment is fully proved upon the prisoners, both the fact and the fault; their sin is too plain to be denied, and, after they have nothing to plead either in exculcation of the crime, or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment. (1.) They cannot plead not guilty, for their sins are upon record in the book of God's omniscience, and their own conscience; nay, and they are obvious to the eye and observation of the world, v. 1, 2. They are written before God in the most legible hand, and by his own hand, and they have nothing to plead either in exculcation of the crime, or in arrest and mitigation of the judgment. (2.) They shall herein give honour to God, and make it to appear that they know both his hand in his justice, and his own in his word, and that they are brought to know his name, by what they are made to know of his hand, v. 21. This once, now at length, they shall be made to know that which they would not be brought to know by all the pains the preachers took with them. Note, So stupid are we, that nothing less than the mighty hand of divine grace, known experimentally, can make us know rightly the name of God as it is revealed to us.

4. Their deliverance out of captivity shall be a type and figure of the great salvation to be wrought out by the Messiah, who shall gather together in
out, but will be produced in evidence, when the
books shall be opened. Nay, we need not appeal to
the tables of the heart, perhaps they will not own the
consequences of their consciences. We need do no
further, for proof of the charge, than the names of the
altars which the blood of their idolatrous sacrifices was sprinkled, and perhaps the
names of the idols, to whose honour they were
erected, were inscribed. Their neighbours will
witness against them, and all the creatures they
have abused by using them in the service of their
hunts. To complete the evidence, their own children
shall be witnesses against them; they will tell truth,
when they see their fathers dissemble and pretend to
remember the altars and the groves to which their
parents took them when they were little, v. 2. It
appears that they were full of them, and acquainted
with them betimes, they talk of them so frequently,
simply, and with so much delight.

(2.) They cannot plead that they repent, or are
come to a better mind; no, as the guilt of their sin is
undeniable, so their inclination to sin is invincible
and incurable. In this sense many understand v.
1, 2. Their sin is deeply engraven as with a pen
of iron in the tables of their hearts; they have a
rooted affection to it, it is woven into their very
nature; their sin is dear to them as that is of which we
say, It is engraven on our hearts. The bias of their
minds is still as strong as ever toward their idols, and
they are not wrought upon either by the word
or rod of God to forget them, and abate their affec-
tion to them. It is written upon the horns of their
altars, for they have given up their names to their
idols, and resolve to abide by what they have
done; they have bound themselves, as with cords, to
the horns of the altars. And v. 2. may be read
fully to this sense, As they remember their children,
they remember their altars and their groves; they
are as fond of them and take as much pleasure
in them, as men do in their own children, and are
as loath to part with them; they will live and die
with their idols, and can no more forget them than
a woman can forget her sucking child.

2. The indigent being thus fully proved, the
judgment is affirmed, and the sentence ratified, v.
3, 4. For we are as they have shedded to their
sins, and will not part with them.

(1.) They shall be made to part with their trea-
urses, and those shall be given into the hands of
strangers. Jerusalem is God's mountain in the field,
it was built on a hill in the midst of a plain; all
the treasures of that wealthy city will God give to the
scoffers. Or, No mountain with whom the fields, thy
wealth and all thy treasures, will I expose to spoil; all
the products of the country, and the stores of the
city, shall be seized by the Chaldeans. Justly are
men stripped of that which they have served their
idols with, and have made the food and fuel of their
hunts. My mountain (so the whole land was, Ps.
lviii. 34. Deut. xi. 11.) you have turned into your
hills. Or, You have turned your altars into workshops
upon your altars; (v. 2.) and you may be given for
a spoil in all your borders. What we make for
a sin, God will make for a spoil; for what comfort
can we expect in that whereof God is disho-
oured?

(2.) They shall be made to part with their in-
heritance, with their real estates, as well as per-
sonal properties. We have read the inscription of
this山谷, (v. 4.) Thou, even thyself, or thou thyself, and
those that are in thee, all the inhabitants, shall dis-
continue from thy heritage that I gave thee. God
owns that it was their heritage, and that he gave it
them; they had an unquestionable title to it, which
was an aggravation of their folly in throwing them-
selves out of the possession of it. It is through thy-
self, (so some read it,) through thine own default,
that they are dispossessed.

Thus shall discontinue, or interrupt, the occupation of thy land. The law
appointed them to let their land rest, (it is the word
here used,) one year in seven, Exod. xxviii. 11.

They did not observe that law, and now God would compel them to let it rest; The land shall enjoy her
sabbaths; (v. xxvii. 34.) and (v. 11.) It shall be no rest
to them, they shall serve their enemies in a land they
know not. Observe, [1.] Sin works a discontinuance of our comforts, and deprives us of the enjoyment of
that which God has given us. Yet, [2.] A discon-
tinuance of the possession is not a defeasance of the
right, but it is intimated, that upon their repentance,
and their recovery possession in, For the pres-
tent, ye have turned it to strangers in mine anger,
which burns so hot, that it seems as if it would burn
for ever; and so it will, unless you repent, for it is the
anger of an everlasting God looking upon immortal
souls; and who knows the power of that anger?

4. Thus shall the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh fles-
sh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the
Lord: 6. For he shall be like the heath in the
desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but
shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in
a salt land and not inhabited. 7. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is:
8. For he shall be as a tree planted by the
waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the
river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but
her leaf shall be green; and shall not be
careful in the year of drought, neither shall she
cease from yielding fruit. 9. The heart is
deceitful above all things, and desperately
wicked: who can know it? 10. I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give
every man according to his ways, and ac-
cording to the fruit of his doings. 11. As
the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth
them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his
days, and at his end shall be a fool.

It is excellent doctrine that is preached in these
verses, in a general concern and use to us all, and
it does not appear to have any particular reference
to the present state of Judah and Jerusalem; the
prophet's sermons were not all prophetic, but
some of them practical; yet this discourse, which,
probably, we have here only the heads of, would be
of singular use to them by way of caution, not to
misplace their confidence in the day of their dis-
trusts. Let us all learn what we are taught here.

Concerning the sins of the people, and the time
then they will certainly meet with who depend upon crea-
tures for success and relief when they are in trouble;
(v. 5, 6.) Cursed be the man that trusts in man;
God pronounces him cursed for the affront he the-
re by puts upon him; or, Cursed, that is, miserable, is
the man that does so, for he leans upon a broken
stick, and if it fall, he shall fall with it, but will run
into his hand and pierce it. Observe, [1.] The shall sin be con-
demned; it is trusting in man, putting that con-
fidence in the wisdom and power, the kindness and
faithfulness, of men, which should be placed in those
attributes of God only: making our applications to
men, and raising our expectations from them as
principal agents, whereas they are but instruments
in the hand of Providence. It is making flesh the

Vol. IV. 3 F
arm we stay upon, the arm we work with, and with which we hope to work our point; the arm under which we shelter ourselves, and on which we depend for protection. God is his people's Arm, Isa. xxxiii. 2. We must not think to make any creature to be that to us, which God has undertaken to be. Man is called flesh, to show the folly of those that make them their confidence; he is flesh, weak and feeble, and has no strength at all in it; he is inactive without spirit, which is a dead thing. He is mortal and dying, as flesh which soon putrefies and corrupts, and is continually wasting. Nay, he is false and sinful, and has lost his integrity; so his being flesh signifies, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) The great malignity there is in this sin; it is the departure of the evil heart of unbelief from the living God. Then that trust in man, perhaps drawn nigh to God with their mouth, and honour him with their lips, they call him their Hope, and say that they trust in him, but really their heart departs from him: they distrust him, despise him, and decline a correspondence with him. Cleaving to the cistern is leaving the Fountain, and is resented accordingly. (3.) The fatal consequences of it. If men rebel against God and will not be served with his things, they are promised to whomever do so. But this is no way of judging about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing; we think that we trust in God, when really we do not, as appears by this, that our hopes and fears rise or fall, according as second causes smile or frown. But it is true, in general.

1. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have, and will have, who make God their confidence, who live by faith in his providence and promise, who refer themselves to him and his guidance at all times, and refrain from all their own devices and cunning, and love the Lord at all times, ver. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) The duty required of us, To trust in the Lord, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient, both to fill up the place of those who fail us, and to protect us from those who abuse us. It is to make the Lord our Hope, his favour the good we hope for, and his power the strength we hope in. (2.) The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that does so, shall be as a tree planted by the waters, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like the heath in the wilderness; like a tree that spreads out its roots, and tree up by the rivers, whereby it draws abundance of sap; which denotes both the establishment and the comfort which they have, who make God their Hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind; a tree thus planted, thus watered, shall not see when heat comes, shall not start from the ground in drought; when summer, it is so well moistened from its roots, that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their Hope, [1.] They shall flourish in credit and comfort; like a tree that is always green, whose leaf does not wither; they shall be cheerful to themselves, and beautiful in the eyes of others. These that thus give honour to God by giving him credit, God will put honour upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. [2.] They shall be fixed in an inward peace and satisfaction; they shall not be careful in a year of drought or droughts, for, like a tree, it has its seed in itself, so it has its moisture. Those who make God their Hope, have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. We need not be solicitous about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. [3.] They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. They who trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, shall not cease from yielding fruits; they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

2. Concerning the abundant satisfaction which they have, and will have, who make God their confidence, who live by faith in his providence and promise, who refer themselves to him and his guidance at all times, and refrain from all their own devices and cunning, and love the Lord at all times, ver. 7, 8. Observe, (1.) The duty required of us, To trust in the Lord, to do our duty to him, and then depend upon him to bear us out in doing it; when creatures and second causes either deceive or threaten us, either are false to us or fierce against us, to commit ourselves to God as all-sufficient, both to fill up the place of those who fail us, and to protect us from those who abuse us. It is to make the Lord our Hope, his favour the good we hope for, and his power the strength we hope in. (2.) The comfort that attends the doing of this duty. He that does so, shall be as a tree planted by the waters, a choice tree, about which great care has been taken to set it in the best soil, so far from being like the heath in the wilderness; like a tree that spreads out its roots, and tree up by the rivers, whereby it draws abundance of sap; which denotes both the establishment and the comfort which they have, who make God their Hope; they are easy, they are pleasant, and enjoy a continual security and serenity of mind; a tree thus planted, thus watered, shall not see when heat comes, shall not start from the ground in drought; when summer, it is so well moistened from its roots, that it shall be sufficiently guarded against drought. Those that make God their Hope, [1.] They shall flourish in credit and comfort; like a tree that is always green, whose leaf does not wither; they shall be cheerful to themselves, and beautiful in the eyes of others. These that thus give honour to God by giving him credit, God will put honour upon them, and make them the ornament and delight of the places where they live, as green trees are. [2.] They shall be fixed in an inward peace and satisfaction; they shall not be careful in a year of drought or droughts, for, like a tree, it has its seed in itself, so it has its moisture. Those who make God their Hope, have enough in him to make up the want of all creature-comforts. We need not be solicitous about the breaking of a cistern, as long as we have the fountain. [3.] They shall be fruitful in holiness, and in all good works. They who trust in God, and by faith derive strength and grace from him, shall not cease from yielding fruits; they shall still be enabled to do that which will redound to the glory of God, the benefit of others, and their own account.

3. Concerning the sinfulness of man's heart, and the divine inspection it is always under, v. 9, 10. It is folly to trust in man, for he is not only frail, but false and deceitful. We are apt to think that we are more wise than our own spirits. What things here promised to whomever do so. But this is no way of judging about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing; we think that we trust in God, when really we do not, as appears by this, that our hopes and fears rise or fall, according as second causes smile or frown. But it is true, in general.

(1.) There is that wickedness in our hearts, which we ourselves are not aware of, and do not suspect to be there; nay, it is a common mistake among the children of men to think themselves, their own hearts at least, a great deal better than they really are. The heart, the conscience of man, in his corrupt and fallen state, is deceitful above all things; it is subtle and false, it is apt to supplant; so the word properly signifies, it is that from which Jacob had his name, a supplanter. It calls evil good, and good evil; puts false colours upon things, and cries peace to those to whom peace does not belong. When men say in their hearts, suffer their hearts to whisper to them, that either there is no God, or he does not see, or he will not require, or they shall have peace, though they go on; in these, and a thousand similar suggestions, the heart is deceitful; it cheats men into the belief of things here promised to whomever do so. But this is no way of judging about which our own hearts deceive us as much as any thing; we think that we trust in God, when really we do not, as appears by this, that our hopes and fears rise or fall, according as second causes smile or frown. But it is true, in general.

(2.) Whatever wickedness there is in the heart, God sees it, and knows it, is perfectly acquainted with it, and apprized of it; I the Lord search the heart. This is true of all that is in the heart, all its thoughts of it, the thoughts and those that are most artfully disguised, and industriously concealed from others. Men may be imposed upon, but God can-
12. A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. 13. O Lord, the Hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. 14. Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise. 15. Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now. 16. As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee; neither have I desired the woful day, thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee. 17. Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil. 18. Let them be confounded that persecute me, but let not me be confounded; let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed: bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.

Here, as often before, we have the prophet retired for private meditation, and alone with God. Those ministers that would have comfort in their work, must be much so. In his converse here with God and his own heart, he takes the liberty, which devout souls sometimes use in their soliloquies, to pass from one thing to another, without tying themselves too strictly to the laws of method and coherence.

1. He acknowledges the great favour of God to his people, in setting up a revealed religion among them, and dignifying them with divine institutions: (v. 12.) A glorious high throne from the beginning, the place of their sanctuary: the temple at Jerusalem, where God manifested his special presence, where the lively oracles were lodged, where the people paid their homage to their Sovereign, and whither they fled for refuge in distress, was the place of their sanctuary. That was a glorious high throne; it was a throne of holiness, that made it truly glorious; it was God’s throne, that made it truly high. Jerusalem is called the hight of the great King, not only Israel’s King, but the King of the whole earth, so that it might justly be deemed the metropolis, or royal city of the world. It was from the beginning so, from the first projecting of it by David, and building of it by Solomon, 2 Chron. ii. 9. It was the honour of Israel, that God set up such a glorious throne among them. As the glorious and high throne, that is, heaven, is the place of our sanctuary; so some read it. Note, All good men have a high value and veneration for the ordinances of God, and reckon the place of the sanctuary a glorious high throne. Jeremiah mentions this here, either as a plea with God for mercy to their land, in honour of the throne of his glory, (ch xiv. 21.) or as an aggravation of the sin of his people, in forsaking God, though his throne was among them, and so profaning his crown, and the place of his sanctuary.

2. He acknowledges the righteousness of God, in abandoning those to ruin, that forsook him, and revolted from their allegiance to him, v. 13. He
4. He complains of the infidelity and daring impiety of the people towards God. He greatly troubled him, and he saw before God this trouble; as the servant that had slights put upon him by the guests he was sent to invite, came and showed his Lord these things. He had faithfully delivered God's message to them; and what answer has he to return to him that sent him? Behold, they say unto this word, Where is now the new wine? Where is now the goodly meat? Where is the fountain of living waters? (v. 15.)

5. He appeals to God concerning the faithful discharge of the office to which he was called, v. 16. Seeing how many professed ministers were left, he seems here to commit his charge to God, that he might, if possible, make a settlement of his work, to exasperate him, and make him uneasy, and tempt him to prevaricate, and alter his message, for fear of displeasing them; but, "Lord," says he, "thou knowest I have not yielded to them." (1.) He continued constant to his work. His office, instead of being his credit and protection, exposed him to reproach, contempt, and injury; "Yet, Lord," says he, "I will not be ashamed, because I have not devised the trouble of wells, nor have I left my work, nor sued for a discharge, or quæstus." 

6. He humbly begs of God, that he would own
him, and protect him, and carry him on cheerfully in that work to which God had so plainly called him, and he had so sincerely devoted himself. Two things he here desires,

(1.) That he might have comfort in serving the God that sent him; (v. 17.) Be not thou a terror to me. Surely more is implied than is expressed;—"Be thou a comfort to me, and let thy favour rejoice my heart, and encourage me, when my enemies do all they can to terrify me, and either to drive me from my work, or to make me drive on heavily in it." Note, The best that have in them, which might justly make God a terror to them, as he was for some time to Job, (ch. vi. 4.) to Asaph, (Ps. lxx. 13.) and especially to David (Ps. lxxii. 13.)—this is that which good men, knowing the terrors of the Lord, dread and deprecate more than anything; nay, whatever frightful accidents may befall them, or how formidable soever their enemies may appear to them, they can do well enough, so long as God is not a Terror to them. He pleads, "Thou art my hope; and then nothing else is my fear, so, not in the day of evil, when it is most threatening, most pressing. My dependence is upon thee; and therefore be not a Terror to me." Note, These that by faith make God their confidence, shall have for their comfort in the worst of times, if it be not their own fault: if we make our trust, we shall not find him our terror.

(2.) That he might have courage in dealing with the people to whom he was sent. 18. They persecuted him, who should have entertained and encouraged him;—"Lord," says he, "let them be confounded, let them be overpowered by the convictions of the world, and made ashamed of their obstinacy, or else let the judgments threatened be at length executed upon them; but let not me be confounded, let not me be terrified by their menace, so as to betray my trust. If upon them mightiest have work to do, which they need not be either ashamed or afraid to go on in, but they do need to be helped by the divine grace to go on in it without shame or fear. Jeremiah had not desired the sorrowful day upon his country in general; but as to his persecutors, in a just and holy indignation at their malice, he prays, Bring upon them the day of evil; in hope that the Lord would bring it upon them mightiest; and thereby prevent the bringing of it upon the country; if they were taken away, the people would be better;—"Therefore destroy them with a double destruction, let them be utterly destroyed, root and branch; and let the prospect of that destruction be their present confusion." This the prophet prays, not at all that he might be avenged, nor so much that he might be eased, but that the Lord may be known by the judgments which he executes.

19. Thus saith the Lord unto me, Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem; 20. And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the Lord, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: 21. Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath-day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22. Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath-day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath-day, as I commanded your fathers. 23. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. 24. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith the Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath-day, but hallow the sabbath-day, to do no work therein; 25. Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. 26. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, and meat-offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the Lord.

27. But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

These verses are a sermon concerning sabbath-sanctification; it is a word which the prophet received from the Lord, and was ordered to deliver in the most solemn, public manner to the people; for they were sent not only to reprove sin, and to press obedience in general, but they must descend to particulars. This message must be proclaimed in all the places of concourse, and therefore in the gates, not only because through them people were continually passing and repassing, but because in them they kept their courts, and laid up their stores. It must be proclaimed (as the king or queen is usually proclaimed) at the court-gate first, the gate by which the kings of Judah come in, and go out, v. 19. Let them be told their duty first, particularly this duty; for if sabbaths be not sanctified as they should be, the rulers of Judah are to be contended with, (so they were, Neh. xiii. 17.) for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He must also preach it in all the gates of Jerusalem. It is a matter of great and general concern, therefore let all take notice of it. Let the kings of Judah hear the word of the Lord, for, high as they are, he is above them; and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for, mean as they are, he takes notice of them, and of what they say and do on sabbath-days. Observe,

1. How the sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, v. 21. 22. (1.) They must rest from their usual employment on the sabbath-day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burden into the city, or out of it, into their houses, or out of them; husbandmen's burdens of corn must not be carried in, nor manure carried out; nor must tradesmen's burdens of wares or merchandises be imported or exported. There must not be a laden horse, or cart, or waggon, seen on the sabbath-day, either in the streets, or in the roads; the servants must not ply in that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provisions or fuel. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labor,
unless in case of necessity. (2.) They must apply themselves to that which is the proper work and business of the day; "Hallow ye the sabbath, consecrate it to the honour of God, and spend it in his service and worship." It is in order to this, that worldly business must be laid aside, that we may be entire for, and intent upon, that work which requires and deserves the whole man. (3.) They must look well to the frame of their spirits, and have a watchful eye upon every thing that borders upon the profanation of the sabbath." Where God is jealous, we must be cautious. "Take heed to yourselves, for it is at your peril, if you rob God of that part of your time which he has reserved to himself." Take heed to your souls; so the word is, in order to the right sanctifying of sabbaths, we must look well to the frame of our spirits, and have a watchful eye upon all the motions of the inward man. Let not the soul be burdened with the cares of this world on sabbath-days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day. And, (4.) he refers them to the law, the statute in this case made and provided; "This is no new imposition upon you, but what I commanded your fathers; as it is an ancient law, it was an ancient command; may, it was a command to the patriarchs."

2. How the sabbath had been profaned; (v. 23.) "Your fathers were required to keep holy the sabbath-day; but they obeyed not, they hardened their necks against this as well as other commands that were given them." This is mentioned, to show that there was a reformation in this matter, that God had a just controversy with them for the long transgression of this law, which they had been guilty of. They hardened their necks against this command, that they might not hear and receive instruction concerning other commands. Where sabbaths are neglected, all religion sensibly goes to decay.

3. What blessings God had in store for them, if they would make conscience of sabbath-sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the sabbath, they should not only not smart for it, but their city and nation should recover its ancient glory, if they would keep sabbaths better, v. 24-26. Let them take care to hallow the sabbath, and do no work therein; and then,

1. The court shall flourish. Kings in succession, or the many branches of the royal family at the same time, as kings, and princes that sit upon the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, (Ps. cxvii. 5.) shall ride in great pomp through the gates of Jerusalem, some in chariots, and some on horses, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah. Note, The honour of the government is the joy of the kingdom; and the support of religion would contribute greatly to this.

2. The city shall flourish. Let there be a face of religion kept up in Jerusalem, by sabbath-sanctification, that it may answer to its title, the holy city, and then it shall remain for ever, shall for ever be inhabited; (so the word may be rendered;) it shall not be destroyed and despoiled, as it is threatened to be. Whatever supports religion, tends to establish the civil interests of a land.

3. The country shall flourish. The cities of Judah and the land of Benjamin shall be replenished with vast numbers of inhabitants, and those abounding in plenty, and living in peace, which will appear by the multitude and value of their offerings which they shall present to God. By this the flourishing of a country may be judged of; What doth the Lord love? The works of the hands of God. Those that starve their religion, either are poor, or are in a fair way to be so.

(b.) The church shall flourish. Meat-offerings, and incense, and sacrifices of praise, shall be brought to the house of the Lord, for the maintenance of the service of that house, and the servants that attend it. God's institutions shall be conscientiously observed, no sacrifices and incense shall be offered to idols, and alienated from God, but every thing shall go in the right channel. They shall have both occasion and hearts to bring sacrifices of praise to God. This is made an instance of great prosperity. Then a people truly flourish, when religion flourishes among them. And this is the effect of sabbath-sanctification; when that branch of religion is kept up, other instances of it are kept up likewise, but when that is lost, devotion is lost either in superstition or in profaneness. It is a true observation which some have made, That the streams of all religion run either deep or shallow, according as the banks of the sabbath are kept up or neglected.

4. What judgments they must expect would come upon them, if they persisted in the profanation of the sabbath; (v. 27.) "If you will not hearken to me in this matter, to keep the gates shut on sabbath-days, so that there may be no unnecessary entering in, or going out, on that day; if you will break through the command, and let the gates be open for that day in common with other days, know that God will kindle a fire in the gates of your city;" intimating, that it shall be kindled by an enemy besieging the city, and assaulting the gates, who shall take this course to force their entrance. Justly shall those gates be fired, that are not used as they ought to be, to shut out sin, and to keep people in to an attendance on the great day of the Lord's greatness, for that day in common with other days, know that God will kindle a fire in the gates of your city; but it shall not be quenched, until it has laid the whole city in ruins. This was fulfilled by the army of the Chaldeans, ch. iii. 13. The profanation of the sabbath is a sin by which God has often contended with a people by fire.

CHAP. XVIII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. A general declaration of God's ways in dealing with nations and kingdoms; that he can easily do what he will with them, as easily as the potter with the clay. (v. 1. 2.) Then he comes to show what he does do what is just and fair with them. If he threaten their ruin, yet, upon their repentance, he will return in mercy and grace toward them, and when he is coming toward them in mercy, nothing but his name and his word can stop the progress of his favours, v. 7-10. II. A particular demonstration of the folly of the men of Judah and Jerusalem, in departing from their God to idols, and so bringing ruin upon themselves, notwithstanding the fair warnings given them, and God's kind intentions toward them, v. 11-17. III. The prophet's complaint to God of the base ingratitude and unreasonable malice of his enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and his prayers against them, v. 18. 23.

1. THE word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there will I cause thee to hear my words. 3. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. 4. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. 5. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 6. O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand
ye in my hand, O house of Israel. 7. what instant I shall speak concerning a
on, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck and to pull down, and to destroy it: 8. that nation, against whom I have pro-
ced, turn from their evil, I will repent he evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak con-
ing a nation, and concerning a king-
i, to build, and to plant it: 10. If it do
in my sight, that it obey not my voice, 
I will repent of the good wherewith I
said I would benefit them.

The prophet is here sent to the potter's house, (he knew where to find it,) not to fire a sermon, as before to the gates of Jerusalem, but to prepare a sermon, or rather to receive it ready prepared. Those needed not to study their sermons, that had them, as he had this, by immediate inspiration.

"Go to the potter's house, and observe how he manages his work, and there I will cause thee, by silent whispers, to hear my words. There thou shalt receive a message, to be delivered to the people." Note, Those that would know God's mind, must observe his appointments, and attend there where they may hear his words. The prophet was never so much as pleasantly guided, and therefore went to the potter's house, (v. 3.) and there notice how he wrought his work upon the wheels, just as he pleased, with a great deal of ease, and in a little time. And, (v. 4.) when a lump of clay that he designed to form into one shape, either proved too stiff, or had a stone in it, or some way or other came to be marred in his hand, he presently turned it into another shape; if it will not serve for a vessel of honour, it will serve for a vessel of dishonour, just as seems good to the potter. It is probable that Jeremiah knew well enough how the potter wrought his work, and how easily he threw it into what form he pleased; but he must go, and observe it now, that, having the idea of it fresh in his mind, he might the more readily and distinctly apprehend that truth which God designed thereby to represent to him, and might more readily and distinctly explain it to the people. God used simili-
tudes by his servants the prophets, (Hos. xii. 10.) and it was requisite that they should themselves un-
derstand the similitudes they used. Ministers will make a good use of their converse with the busi-
ness and affairs of this life, if they learn thereby to speak more plainly and familiarly to people about the things of God, and to expand scripture com-
parisons. For they ought to make all their know-
ledge, some way or other, serviceable to their pro-
fession.

Now let us see what the message is, which Jere-
miah receives, and is intrusted with the delivery of, at the potter's house. While he looks carefully
upon the potter's work, God darts into his mind these two great truths, which he must preach to the
house of Israel.

1. That God has both an incontestable authority, and an irresistible ability, to form and fashion king-
doms and nations as he pleases, so as to serve his own purposes: "Cannot I do with you as this pot-
ter, saith the Lord? v. 6. Have I not as absolute a power over you in respect both of might and of right?" Nay, God has a charter to a dominion over us than the potter has over the clay, for the potter only gives its form, whereas we have both matter and form from God. As the clay is in the potter's hand to be moulded and shaped as he pleases, so are ye in my hand. This intimates, (1.) That

God has an incontestable sovereignty over us, is not Debon to us, may dispose of us as he thinks fit, and is not accountable to us; and that it would be as absu-
surd for us to dispute this as for the clay to quarrel with the potter. (2.) That it is a very easy thing with God to make what use he pleases of, and carry on what he pleases in his dealings with us, and that we cannot resist him. One turn of the wheel, quite alters the shape of the clay, makes it a vessel, unmakes it, new-makes it. Thus are our times in God's hand, and not in our own, and it is in vain for us to strive with him. It is spoken here of nations; the most politic, the most potent, are what God is pleased to make them, and no other: He designs this work by Job, (ch. xii. 23.) He increa-
seth the nations and destroyeth them, he equal-
izes the nations and straiteneth them again; (Ps. cvi. 33, &c.) and compare Job xxxiv. All nations before God are as the drop of the bucket, soon wiped away, or the small dust of the balance, soon blown away, (Isa. xl. 15.) and therefore, no doubt, as easily managed as the clay by the potter. (3.) That God will not be a Loser by any in his glory, at long run, but that he be not glorified by you, he will be glorified upon them. If the potter's vessel be marred for one use, it shall serve for another; those that will not be monuments of mercy, shall be monu-
ments of justice: The Lord has made all things for himself, ye even the wicked for the day of evil, Prov. xvi. 4. God formed us out of the clay, (Job xxxii. 6.) and, we are still as clay in his hands, (Isa. xli. 4.) and therefore, he will be sure to make some use of us, to turn us to good account: the clay that has been over us, that the potter has over the clay? Rom. ix. 21. And are we not bound to submit, as the clay to the potter's wisdom, and will? Isa. xxix. 15, 16.—xlv. 9, 7.

2. That, in the exercise of this authority and ability, he always goes by fixed rules of equity and goodness. He dispenses favours indeed in a way of sovereignty, but never punishes by arbitrary right. High is his right hand, yet he rules not with a high hand, but, as it follows there, Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne, Ps. lxxi. 13, 14. God asserts his despotic power, and tells us what he might do, but at the same time assures us, that he will act as a righteous and merciful Judge.

(1.) When God is coming against us in ways of judgment, the execution of them, which shall appear by this, that national repentance will stop the progress of the judgments; (v. 7, 8.) If God speak concerning a nation, to pluck up its fences that secure it, and so lay it open, its fruit-
trees that adorn and enrich it, and so leave it deso-
late; to pull down its fortifications, that the enemy may have liberty to enter in, its habitations, that the inhabitants may be under a necessity of going out, and so destroy it, as either a vineyard or a city is destroyed; in this case, if that nation take the alarm, and repent of its sins, and reform its lives, turn every one from his evil way, and return to God, God will return in mercy to them, and though he cannot change his mind, he will change his way, so that it may be said, He repents him of the evil that he said lusts to do to them. Thus often in the time of the Judges, when the oppressed people were penitent people, still God raised them up saviours; and when they turned to God, their affairs immediately took a new turn. It was Nineveh's case, and we wish it had often been Jerusalem's; see 2 Chron. vii. 14. It is an undeniable truth, that a sincere conversion from the evil of sin will be an effec-
tual prevention of the evil of punishment; and

(2.) When God is coming towards us in ways of mercy, if any stop be given to the progress of that
mercy, it is nothing but sin that gives it; (v. 9, 10.) If God speak concerning a nation, to build and to plant it, to advance and establish all the true interests of it, is his husbandry, and his building, (1 Cor. iii. 9.) and if he speak in favour of it, is done, it is increased, it is enriched, it is enlarged, its trade flourishes, its government is settled in good hands, and all its affairs prosper, and its enterprises succeed. But if this nation, which God hath thus loaded with benefits, do evil in his sight, and obey not his voice; if it lose its virtue, and become debauched and profane; if religion grow into contempt, and vice get to be fashionable, and so be kept in countenance and reputation, and there be a general decay of all good, then God will turn his hand against them, will pluck up what he was planting, and pull down what he was building; (ch. xlv. 4.) the good work that was in the doing, shall stand still, and be let fall; and what favours were further designed, shall be withheld, and this is called his repenting of the good wherein he said he would benefit them, as he changed his purpose concerning Eliphaz’s house, (1 Sam. xi. 30.) and hurried Israel back into the wilderness, when he had brought them within sight of Canaan. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker between God and a people; it forfeits the benefit of his promises, and spoils the success of their prayers. It defeats his kind intentions concerning them, (Hos. vii. 1.) and baffles their pleasing expectations from him. It raises their comforts, prolongs their grievances, brings them into straits, and returns their deliverances, Is. xlix. 1, 2.

11. Now, therefore, go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good. 12. And they said, There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart. 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ask ye now among the heathen, who hath heard such things? the virgin of Israel hath done a very horrible thing. 14. Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon which cometh from the rock of the field? or shall the cold flowing waters that come from another place be forsaken? 15. Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burnt incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths in a way not cast up: 16. To make their land desolate, and a perpetual hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and wag his head. 17. I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy: I will shew them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity.

These verses seem to be the application of the general truths laid down in the foregoing part of the chapter, to the nation of the Jews and their present state.

1. God was now speaking concerning them, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy; for it is that part of the rule of judgment that their case agrees with; (v. 11.) “Go, and tell them,” (saith God,) “Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you. Providence in all its operations is plainly working toward your ruin. Look upon your conduct toward God, and you cannot but see that your deserve it; look upon his dealings with you, and you cannot but see that he designs it.” He frames evil, as the potter frames the vessel, so as to answer the end.

2. He invites them by repentance and reformation to meet him in the way of his judgments, and so to prevent his further proceedings against them; “Return ye now every one from his evil ways, that so according to all the ways of your fathers ye may return from the evil he had proposed to do unto you, and that providence which seemed to have been framed like a vessel on the wheel against you, shall immediately be thrown into a new shape, and the issue shall be in favour of you.” Note, The warnings of God’s word, and the threatenings of his providence, should be improved by us as strong inducements to us to reform our lives; in which it is not enough to turn from our evil ways, but we must make our ways and our doings good, conformable to the rule, to the law.

3. He foresees their obstinacy, and their perverse refusal to comply with this invitation, though it tended so much to their own benefit, v. 12. They said, “There is no hope.” If we must not be delivered unless we come from evil ways, we may even despair of ever being delivered, for we are resolved that we will walk after our own devices. It is to no purpose for the prophets to say anything more to us, to use any more arguments, or to press the matter any further; we will have our way, whatever it cost us; we will do every one the imagination of his own evil heart, and will not be under the restraint of the divine law. Note, Thus which rains sinners, is, affecting to live as they list; they call it liberty to live at large, whereas for a man to be a slave to his lusts, is the worst of slavery. See how strangely some men’s hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, that they will not so much as promise amendment; nay, they set the judgments of God at defiance; “We will go on with our own devices, and God go on with his; and we will venture the issue.”

4. He upbraids them with the monstrous folly of their obstinacy, and their hating to be reformed. Surely never were people guilty of such an absurdity, never any that pretended to reason, acted so unreasonably; (v. 13.) “Ask ye among the heathen, even those that had not the benefit of divine revelation, no oracles, no prophets, as Judah and Jerusalem had, yet, even among them, who hath heard such a thing?” The Ninevites, when thus warned, turned from their evil ways. Some of the worst of men, when they are told of their faults, especially when they begin to smart for them, will at least promise reformation, and say that they will endeavour to mend. But the virgin of Israel bids us not to repeat this answer, is ready to rush upon us no matter what conscience and Providence say to the contrary, and thus hath done a horrible thing. She should have preserved herself pure and chaste for God, who had espoused her to himself; but she has alienated herself from him, and refuses to return to him. Note, It is a horrible thing, enough to make one tremble to think of it, that those who have once been in the way of sin, and have sailed against sin, should now become so desperate by refusing to reform. Willful impenitence is the grossest self-murder; and that is a horrible thing, which we should abhor the thought of. He shows their folly in two things: 1. In the nature of the sin itself; that they were guilty of. They forsook God for idols, which was
of the most horrible thing that could be, for they put a cheat upon themselves. v. 14, 15. Will a thirsty traveller leave the snow, which, being melted, runs down from the mountains of Lebanon, and, passing over the rock of the field, flows in clear, clean, crystal streams? Will he leave these, pass these by, and think to mend himself with some dirty puddle-water, which, after it has run over from one place to another, from any other place, be forsaken in the heat of summer? No; when men are parched with heat and drought, and meet with cooling, refreshing streams, they will make use of them, and not turn their backs upon them. The margin reads it, "Will a man that is travelling the road, leave my fields, which are plain and level, for a rock, which is rough and stony, and toils, that are as vain as vanity itself, that are not what they pretend to be, nor can perform what is expected from them." They had not the common wit of travellers, but even their leaders caused them to err, and they were content to be misled. (1.) They left the ancient paths, which were appointed by the divine law, which had been walked in by all the saints, which were therefore their right road, but in a dirty way, a rough way, a being well tracked, was both easy to hit, and easy to walk in. But when they were advised to keep to the good old way, they positively said that they would not, ch. vi. 16. (2.) They chose by-paths; they walked in a way not cast asp; not in the highway, the King's highway, in which they might travel safely; and which would certainly lead them to their right end, but in a dirty way, a rough way, a way in which they could not but stumble: such was the way of idolatry; such is the way of all iniquity: it is a false way, it is a way full of stumbling-blocks; and yet this way they chose to walk in, and lead others in.

2. In the mischievous consequences of it. Though the thing itself had been bad, they might have had some hope thereby; but they made themselves any good out of it. But the direct tendency of it was to make their land desolate, and, consequently, themselves miserable, (for so the inhabitants must needs be, if their country be laid waste,) and both themselves and their land a perpetual hissing. Those deserve to be hissed, that have fair warning given them, and will not take it. Every one that passes by their land shall make his remarks upon it, and shall be astonished, and wag his head, some wondering at, others commiserating, others triumphing in, the desolations of a country that had been the glory of all lands. They shall wag their heads in derision, upbraiding them with their folly in forsaking God and their duty, and so pulling this misery upon their own heads. Note, The consequence of turning from God will justly be the scorn of all about them; and, having reproached the Lord, will themselves be a reproach. Their land being made desolate, in pursuance of their destruction, it is threatened, (v. 17.) I will scatter them as with an east-wind, which is fierce and violent; by it they shall be hurried to and fro before the waters that proceed from the north, and are open to the east. They shall not only flee before the enemy, (that they may do, and yet make an orderly retreat,) but they shall be scattered, some one way, and some another. That which completes their misery, is, I will show them the back, and not the face, in the day of their calamity. Our calamities may be easily borne, if God look towards us, and smile upon us, when we are under them, if he countenance us, and show us favour; but if he turn the back upon us, if he show himself displeased, if he be deaf to our prayers, and refuse us his help; if he forsake us, leave us to ourselves, and stand at a distance from us, we are quite undone. If he hide his face, who then can hold him? Job xxxiv. 33. Here God would deal with them as they had dealt with him; (ch. ii. 27.) They have turned their back unto me, and set forth their face. It is a righteous thing with God to show himself strange to these in the day of their trouble, who have showed themselves rude and unfaithful to him in their prosperity. This will have its full accomplishment in that day, when God will say to those, though they have been professors of piety, were yet workers of iniquity. Deut. xxvii. 16. I know you not, say, I never knew you.

18. Then said they, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet: come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words. 19. Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. 20. Shall evil be recompensed for good? for they have digged a pit for my soul. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them. 21. Therefore deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword; and let their wives be bereaved of their children, and be widows; and let their men be put to death; let their young men be slain by the sword in battle. 22. Let a cry be heard from their houses, when thou shalt bring a troop suddenly upon them; for they have digged a pit to take me, and hid snares for my feet. 23. Yet, Lord, thou knowest all their counsel against me to slay me: forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; but let them be overthrown before thee: deal thus with them in the time of thine anger.

The prophet here, as sometimes before, brings in his own affairs, but very much for instruction to us. 1. See here what are the common methods of the persecutors. We may see this in Jeremiah's enemies, v. 18. 1. They laid their heads together, to consult what they should do against him, both to be revenged on him for what he had said, and to stop his mouth for the future. They said, Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah. The enemies of God's people and ministers have been often very crafty themselves, and confident with one another, to do them mischief. What they cannot act upon the prejudice of religion separately, they will try to do in concert. The wicked plots against the just. Cain's plots, and the chief priests and elders, did devise devices against our blessed Saviour himself. The opposition which the gates of hell give to the kingdom of heaven, is carried on with a great deal of cursed policy. God had said, (v. 11.) I devise a device against you; and now, as if they resolved to be quits with him,
and to outwit Infinite Wisdom itself, they resolve to
declare devices against God's prophet, not only
against his person, but against the word he deliver-
ed to them, which they thought by their subtile
management to defeat. 'O the prodigious madness
of those that hope to dissuad God's counsel!

2. Herein they pretended a mighty zeal for the
church, which, they suggested, was in danger, if
Jeremiah was tolerated to preach as he did; "If
they be not destroyed, we shall not cease to
suffer; for the law shall not perish from the
priest: the law of truth is in their mouths," (Mal. ii. 6.)
and there we will seek it; the administration of ordinances
according to the law is in their hands, and neither
the one nor the other shall be wrested from them.
"Counsel shall not perish from the wise; the admin-
istration of public affairs shall always be lodged with
the privy-councillors and ministers of state, to
whom it belongs; nor shall the word of truth be
uttered to the prophets;" they mean those of their own
choosing, who prophesied to them smooth things, and
flattered them with visions of peace. Two things
they insinuated, (1.) That Jeremiah could not be
himself a true prophet, but was a pretender and
a usurper, because he was neither commissioned by
the priests, nor concurred with the other prophets,
who professed to be teachers of the people; who
was the better, he or they, if he be suffered to go on.
If Jeremiah be regarded as an oracle, farewell
the reputation of our priests, our wise men and prophets;
but that must be supported, which is reason enough why he must be suppressed.

(2.) That the matter of his prophecies could not be
from God, because it reflected sometimes upon the
prophets and priests; he had charged them with be-
ing the ring-bearers of all the mischief of ch. v. 18.
and the governors of the people; (ch. xiv. 1.) he had
foretold 11 that their heart should perish, and be aston-
ished, (ch. iv. 9.) that the wise men should be dis-
alyzed, (ch. viii. 9, 10.) that the priests and pro-
phets should be intoxicated; (ch. xiii. 13.) now this
galled them more than any thing else; presuming
upon the promise of God's presence with their
priests and prophets, they could not believe that he
would ever leave them. "The guides of the church
must needs be infallible, and therefore who fore-
told their being infatuated, must be condemned as
a false prophet. Thus, under colour of zeal for the
church, have its best friends been run down.

3. They agreed to do all they could to blast his
reputation; "Come, let us smite him with the tongue,
fasten a bad character upon him, represent him to
some as despicable, and fit to be slighted; to them,
as dangerous, and fit to be prosecuted; to all, as
odious, and not fit to be tolerated." This was their
device, forteri calumniarii, aliquid adhærerit—to
throw the vilest calumnies at him, in hope that some
would adhere, to dress him up in bear-skins, other-
wise they could not bait him. They who projected
this, it is likely, were men of figure, whose tongue
was no small slander, whose representations, though
ever enough, were so designed as to make
them obnoxious, to the justice of the one
and the fury of the other. The scourge of such
tongues will give not only smart lashes, but
deep wounds; it is a great mercy therefore to be hid from
it, Job v. 21.

4. To set others an example, they resolve that
they would not themselves regard any thing he said,
their confidence in his word, in regard to which
they were so well confirmed as a message from God;
"Let us not give heed to any of his words; for, right or wrong,
they will look upon them to be his words, and not
the words of God. What good can be done with
those who hear the word of God with a resolution
not to heed it, or believe it? Nay,

5. That they may effectually silence him, they
resolve to be the death of him; (v. 23.) All their
counsel against me is to slay me; they hunt for
the precious life; and a precious life indeed it was that
they hunted for. Long was this Jerusalem's wretched
character. Thou that killest many of the pro-
phets, and wouldst have killed them all.

11. See here what is the common relief of the
persecuted. This we may see in the course that
Jeremiah took, when he met with this hard usage.
He immediately applied himself to his God by
prayer, and gave himself up to his support.

1. He referred himself and his cause to God's
cognizance, v. 19. They would not regard a word
he said, would not admit his complaints, or take any
notice of his grievances; but, Lord, (says he,) do
thou give heed to me. It is matter of comfort to
faithful ministers, that, if men will not give heed to
their preaching, yet God will give heed to their
praying. He appeals to God as an impartial Judge,
and will bear both sides, as every judge ought to
do; "Do not only give heed to me, but hearken to
the voice of them that contend with me, hear what
they have to say against me, and for themselves,
and then make it to appear that then sitteth in the
throne, judging right. Hear the voice of my con-
tenders, how noisy and clamorous they are, how
false and malicious all they say is, and let them be
uttered against me; cause their own tongues to fall upon them."

2. He complains of their base ingratitude to him; (v. 20.)
"Shall evil be recompensed for evil, and shall it
yet go unpunished? Wilt not thou recompense
me good for that evil?" 2 Sam. vi. 12. To render
good for good is human, evil for evil is brutish, good
for evil is Christian, but evil for good is devilish; it
is very absurd and wicked a thing, that we cannot
think but God will avenge it. See how great
the evil was, that they did against him; they
dug a pit for his soul; they aimed to take away his
life, no less would satisfy them, and that, not in a
generous way, by an open assault, against which he
might have an opportunity of defending himself, but
in a base, cowardly, clandestine way, they digged
fils for him, which there was no fence against, Ps.
xxviii. 53, but see how great the good was, which
he had done for them; Remember that I stood be-
fore thee to speak good for thee; he had been an
intercessor with God for them, had used his interest
in heaven on their behalf, which was the greatest
kindness they could expect from one of his char-
acter. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee,
Gen. xxv. 7. Moses often did this for Israel,
and yet they did not rise up against him; nor did
they shake of stoning him. He did them this kindness
when they were in imminent danger of destruction,
and most needed it. They had themselves pro-
voked God's wrath against them, and it was ready
to break in upon them, but he stood in the gap, (as
Moses, Ps. cxi. 23.) and turned away that wrath.
Now, (1.) This was very base in them. Call a man
ungrateful, and you cannot imagine that it
was not more so in them, who had forgotten their
God, did not know their best friends. (2.) It was
very grievous to him, as the like was to David; (Ps.
xxiv. 13.—cix. 4.) For my love they are my ad-
versaries. Thus disingenuously do sinners deal with
the great Intercessor, crucifying him afresh, and
speaking against him on earth, while his blood is
speaking for them in heaven. It would be comfort to the prophet, that, when
they were so spiteful against him, he had the testi
mony of his conscience for him, that he had done
his duty to them; and the same will be our rejoic-
ing in such a day of evil. The blood-thirsty hate
the upright, but the just seek his soul, Prov.
xxix. 10.

3. He impregnates the judgments of God upon
them, not from a revengeful disposition, but in a
prophetical indignation against their horrid wickedness, v. 21. -23. He prays, (1.) That their families might be starved for want of bread; "Deliver up their children to the famine, to the famine in the country for want of rain, and that he may strike them through the straitness of the siege. To this let me add (2.) That they might be cut off "by the sword of war, which, whatever it was in the enemy's hand, would be, in God's hand, a sword of justice; "Pour them out (so the word is) by the hands of the sword; let their blood be shed as profusely as water, that their wives may be left childless and widowed, their husbands being taken away by death;" (some think that the prophet refers to futility;) let their young men, that are the strength of this generation, and the hope of the next, be slain by the sword in battle, (3.) That the terrors and desolations of war might seize them suddenly and by surprise, that thus their punishment might answer to their sin; (v. 22.) "Let a cry be heard from their houses, loud shrieks, when thou shalt bring a troop of the Chaldeans sud- denly upon them, to seize them and all they have, to make them prisoners, and their estates a prey;" for thus they would have done by Jeremiah, they aimed to ruin him at once ere he was aware; "They have dug a pit for me, as for a wild beast, and have hid snares for me, as for some ravenous, noxi- ous foul." (4.) They that think to insinuate themselves will justly be themselves insinuated in an evil time. (4.) That they might be dealt with according to the desert of this sin which was without ex- cuse; "Forgive not their iniquity, neither blot out their sin from thy sight; let them not escape the just punishment of it: let them lie under all the miseries of those whose sins are unpardoned." (5.) That God's wrath against them might be their ruin; "Let their sons fall down before their eyes;" that is, lets, that justice is in pursuit of them, that they endeavour to make their escape from it, but in vain; they shall be made to stumble in their flight, and, being overthrown, they will certainly be overtaken. And then, Lord, in the time of thine anger, do to them, (he does not say what he would have done to them, but,) do to them as thou holdest fit, as thou used to do with those whom thou art angry with; deal thus with them.

Now this is not written for our imitation. Jeremiah was a prophet, and, by the impulse of the spirit of prophecy, in the foresight of the ruin certainly coming upon his persecutors, might pray such prayers as we may not; and if we think, by this example, to justify ourselves in such imprega-
tions, we know not what manner of spirit we are of; our Master has taught us, by his precept and pattern, to bless them that curse us, and pray for them that despitefully use us; yet it is written for our instruction, and is of use to teach us, [1.] That those who have forfeited the benefit of the prayers of God's prophets for them, may justly expect to have their prayers against them. [2.] That per- secutors of the true prisoners among them for their iniquity very fast, and will bring as sure and sore a destruction upon them as any other. [3.] Those who will not be won upon by the kindness of God and his prophets, will certainly at length feel the just resentment of both.

CHAP. XIX.

The same melancholy theme is the subject of this chapter; that was of the foregoings-the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins; Jeremiah had often foretold this; here he has particular full orders to do it again. 1. He must set his sins in order before them, v. 1. -5. He must describe the particular judgments which were now coming upon them for these sins, v. 6. -9. 11. He must do this in the valley of Tophet, with great solemnity, and for some particular reasons, v. 2, 3. 4. He must summon a company of the elders together, to be witnesses of this solemn solemnity, that they might confirm this, and endeavour to affect his hearers with it, by a sign, which was, the breaking of an earthen bottle, signifying that they should be dashed to pieces like a potter's vessel, v. 10. -13. When he had done this in the valley of Tophet, he ratified it in the court of the temple, v. 14. Thus were all likely means tried to awaken this stupid, senseless people to repentance, that their ruin might be prevented; but all in vain.

1. Thus saith the Lord, Go, and get a potter's earthen bottle, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests, 2. And go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee; 3. And say, Hear ye the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. 4. Because they have forsaken me, and have estranged this place, and have burnt incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; 5. They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into my mind: 6. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor, The valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter. 7. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives; and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. 8. And I will make this city desolate, and a hissing: every one that pass- eth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. 9. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend, in the siege and straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.

The corruption of man having made it necessary that freewill should be upon freewill, and line upon line, (so unapt are we to receive, and so very apt to let slip, the things of God,) the grace of God has provided that there shall be, accordingly, freewill upon freewill, and line upon line, that those who are irremediable may be inexusable. For this reason, the prophet here is sent with a message to the same purpose with what he had often delivered, but with some circumstances that might make it the more taken notice of, a thing which ministers
should study, for a little circumstance may sometimes be a great advantage, and they that would win souls, must be wise.

1. He may take of the elders and chief men, both in church and state, to be his auditors, and witnesses to what he said; the ancients of the people, and the ancients of the priests, the most eminent men both in the magistracy, and in the ministry, that they might be faithful witnesses, to record, as these, Isai. vii. 2. It is strange that these great men would be at the beck of a poor prophet, and obey his summons, that send him out of the city, they love counsel, and they knew what word of the Lord was there from the beginning, and the holy ones were not disaffected to him, yea, and though the generality of the elders were disaffected to him, yet it is likely that there were some few among them, who looked upon him as a prophet of the Lord, and would pay this respect to the heavenly vision. Note, Persons of rank and figure have an opportunity of honouring God by a diligent attendance on the ministry of the word, and other divine institutions; and they ought to think it an honour, and no dispensation to themselves, yea, though the circumstances be mean and desppicable. It is certain that the greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of God.

2. He must go to the valley of the son of Hinnom, and deliver this message there; for the word of the Lord is not bound to any one place; as good a place as any that was there, was as good as Jerusalem, as the gate of the temple, and the mount Zion, and the house of the Lord, and the altar of sacrifice, they were as good as the gates of the city, in the gate of the city. Christ preached on a mountain, and out of a ship. This valley lay partly on the south side of Jerusalem, but the prophet's way to it was by the entrance of the east gate, the sun-gate, (ver. 2.) so some render it, and suppose it to look not toward the sun-rising, but the noon-sun, the latter gate; so some. This sermon must be preached in that place, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, where they saw they had been guilty of the villest of their idolatries, the sacrificing of their children to Moloch, a horrid piece of iniquity, which the sight of the place might serve to remind them of, and upbraid with. (2.) Because there should they feel the sorest of their calamities; there the greatest slaughter should be made among them; and it being the common sink of the city, let this be a memorable instance, that a miserable spectacle this magnificent city would be, when it should be all like the valley of Tophet. God bids him go thither, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee, when thou comest thither; whereby it appears, (as Mr. Gataker well observes,) that God's messages were frequently not revealed to the prophets before the very instant of time wherein they were to deliver them.

3. He must give general notice of a general ruin now shortly coming upon Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 3. He must, as those that make proclamations, begin with an "Oyes, Hear ye the word of the Lord, though it be a terrible word, for you may think yourselves if it be so." Both rulers and riled must attend to it, at their peril; the kings of Judah, the king and his sons, the king and his princes, and priests, who are the heads of the people, the King of kings, for, high as they are, he is above them. The inhabitants of Jerusalem also must hear what God has to say to them. Both princes and people have contributed to the national guilt, and must concur in the national repentance, or they will both share in the national ruin. Let them all know that the Lord of hosts, who is therefore able to do so, shall lead away captives, and shall be strong against them, and shall bring back them again; yea, because he is so, will therefore punish them in this first place for their iniquities; (Amos iii. 2.) He will call evil upon this place, upon Judah and Jerusalem, so surprising, and so dreadful, that whoever hears it, his ears shall tingle: whosoever hears the prediction of it, hears the report and representation of it, it shall make such an impression of terror upon him, that he shall still think it hearing it sounding in his ears, and shall not be able to get it out of his mind. The ruin of El's house is thus described, (1 Sam. xvi. 11.) and of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxii. 12.

4. He must plainly tell them what their sins were, for which God had this controversy with them; (ver. 4, 5.) they were, apostasy from God; They have forsaken me; abuse of the privileges of the visible church, with which they had been dignified; They have disgraced this place. Jerusalem, the holy city, the holy temple, the holy house which were designed for the honour of God, and the support of his kingdom among men, they had alienated from these purposes and (as some render the word) they had strangely abused. They had so polluted both with their wickedness, that God had disowned both, and abandoned them to ruin. He charges them with an affront for, and the adoration of, false gods, such as neither they nor their fathers have known, such as never had recommended themselves to their belief and esteem by any acts of power or goodness done for them or their ancestors, as that God had abundantly done, whom they forsook; yet they took them at a venture for their gods; nay, being fond of change and novelty, they liked them the better for their being upstarts; and new fashions in religion were dearer to them than olden things. They also stand charged with murder, wilful murder, from malicious pretexts; They have filled this place with the blood of innocents. It was Manasseh's sin, (2 Kings, xxiv. 4.) which the Lord would not pardon. Nay, as if idolatry and murder, committed separately, were not bad enough, and affront enough to God and man, they have put them together, have consolidated them into one dreadful crime, that of burning their children in the fire to Baal, (ver. 5.) which was the most inordinate defiance to all the laws both of natural and revealed religion that ever mankind was guilty of; and by it they openly declared that they loved their new gods better than ever they loved the true God, though they were such cruel taskmasters, that they required human sacrifices, inhuman I should say, for they thought that the whole lives and souls are, never demanded from his worshippers; he never shook of such a thing, nor came it into his mind. See ch. vii. 31.

5. He must endeavour to affect them with the greatness of the desolation that was coming upon them. He must tell them, (as he had done before, ch. vii. 52.) that this valley of the sons of Hinnom shall acquire a new name, the valley of slaughter, (ver. 6.) for (ver. 7) multitudes shall fall there by the sword, when either they sally out upon the besiegers, and are repulsed, or attempt to make their escape, and are seized; They shall fall before their enemies, who not only endeavour to make themselves masters of their houses and estates, but have such an implacable enmity to them, that they seek their lives, they thirst after their blood, they have no heart, no mind, I mean, to spare them, they will not allow a cartel for the burning of the slain, but their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven and beasts of the earth. What a dismal place will the valley of Tophet be then! And as for those that remain within the city, and will not capitulate with the besiegers, they shall perish for want of food, when first they have eaten the flesh of the little children, when they have eaten the flesh of their own children, they shall have no bread for the next day, and the day after they shall be consumed with hunger, as they shall be consumed with the fire of war, as they are consumed with the fire of God. They shall be devoured, for God will not show them mercy in the day of judgment, he will not spare them, but he will make his seat of vengeance upon them; (ver. 8.) Ver. 9. This was threatened in the law, as an instance of the extremity to which the judgments of God should reduce them, (Lev. xxvi. 29. Deut. xxvii. 33.) and was accomplished, Lam. iv. 10. And lastly, the whole city shall be desolate, the houses laid in ashes, the inhabitants,
420

sacrifices. They might have been made long since."

They that will make God's counsel, by humbling themselves under his mighty hand, will make void their counsel, and blast their projects, which they think ever so well concerted for their own preservation. There is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

10. Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, 11. And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Even so will I break this people, and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again; and they shall bury them in Tophet, till there be no place else to bury. 12. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make their city as Tophet: 13. And the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall he defile, as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burnt incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods. 14. Then came Jeremiah from Tophet, whither the Lord had sent him to prophesy; and he stood in the court of the Lord's house, and said to all the people, 15. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the evil that I have pronounced against it; because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.

The message of wrath delivered in the foregoing verses is here enforced, that it might gain credit, two ways.

I. By a visible sign. The prophet was to take along with him an earthen bottle, (v. 1.) and when he had delivered his message, he was to break the bottle to pieces, (v. 10.) and the same that were auditors of the sermon, must be spectators of the sign. He had compared this people, in the chapter before, to the potter's clay, which is easily marred in the making; but some might say, "It is past that with us, we have been made and hardened long since." "And what though you be," says he, "the potter's vessel is as soon broken in the hand of any man, as the vessel while it is soft clay is marred in the potter's hand, and its case is, in this respect much worse; that the vessel, while it is soft clay, though it be marred, may be moulded again, but after it is hardened, when it is broken, it can never be pieced again." Perhaps what they see will affright them more than what they only hear talk of; that is the intention of sacramental signs, and teaching by symbols was anciently used. In the explication of this sign, he must inculcate what he had before said, with a further reference to the place where this was done, in the valley of Tophet.

1. As the bottle was easily, irresistibly, and irrecoverably broken, so shall Jerusalem be broken by the Chaldean army, v. 11. They depended much upon the firmness of their constitution, and the fixedness of their course, which they thought hardened them like a vessel of brass; but the prophet shows that all that did but harden them like a vessel of earth, which, though hard, is brittle, and sooner broken than that which is not so hard. Though the vessels were not all they still they were vessels of earth, and so they shall be made to know, if they dishonour God and themselves, and serve not the purposes for which they were made. It is God himself who made them that resolves to unhackle them; I will break this people, and this city, dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel; the doom of the heathen, (Ps. ii. 9. Rev. ii. 27.) but now Jerusalem's doom, xxx. 14. A potter's vessel, when once broken, cannot be made whole again; cannot be cured, so the word is. The ruin of Jerusalem shall be an utter ruin; no hand can repair it, but his that broke it; and if they return to him, though he has torn, he will heal.

2. This was done in Tophet to signify two things, (1.) That Tophet should be the receptacle of the sins; They shall be cast into a city intended to bury elsewhere; (so some read it;) and if they had had conveniences any where else, they would not have buried there, where all the fifth of the city was carried. Or, as we read it, They shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place to bury any more there; they shall justly for room to lay their dead; and a very little room will then serve these, who, while they lived, laid,burse to house, and earth to field. They that would be placed alone in the midst of the earth, while they were above ground, and obliged all about them to keep their distance, must lie with the multitude when they are under ground, for they are innumerable before them.

(2.) That Tophet should be a resemblance of the whole city; (v. 12.) I will make this city as Tophet. As they should break the whole clay vessel, so all the sin which they sacrificed to their idols, so God will fill the whole city with the slain, that shall fall as sacrifices to the justice of God. We read (2 Kings xxiii. 10.) of Josiah's defiling Tophet, because it had been abused to idolatry; which he did, (as should seem, v. 14.) by filling it with the bones of men; and, whatever it was before, thenceforward it was loaded upon as a detestable place. Dead carcasses, and other filth of the city, were carried thither, and a fire continually kept there, for the burning of it. This was the posture of that valley, when Jeremiah was sent thither to prophesy; and so execrable a place was it looked upon to be, that in the language of our Saviour's time, hell was called, in allusion to it, Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom. It was also, (says God,) since that blessed reformation, when Tophet was defiled, did not proceed as it ought to have done, nor prove a thorough reformation, but though the idols in Tophet were abolished and made odious, these in Jerusalem remained, there fore will I do with the city as Josiah did by Tophet, fill it with the bodies of men, and make it an heap of rubbish. Even the houses of Jerusalem, and those of the kings of Judah, the royal palaces not excepted, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, (v. 15.) and for the same reason, because of the idolatries that have been committed there; since they will not defile them by a reformation, God will defile them by a destruction, because upon the roof
of their houses they have burnt incense unto the host of heaven. The flat roofs of their houses were sometimes used by devout people as convenient places for prayer, (Acts x. 6.) and by idolaters they were used as high places, on which they sacrificed to strange gods, especially to the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, that there they might be so much the more and the more full of their wickedness and corruption. We read of those that worshipped the host of heaven on the house-tops, (Zeph. i. 5.) and of altars on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, 2 Kings xxiii. 12. This sin upon the house-tops brought a curse into the house, which consumed it, and made it a dunghill like Tophet.

II. By a solemn recognition and ratification of what we have heard and seen in the course of the Lord's house, v. 14, 15. The prophet returned from Tophet to the temple, which stood upon the hill over that valley, and there confirmed, and, probably, repeated, what he had said in the valley of Tophet, for the benefit of those who had not heard it: what he had said he would stand to. Here, as often before, he both assures them of judgments coming upon them, and assigns the cause of them, which was their sin. Both these are brought by him together in one place, with a reference to all that had gone before. 1. The accomplishment of the prophecies is here the judgment threatened. The people flattered themselves with a conceit that God would be better than his word; the threatening was but to frighten them, and keep them in awe a little: but the prophet tells them that they deceive themselves if they think so. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, who is almighty, and will make his words good, I will bring upon this city, and upon all her towns, all the lesser cities that belong to Jerusalem the metropolis, all the evil that I have pronounced against it. Note, Whatever men may think to the contrary, the executions of Providence will fully answer the predictions of the word; and God will appear as terrible against sin and sinners as the scripture makes him, nor shall the unbelief of men make either his promise or his threatenings of no effect, or of less effect than it was thought to be of. 2. The contempt of the prophecies is here the sin charged upon them, as the procuring cause of this judgment. It is because they have hardened their necks, and would not bow and bend them to the yoke of God's commands, would not hear my words, would not heed them, and yield obedience to them, the people that is settled among their sins, in their sinful ways, is altogether their own fault; if their necks are hardened, it is their own act and deed, they have hardened them; if they are deaf to the word of God, it is because they have stopped their own ears. We have need therefore to pray that God, by his grace, would deliver us from hardness of heart, and contempt of his word and commandments.

CHAP. XX.

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, if it did not convince and humble men, would provoke and exasperate them; and so it did; for here we find, I. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur, for preaching that sermon, v. 1, 2. II. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word, which Jeremiah had preached, confirmed, v. 3-6. III. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet, and wherein he had been so treated, (v. 7-10.) encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears that he had much grace, (v. 11-13.) and never measured the day of his probation, (v. 14, 15.) by which it appears that he had had sad remembrances of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

I. NOW Pashur, the son of Immer the priest, who was also the chief governor in the house of the Lord, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things. 2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord. 3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-missabib. 4. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends; and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. 5. Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon. 6. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thy house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

Here is,

I. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, v. 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore, one would think, should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too; and the more, because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers, ought to consult: but this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronized. He was the son of Immier; he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which course, Immier, whom these priests were first settled by, was father, (1 Chron. xxiv. 14.) as Zechariah was of the order of Abiah, Luke i. 5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name, mentioned ch. xxii. 1. who was of the fifth course. This Pashur was chief governor in the temple; perhaps he was only so pro tempore — for a short period, the course he was head of being now in waning; or he was sufficing, by the High Priest; or, perhaps, captain of the temple, or of the guards about it, Acts iv. 1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity, and concern for God and the church.

We cannot suppose that Pashur was one of those ancient of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet, to heap him reproaches, unless we are with those who design to make no charge against him; but when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable that he was himself a witness of what he said, and so it may be read, (v. 1.) He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things. As we read it, the information was brought him by others, whose examinations he took; He heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things, and could not bear it; especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was chief governor, without his leave. When power in the
church is abused, it is the most dangerous power that can be employed against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah. 1. He smote him, struck him with his hand, or staff of authority. Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the High Priest ordered to be given Paul; (Acts xxvii. 2.) he struck him on the mouth, and bade him hold his peace. He was guilty of many bloody sins, intended to hurt him; he beat him severely, as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen, (Matt. xxi. 35.) that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal; the High Priest, and the rest of the priests, ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah’s credentials examined, and the matter inquired into, whether he had an authority, or not. But what rules of justice are set aside, and despised, as mere formalities; right or wrong, Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity. 2. He put him in the stocks. Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others (as we) a pair of stocks for his legs; whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, in the high gate of Benjamin, which was in, or by the house of the Lord; probably, a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, but little as long as he was unjustly imprisoned, to expose him to contempt, and render him odious, that he might not be regarded if he did prophecy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious, ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been counted as the off-scouring of all things. Would it not raise a pious indignation, to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench, and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well that there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face. II. God’s just displeasure against Pashur, and the tokens of it. On the morrow, Pashur gave Jeremiah’s discharge, brought him out of the stocks; (v. 3.) it is probable that he continued him there, in little cases, as long as he found it convenient to keep him in that punishment. And now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that, when Pashur put Jeremiah in the stocks, the latter gave him any check for what he did; he appears to have quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; when he suffered, he threatened not; but, when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet’s mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For when the prophet of the Lord was bound, the word of the Lord was not.—What can we think Pashur aimed at, in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see by what God says to him, that he is disappointed. 1. Did he aim to establish himself, and make himself easy, by silencing one that told of his faults, and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? He shall not gain this point; for, (1.) Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face, and make him always uneasy. To confirm this, he shall have a name given him, Mager-missabib—Terror round about, or, Fear on every side. God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so, will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress, but in despair; not only in danger on every side, (that a man may be, and yet by fath may be in no terror, as David, Ps. iii. 6. xxvii. 3.) but in fear on every side; and that a man may be when there appears no danger; The wicked flee when no man pursues; are in great fear where no fear is. This shall be Pashur’s case; (v. 4.) “Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself; thou shalt be subject to continual frights, and thy own fancy and imagination shall create thee a constant uneasiness.” Note, God can make the most daring sinner in fear for himself, and render him a way to frighten those that frighten his people from doing their duty. And those that will not hear of their faults from God’s prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, shall be made to hear of them from conscience, which is a reprover in their own bosoms, that will not be daunted or silenced. And miserable is the man that is thus made a terror to himself! Yet this is not all, all his calamities are ordered for his present good, and for his everlasting glory; they shall be turned into blessing, and cause him to be a terror to others. (2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in, and perhaps, studied to oblige, in what he did against Jeremiah, shall fall all. God does not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live longer, for the sake of his friends, and to teach him by his own proceedings, what a continual castigation, that, wherever he goes, he shall be a monument of divine justice; and when it is asked, “What makes this man in such continual terror?” it shall be answered, “It is God’s hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks.” His friends, who should encourage him, shall all be cut off; they shall fall by the sword of the enemy, and by the hand of their enemies. This is a very just and justifiable design, to increase his terror. (3.) He shall find, in the issue, that his terror is not causeless, but that divine vengeance is waiting for him; (v. 6.) he and his family shall go into captivity, even to Babylon; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect, be buried in his chains, and burned with the remains of his bones, with the remains of Pashur. Let persecutors read it, and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin. 2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable that he did; for it appears by v. 6. that he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people that they should have peace; he prophesied lies to them, and because Jeremiah’s prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavored to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he gain his point? No, Jeremiah stands to what he has said against Judah and Jerusalem; and God by many means frustrates it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its course; so it had here. (1.) The country shall be ruined: (v. 4.) I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon. It had long been God’s own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country, and dispose of the inhabitants; some to the sword, and some to captivity, as he pleases, but none shall escape him. (2.) The city shall be ruined too, v. 5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that, and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon. [1.] He shall seize their magazines and military stores, *•••• called the
1. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him, and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation, no doubt, was according to truth, and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and no doubt, would bear him out. He complains, 1. That he was ridiculed and laughed at; they made a jest of every thing he said and did; and this cannot but be a great grievance to an innocent mind; (v. 7.) I am his master and teacher; he was put upon him, and made themselves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was continually; I was in derision daily; thus he was universally; Every one mocks me; the greatest so far forget their own gravity, and the meanest so far forgot mine. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, was reviled by both the soldiers and priests; and the reviling of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of his office; (v. 8.) they could find nothing for which to deride him, but his preaching; it was the word of the Lord that was made a reproach; that for which they should have honoured and respected him; but that to deliver God's message to the Lord to them, was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon, but, though he kept as closely as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it, for which to banter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think that, though divine revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for, (1.) The manner of his preaching: Since he spake, he cried out. He had always been a lively, affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name, he always spake as a man in earnest; he cried aloud, and did not spare, spared neither himself, nor them to whom he preached; and this was enough for them to laugh at, who hated to be serious. It is common for these that are unaffected with, and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless, unbelieving hearers. (2.) The matter of his preaching; he cried violence and spoil. He reproved them for the violence and spoil which they were guilty of; they were themselves that spoke thus to another; and he prophesied of the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them, as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as overprecise, for the latter as over-credulous; in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains further; (2.) That he was pithed and contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as a bad man, and dangerous to the government. This he laments as his grievance, v. 10. Being laughed at, though it touches a man in point of honour, is yet a thing that may be easily laughed at again; for, as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to deserve those jests and jeers and sport, and with more subtlety. (1.) They spake ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself, and were industrious to spread false report concerning him; I heard, at second-hand, the defaming of many, fear on every side, (of many Magor missabibs; so some read,) of many such men as Pashur was, and who expounded this to them. On this was the matter of their defamation, they represented Jeremiah as an instigator of instilled fears and jealousies on every side into the minds of
the people, and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or, had the prophets been more severe against him, that he could not but be afraid of the consequences. Nay, he was, he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a Magna-missibah. These words are found in the original, verbatim, the same, Ps. xxxi. 13. I have heard the slander, or defaming of many, fear on every side. Jeremiah, in his complaint, chooses to make use of the same words that David was for so long time in distress, to furnish a comfort to him that other good men had suffered the abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves, as there is occasion. Whatever we have to say, we may from thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter; Report, say they, and we will report. They resolve to cast an odium upon him, and this is the method they take; "Let some very bad thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and though it be ever so false, we will second it, and spread it, and add to it." (For the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carriage.) "Do you that frame a story plausible, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and then say that you heard it from him who we came into, Do you say it, and we will swear it; do you set it agoing, and we will follow it." And thus both are guilty equally, they that raise, and they that propagate, the false report. The receiver is as bad as the thief. (2.) They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him, on which to ground an accusation, as the spies that came, Luke xx. 20.—xi. 33, 34. His familiars, that he converse freely with, and put a confidence in, watched for his halting, observed what he said, which they could by any strained innuendo put a bad construction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad, when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, "If we accost him kindly, and insinuate ourselves into his acquaintance, peradventure he will be addicted to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy, and a pensioner to the king of Babylon, or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasurables words; and then we shall prevail against him, and take our revenge on him for telling us of our faults, and threatening us with the judgments of God." Not the least of their devices was to connect him with the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation. 11. Here is an account of the temptation he was in, under this affliction; his feet were almost gone, as the Psalmist's, Ps. xxxi. 2. And this is that which is to be most dreaded in affliction, being driven to it by sin. 12. As he was. He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with, (v. 7.) O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived. This, as we read it, sounds very harsh. God's servants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Mister, and never cheated them; and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If, when God called him to be a prophet, and told him he would set him over the kingdom, (ch. i. 16.) and make him a defended city, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterward it proved otherwise, he must not say that God had deceived him, but that he had deceived himself; for he knew how often the spirit of prophecy in those that were actuated by it, and had no reason to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told him that all the princes, priests, and people of the land, would fight against him, (ch. i. 19.) which he had forgotten, else he would not have set the blame on God. Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should expect, in going to Jerusalem, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But it may be well read thus, Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded; it is the same word that was used, Gen. ix. 27. margin, God shall persuade Japheth. And Prov. xxv. 15. By much forbearance is a prince persuade. And Hos. ii. 14. I will allure her. And this agrees with what the Lord says, "They think more than I, didst over-power them, and persuaded them by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and thou hast prevailed." Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetic office, he pleaded that he was under age, and unfit for the service; but God overruled his pleas, and told him that he must go, ch. i. 6, 7. Now, Lord, says he, since thou hast put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision; but why am I so when thou didst thrust me into it. It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God, as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done, had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him, and the profit it would have been to him. 13. Note, As long as we see ourselves in the view of God and duty, it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it. 2. He was tempted to quit his work, and give it over; partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it, and partly because those to whom he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were exasperated and made worse; (v. 9.) Then I said, Since by prophesying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, I will not make mention of him as my Author for any thing I say, nor speak any more in his name, since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself, and speak no more, since I may as well speak to the stones as to them." Note, It is strong temptation to poor ministers to resolve that they will preach no more, when they see their preaching slighted and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their ministers into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say that they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thank-worthy; and though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious. 11. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to this work, and cheerful dependence on his God, notwithstanding. 1. He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to his business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up; "I said, in my haste, I will speak no more in his name, what I have in my heart to deliver I will stifle and suppress; but I soon found it was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, which glued inwardly, and must have vent, it was impossible to smother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy, and in a continual agitation; while I kept silence from good, my heart was hot within me, it was pain and grief to me, and I must speak, that I may be refreshed;" Ps. xxxix. 2, 3. Job xxxvii. 20. While I kept silence, my bones were ached, Ps. xxxvii. 3. See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those that were actuated by it, and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves. I believed, therefore have I spoken. Jeremiah was soon weary
with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to pain so much as being silenced, nor to terror so much as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for, *Wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel,* whatever it cost me, 1 Cor. iv. 16. And it is really a mercy to have the word of God thus mightily in us to overpower our convictions.

He was assured of God's presence with him, which would be sufficient to baffie all the attempts of his enemies against him; (v. 11.) "They say, *We shall prevail against him,* the day will undoubtedly be our own; but I am sure that they shall not prevail; they shall not prosper, I can safely set them all at defiance, for the Lord is with me, is on my side, to take my part against them," (Rom. viii. 31.) to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me. He is with me, to support me and keep me up under the burthen which now presses me down. He is with me, to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire. He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to strike a terror upon them, and so to overcome them. Note, Even that in God which is terrible, is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall stand to their good. The terrible God, and the terri-\footnote{13}ble people. God's being a mighty God, bespeaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him, or any one that, like Jeremiah, was commissioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God be to those that think to damn all about them, and will themselves be damned by nothing! The most formidable enemies that act against us, appear despis-\footnote{14}ible when we see the Lord for us, when the presence of God is as a terrible one, Neh. iv. 14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance, *"If the Lord be with me, my persecutors shall stumble,* so that when they pursue me, they shall not overtake me, (Ps. xxvii. 2.) and then they shall be greatly ashamed of their impotent malice and fruitless attempts. Nay, their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be for-\footnote{15} gotten; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation, whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave upon them an indelible reproach." 3. He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, v. 12. He looks upon God as the God that tries the righte-\footnote{16}ous, takes cognizance of them, and of every cause that they are interested in. He does not judge in favor of them, but in destroying the wicked, he is found finding that they have right on their side, and their persecutors wrong them and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. He that tries the righteous, tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both. For he sees the reins and the heart, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can pass an un-\footnote{17}derstanding judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God, (1.) To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodges his appeal; *Unto thee have I opened my cause.* Not but that God perfectly knew his cause, and all the merits of it, without his opening; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him, he knows it, but he will know it from us, and allows us a share in the honor of the open confession of it, as well to find out, as to confess our faults to him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and burthened, to open our cause to God, and pour out our complaints before him. (2.) By whom he expects to be righted; *Let me see thy vengeance upon them;* such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication, the vengeance thou must to take on persecutors. Note, Whenever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it, to whom vengeance belongs, and who hath said, *I will repay.* 4. He greatly rejoices and praises God, in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliver-\footnote{18}ance, v. 13. So full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, the divine protection he is under, and the divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he stirs up himself and others to praise God the giver of it; *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord.* Here is a great change with him since he began this dis-\footnote{19}course; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced, and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in God whom (v. 7.) he was disturbing; he stirs up himself to praise that Name which (v. 9.) he was resolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exercise of his soul, that turned his sighs into songs, and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, *He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evil-doers;* he means especially himself, his own poor soul. *He hath delivered me from the wicked who desire my soul to perish, and to cast me into the net of the hand of Pashur, and he will continue to deliver me,* 2 Cor. i. 10. *He will deliver my soul* from the sin that I am in danger of falling into, when I am thus persecuted. *He hath delivered me from the hand of evil-doers, so that they have not gained their point, nor had their will.* Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to, who has well-doers under the hand of his protection, and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint. 14. Cursed be the day wherein I was born; let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. 15. Cursed be the man that brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee; making him very glad. 16. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew, and repented not; and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noon-\footnote{20}tide; 17. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. 18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame? What is the meaning of this? Does there proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing? Could he that said so cheerfully, (v. 13.) *Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord,* say so passionately, (v. 14.) *Cursed be the day wherein I was born?* How shall we reconcile these? What have we in these verses the prophet records, I suppose, to his own shame and humiliation, to set his people upon taking him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and burthened, to open our cause to God, and pour out our complaints before him.
be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to dissolve our guard upon our spirits, another time. See here how strong the temptation was, which the prophet, by divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair, if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. Let us see here,

1. What the prophet's language was, in this tempta-

(1.) He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birth-
day, as Job did in a heat; (ch. iii. 1.) "Curst be the
day wherein I was born. It was an ill day to
to me, (v. 14.) because it was the beginning of sor-
rows, and an inlet to all this misery." It is a wish
that he had never been born. Judas in hell had reason to wish so; (Matth. xxvi. 24.) but no man
on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but that he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birth-day, at the return of the year, with gladness, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrows, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

(2.) He wished ill to the messenger that brought
his father the news of his birth, v. 15. It made
his father very glad to hear that he had a child born, (perhaps it was his first-born,) especially that it was a man-child, for then being of the family of the
priests, he might live to have the honour of serving
God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man
that brought him the tidings, when perhaps the
father to whom they were brought, gave him a gra-
unity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes,
"That parents are often much rejoiced at the birth
of their children, when, if they did foresee what
misery they are born to, they would rather lament
over them than rejoice in them." He is very free
and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon
the messenger of his birth; (v. 16.) "Let him be as
the cities of Sodom and Gomorrath, which the Lord
utterly overthrew, and repented not, did not in the
least mitigate or alleviate their misery. Let him
hear the cry of the invading, besieging enemy in
the morning, as soon as he is stirring, then let him
take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their
shouting for victory. And thus let him live in con-
stant terror."

(2.) He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not slain
from the womb, that his first breath was not his,
and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, v. 17. He wishes the mes-
genger of his birth had been better employed, and
had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of
whom he was born, had been, to her great misery,
and his, in the very womb, and he, in the very
womb, in which he was conceived, would have lived, with-
out more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in.
Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance be-
tween the womb and the grave; (Job i. 21.) Naked
came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall
I return thither.

(4.) He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes; (v. 18.) "Where-
fore came I forth out of the womb, where I lay
hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safe,
and knew no evil, to see all this labour and sorrow,
may to have my days consumed with shame, to be
continually vexed and abused, to have my life not
only spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by
troubles."

2. What use we may make of this. It is not re-
corded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good
lessons from it.

(1.) See the vanity of human life, and the vexa-
tion of spirit that attends it. If there were not
another life after this, we should be tempted many
a time to wish that we had never known this, for
our few days here are full of trouble.

(2.) See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion,
how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to
ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day—to
curse a messenger for the sake of his message! What a brutish, barbarous thing for a child to wish
his own mother had never been delivered of him!

(3.) See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best. See how much those who
think they stand, are concerned to take heed lest
they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, lead
us not into temptation!

CHAP. XXI.

It is plain that the prophecies of this book are not placed here in the same order in which they were preached; for there are chapters after this, which concern Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim, and Jeconiah, who all reigned before Zede-
kiel, in which some of the prophetic words in this chapter appear.

Here is, 1. The message which Zedekiah sent to the
prophet, to inquire of him to the Lord for them, v. 1, 2. 2. The answer which Jeremiah, in God's name, sends to that message; in which, 1. He foretells the cer-
tain and inevitable ruin of the city, and the fruitless-
ness of their attempts for its preservation, v. 3, 7. 2. He advises the people to make the best of bad, by going over to the king of Babylon, v. 8, 10. 3. He advises the
king and his family to repent and reform, (v. 11, 12,) and not to trust to the strength of their city, and grow secure, v. 13, 14.

1. T

HE word which came unto Jer-

emiah from the Lord, when king
Zedekiah sent unto him Paschur the son
of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Ma-
aseah the priest, saying,

2. Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us; for Nebuchad-
rezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the Lord will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us. 3. Then said Jer-
emiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Ze-
dekiah, 4. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith
you fight against the king of Babylon, and
against the Chaldeans, which besiege you
without the walls, and I will assemble them
into the midst of this city. 5. And I myself
will fight against you with an outstretched
hand, and with a strong arm, even in anger,
and in fury, and in great wrath. 6. And I
will smite the inhabitants of this city, both
man and beast: they shall die of a great
pestilence. 7. And afterward, saith the
Lord, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Ju-
dah, and his servants, and the people, and
such as are left in this city from the pesti-
ulence, from the sword, and from the famine,
into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of
Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

Here is, a very humble, decent message which King Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah the prophet, when he was in distress. It is indeed charged upon this Zedekiah, that he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet, speaking from the mouth of the Lord; (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12,) he did not always humble himself as he did sometimes; he never humbled himself till necessity forced him to it; he humbled himself so far as to desire the prophet's assistance, but not so far as to take his advice, or to be ruled by him. Observe,

1. The distress which King Zedekiah was now in; "Behold, these nations, which go forth against thee, which came up against thee, are such as ate flesh in the mountains, dwelt in the thickness of the forests; they said, Let us lie in wait for the Lord, and his pasture, because of his anointing; let us lie in wait for all his shepherds; and we will smite them without cause. But I will raise up against them such an enemy as they have not known; I will confound them with their own counsels: and I will turn their own weapons against them. For I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there a thing too hard for me?" Is. xlv. 19. 20, 21.

2. The messengers he sent, Pashur and Zephaniah, one belonging to the fifth course of the priests, the other to the 24th. 1 Chron. xxiv. 9, 18. It was well that he sent, that he sent persons of rank; it had been better if he had desired a personal conference with the prophet, which, no doubt, he might easily have had if he would so far have humbled himself. Perhaps these priests were no better than the rest, and yet, when they were commanded by the king, they must carry a respectful message to the prophet, which was both a mortification to them and an honour to Jeremiah. He had rashly said, (ch. xx. 18.) My days are consumed with shame; and yet here we find that he lived to see better days than these were, when he made that complaint; now he appears in reputation. Note, It is folly to say, when things are bad with us, "They will always be so." It is possible that those who are despised, may come to be respected; and it is promised, that those who honour God, he will honour, and that those who have afflicted his people, shall bow to them. Isa. lx. 14.

3. The message itself, Inquire, I pray thee, of the Lord for us, v. 2. Now that the Chaldean army was got into him, but came to their bowels, they were at length convinced that Jeremiah was a true prophet, though loath to own it, and brought too late to it. Under this conviction, they desire him to stand their friend with God, believing him to have that interest in heaven, which none of their other prophets had, who had flattered them with hopes of peace. They now employ Jeremiah, (1.) To consult the mind of God for them; "Inquire of the Lord for us." He is consulted with reference to the present distress, for the measures we have hitherto taken are all broken." Note, Those that will not take the direction of God's grace, how to get clear of their sins, would yet be glad of the directions of his providence, how to get clear of their troubles. (2.) To seek the favour of God for them: so some read it; "Entreat the Lord for us; be an intercessor for us;" and (as before,) Not in vain, for the prayers of God's people and ministers when they are in prosperity, may perhaps be glad of an interest in them when they come to be in distress. Give us of your oil. The benefit they promise themselves, is, It may be, the Lord will deal with us now according to the wondrous works he wrought for our fathers, that the enemy may rise the siege, and go lift from us. Observe, [1.] All their care is, to get rid of their trouble: not to make their peace with God, and be reconciled to him; "That our enemy may go up from us," not, "That our God may return to us." Thus Pharaoh, (Exod. x. 17.) Entreat the Lord that he may take away this death. [2.] All their hope is, that God had done wondrous works formerly in the deliverance of Jerusalem when Sennacherib besieged it, at the prayer of Isaiah: so we are told, 2 Chron. xxxii. 29, 31. And why do we not find that they now tell how they must make haste to tell their messengers, to be did what God will do at the prayer of Jeremiah? But they did not consider how different the character of Zedekiah and his people was from that of Hezekiah and his people: those were days of general reformation and piety, these of general corruption and apostacy. Jerusalem is now the reverse of what it was then. Note, It is folly to think that God should do for us while we hold fast our iniquity, as he did for those that held fast their integrity.

4. A very startling, cutting reply, which God, by the prophet, sent to that message. If Jeremiah had been to have answered the message of himself, we have reason to think that he would have returned a comfortable answer, in hope their sending of such a message was an indication of some good purposes in them, which he would be glad to make the most of. But he did not let the king know their hearts better than Jeremiah does, and sends them an answer which hath scarcely one word of comfort in it. He sends it in the name of the Lord God of Israel, (v. 3.) to intimate to them, that though God allowed himself to be called the God of Israel, and had done great things for Israel formerly, and had still great things in store for Israel, may not we use the covenants with them, yet this should stand the present generation in no stead, who were Israelites in name only, and not in deed, any more than God's dealings with them should cut off his relation to Israel as their God. It is here foretold,

1. That God will render all their endeavours for their own security fruitless and ineffectual; (v. 4.) I will be so far from teaching your hands to war, and putting an edge upon your swords, that I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hand, when you sally out upon the besiegers to beat them off, so that they shall not give the stroke you design; nay, they shall recoil into your own faces, and be turned upon yourselves. Nothing can make for those who have God against them.

2. That the besiegers shall in a little time make themselves masters of Jerusalem, and of all its wealth and glory; "Jerusalem, the city, who are now surrounding it. Note, If that place, which should have been a centre of devotion, be made a centre of wickedness, it is not strange if God make it a rendezvous of destroyers."

3. That God himself will be their Enemy; and then I know not who can befriend them, no, nor Jeremiah himself; (v. 5.) "I will be so far from preserving Egypt, as has been the case, that myself will fight against you." Note, Those who rebel against God may justly expect that he will make war upon them; and that, (1.) With the power of a God who is irresistibly victorious: I will fight against you with an outstretched arm, which will reach far, and with a strong arm, which will strike home, and wound deep. (2.) With the wrath of his angry justice; "and in fury, and in great wrath; it is a sentence sworn in wrath, against which there will be no exception; and it will soon be found what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God."

4. That these who, for their own safety, decline sallying out upon the besiegers, and so avoid their sword, shall yet not escape the sword of God's justice; (v. 6.) I will smite those that abide in the city,
himself hath set his face against this city for evil, and not for good, to lay it waste, and not to protect it, for evil which shall have no good mixed with it, because they have not forsaken the ways of their fathers, and that therefore if you would make the best of bad, you must stagger out of the Chaldeans, and surrender prisoners of war."  

In vain did Rabshakeh persuade the Jews to do this while they had God for them, (Isa. xxxvi. 16.) but it was the best course they could take now that God was against them. Both the law and the prophets had often set before them life and death in another sense—life through his grace, and death by his wrath.  

They persist in disobedience, (Deut. xxx. 19.) but they had slighted that life which would have made them truly happy, to upbraid them with which the prophet here uses the same expression; (v. 8.) Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death, which denotes not, as that, a fair proposal, but a melancholy dilemma, advising them of two evils to choose the least; and that lesser evil, a shameful and wretched captivity, is all the life now left for them to propose to themselves. He that abides in the city, and trusts to that to secure them, shall certainly die either by the sword without the walls, or famine or pestilence within. But he that can so far bring down his spirit, and quit his vain hopes, as to set his heart and hands upon it, the Chaldeans, his life shall be given him for a prey; and they shall not steal, but with much difficulty and hazard, as a prey is taken from the mighty. It is an expression like that, He shall be saved, yet so as by fire. He shall escape, but very narrowly; or, he shall have such surprising joy and satisfaction in escaping with his life from such a universal destruction, as shall equal all that he had lost. They thought they had made a prey of the camp of the Chaldeans, as their ancestors did that of the Assyrians, (Isa. xxxviii. 23.) but they will be sadly disappointed; if by yielding discretion they can but save their lives, that is all the prey they must promise themselves. New e we would think this advice from a prophet, in God's name, should have gained some credit with them, and been universally followed; but, for aught that appears, there were few or none that took it; so wretchedly were their hearts hardened to their destruction.  

2. He advises the king and princes to reform, and make conscience of the duty of their place. Because it was the king that sent the message to him, in the reply there shall be a particular word for the house of the king; and the godly repentance made to them, (that was no part of a prophet's business, no more then they did him the honour to send to him,) but to give them wholesome counsel; (v. 11, 12.) "Execute judgment in the morning; do it carefully and diligently. Those magistrates that would fill up their place with duty, had need rise betimes. Do it quickly, and do not delay to do justice upon offenders made to you, nor tire out patience with them, before you have done. Do not lie in your beds in a morning, to sleep away the debauch of the night before, nor spend the morning in panpering the body, (as those princes, Eccl. x. 16.) but spend it in the despatch of business. You would be delivered out of the hand of those that distress you, and expect that thereon God should do you justice; see then that you do justice to those that apply themselves to you, and deliver them out of the hand of their oppressors, let my fury go out like fire against you in a particular manner, and you fare worst, who think to escape best, because of the evil of your doings." Now, (I.) This intimates that it was their neglect to do their duty, that brought all this desolation upon the people. It was the neglect of them that kindled the fire of God's wrath. Thus plainly does he deal even with the house of the king; for those that would have the benefit of a prophet's prayers, must think-
fully take a prophet's reproofs. (2.) This directs them to take the right method for a national reformation. The priests must begin, and set a good example, and then the people will be invited to reform. They must use their power for the punishment of wrong, and then the people will be obliged to reform. He reminds them that they are the House of David, and therefore should treat in his steps, who executed judgment and justice to his people. (3.) This gives them the reason why he encouraged him to hope that he may be a lengthening of their trouble and want. He is a rock of the plain, which makes it difficult for an army to undermine them. These advantages of their situation they trusted to more than to the power and promise of God; and thinking their city by these means to be impregnable, they set the judgments of God at defiance, saying, "Who shall come down against us? None of our neighbours dare make a descent upon us; or, if they do, who shall enter into our cities?" They had good colour for this confidence; for it appears to have been the sense of all their neighbours that no enemy could force his way into Jerusalem, Lam. iv. 12. But those are least safe, that are most secure. God soon shows the vanity of that challenge, Who shall come down against us? when he says, (v. 13.) Behold, I am against you. They had indeed by their wickedness driven God out of their city, when he would have tarried with them as a Friend; but they could not by their bulwarks keep him out of their city, when he came against them as an Enemy. If God be for us, who can be against us? But if he be against us, who can be for us, to stand us in any stead? Nay, he comes against them not as an Enemy that may lawfully and with some hope of success be resisted, but as a Judge that cannot be resisted; for he says, (v. 14.) I will punish you, by due course of law, according to the fruit of your doings, according to the merit of them, and the direct tendency of them. That shall be brought upon you, which is the natural product of sin. Nay, he will not only come with the anger of an enemy, and the justice of a judge, but with the force of a consuming fire, which has no compassion, as a judge sometimes has, nor spares any thing combustible, that comes in its way. Jeremiah is become a leper, and like him, he son of Jehoiakim, saith the Lord, will kindle a fire that shall consume all before it; for our God is himself a consuming Fire; and who is able to stand in his sight, when once he is angry.

CHAP. XXII.

Upon occasion of the message sent in the foregoing chapter to the house of the king, we have here recorded some sermons which Jeremiah preached at court, in some preceding reigns, that, as a great comfort, they had had warning long before that fatal sentence was pronounced upon them, and were put in a way to have prevented it. Here is, I. A message sent to the royal family, as it should seem, in the reign of Jehoiakim, relating partly to Jehozekiah, who was made away, and partly to his father, and partly to Jehoiakim, who succeeded him, and was now upon the throne. The king and princes are exhorted to exercise judgment, and are assured that, if they do so, the royal family and kingdom shall prosper; but otherwise it should be ruined, v. 1-9. Jehozekiah, called here, Shallum, is lamented, v. 10, 11. Jehoiakim is reproved and reproached, v. 12-15. II. Another message sent them in the reign of Jehoiakim, and ala, Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim. He is charged with an obstinate refusal to hear, and is threatened with destruction, and it is foretold, that in him Solomon's house should fall, v. 16, 17.

1. Thus saith the Lord, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, 2. And say, Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates; 3. Thus saith the Lord, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place. 4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings, sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people. 5. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation. 6. For thus saith the Lord unto the king's house of Judah, Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited. 7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire. 8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city? 9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Here we have,

1. Orders given to Jeremiah to preach before the king. In the chapter before, Zedekiah sent messengers to the prophet, but here the prophet is bidden to go, in his own proper person, to the house of the king, and demand his attention to the word of the King of kings; (v. 2.) Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah. Subjects must own, that where the word of a king is, there is power over them; but kings must own, that where the word of the Lord is, there is power over them. The King of Judah is here spoken to, as sitting upon the throne of David, who was a man after God's own heart, as holding their dignity and power by the covenant made with him; let them therefore conform to his example, that they may have the benefit of the promises made to him. With the king his servants are spoken to, because a good government depends upon a good prince, and a good prince being the key of good government. II. Instructions given him what to preach. 1. He must tell them what was their duty, what was the good which the Lord their God required of them, v. 3. They must take care, (1.) That they do all the good they can with the power they have. They must do justice, in defence of those that were injured, and must deliver the spoilt out of the hand of their oppressors. This was the duty of the king, Ps. Lxxxii. 3. Herein they must be ministers of God for good. (2.) That they do no hurt with it, no wrong, no violence. That is the greatest wrong and violence, which is done under colour of law and justice, and by those whose business it is to punish and protect from wrong and violence.
They must do no wrong to the stranger, fatherless, and widow, for these God does in a particular manner patronize, and take under his tuition, Exod. xxii. 21, 22.

2. He must assure them that the faithful discharge of their duty would advance and secure their prosperity, v. 4. There shall then be a succession of kings, an uninterrupted succession, upon the throne of David, and of his line; these enjoying a perfect tranquillity in every external blessing that could contribute to the dignity, riding on chariots, and horses, as before, ch. xvii. 25. Note, The most effectual way to preserve the dignity of the government, is, to do the duty of it.

3. He must likewise assure them that the iniquity of their family, if they persisted in it, would be the ruin of their family, though it was a royal family; v. 5. If they will not hear, will not obey, this house shall become a desolation, the palace of the kings of Judah shall fare no better than other habitations in Jerusalem. Sin has often been the ruin of royal palaces, though ever so stately, ever so strong. This sentence is ratified by an oath; I swear by myself, (and God can swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13.) that this house shall be laid in ruins. Note, Sin will be the ruin of the houses of princes as well as of mean men.

4. He must show how fatal their wickedness would be to their kingdom as well as to themselves, to Jerusalem especially, the royal city, v. 6-9. (1.) It is confessed that Judah and Jerusalem had been valuable in God's eyes, and considerable in their own; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon. But they were cast in a place that was rich and pleasant as Gilead; Zion was a strong hold, as stately as Lebanon: this they trusted to as their security. But, (2.) This shall not protect them; the country that is now fruitful as Gilead, shall be made a wilderness. The cities that are now strong as Lebanon, shall be cities not inhabited; and when the country is laid waste, the cities must be despeckled. See how easily God's judgments can ruin a nation, and how certainly sin will do it.

When this desolating work is to be done, [1.] There shall be those that shall do it effectually; (v. 7.) "I will prepare destroyers against thee; I will sanctify them," (so the word is,) "I will appoint them to this service and use them in it." Note, When destruction is designed, destroyers are prepared; they are in the preparing, and things are working toward the designed destruction, and are getting ready for it, long before. And who can contend with the destroyers of God's preparing? They shall destroy cities as easily as men fell trees in a forest; They shall cut down the choice cedars; and yet, when they are down, shall value them no more than thorns or briers; they shall be consumed, for their choicest cedars are become rotten ones, and good for nothing else. [2.] There shall be those who shall be ready to justify God in the doing of it; (v. 8, 9.) persons of many nations, when they pass by the ruins of this city in their travels, will ask, "Therefore hath the Lord done thus unto this city? How came so strong a city to be overpowered? So rich a city to be impoverished? So holy a city to be profaned? And a city that had been so dear to God, to be abandoned by him? The reason is so obvious, that it shall be ready in every man's mouth.

Ask them that go by the way, Job xxxi. 29. Ask the next man you meet, and he will tell you it was because they changed their gods, which other nations new to do. They forsook God, the covenant servant of Jehovah their God, derived from their allegiance to him, and from the duty which their covenant with him bound them to; and they worshipped other gods, and served them, in contempt of him; and therefore he gave them up to this destruction. Note, God never casts any off until they first cast him off. "Go," says God to the prophet, "and preach this to the royal family."

10. Weep ye not for the dead, neither bewail him; but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. 11. For thus saith the Lord touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more: 12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more. 13. Wo unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; 14. That saith, I will build me a wide house, and large chambers, and cutteh him out windows: and it is eedled with cedars, and painted with vermilion! 15. Shall thou reign because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? 16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.

17. But thine heart and thy heart are not but for thy coveitiveness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence to do it. 18. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoahkim the son of Josiah king of Judah: They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! 19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Kings, though they are gods to us, are men to God, and shall di[e] like men; so it appears in these verses, where we have a sentence of death post upon two kings who reigned successively in Jerusalem, two brothers, and both the ungracious sons of a very pious father.

1. Here is the doom of Shallum, who doubtless is the same with Jehoahaz, for he is that son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned in the stead of Josiah his father, (v. 11.) which Jehoahaz did by the act of the people who made him king, though he was not the eldest son, 2 Kings xxii. 30. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1. Among the sons of Josiah (1 Chron. iii. 15.) there is one Shallum mentioned, and not Jehoahaz. Perhaps the people preferred him before his elder brother, because they thought him a more active, daring young man, and fitter to rule; but God soon showed them the folly of their injustice, and that it could not prosper, for within three months the kings of Egypt came upon them, deposed him, and carried him away prisoner into Egypt, as God had threatened. Deut. xxxxxiv. 6. It does not appear that any of the people were taken into captivity with him. We have the story, 2 Kings xxiii. 34. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 4. Now here,

1. The people are directed to lament him rather
than his father Josiah: "Weep not for the dead, weep not any more for Josiah." Jeremiah had been himself a true mourner for him, and had stirred up the people to mourn for him; (2 Chron. xxxv. 25.) yet now he will have them go out of mourning for him, though it was but three months after his death, and to turn their tears into another channel, they must weep and mourn for the destruction of Tyre, and not that there was any great loss of him to the public, as there was of his father, but that his case was much more deplorable. Josiah went to the grave in peace and honour, was prevented from seeing the evil to come in this world, and removed to see the good to come in the other world; and therefore, Weep not for him, but for his unhappy son, who is like to have no prospect of his father's event: in wretched captivity. Note, Dying saints may be justly envied, while living sinners are justly pitied. And so dismal perhaps the prospect of the times may be, that tears even for a Josiah, even for a Jesus, must be restrained, that they may be reserved for ourselves and our children, Luke xxiii. 28.

2. The reason given is, because he shall never remove his bones, but shall lie where he died, and shall die there. They were loath to believe this, therefore it is repeated here again and again, and shall return no more, v. 10. He shall never have the pleasure of seeing his native country, but shall have the continual grief of hearing of the desolations of it. He is gone forth out of this place, and shall never return, v. 11. He shall die in the place whither they have led him alive, v. 12. This cannot be forsaking the good example of his father, and usurping the right of his elder brother. In Ezekiel's lamentation for the princes of Israel, this Jeconiah is represented as a young lion, that soon learned to catch the prey, but was taken, and brought in chains to Egypt, and was long expected to return, but in vain. See Ezek. xix. 3—5.

11. Here is the doom of Jeconiah, who succeeded him. Whether he had any better right to the crown than Shallum, we know not; for though he was elder than his predecessor, there seems to be another son of Josiah, elder than he, called Johanan, 1 Chron. iii. 15. But this we know, he ruled no better, and fared no better at last. Here is,

1. His sins faithfully reproved. It is not fit for a private person to say to a king, Thou art wicked; but a prophet, who represents God, and does not take away his trust if he does not deliver it, be it ever so unpleasing, even to kings themselves. Jehoiakim is not here charged with idolatry, and, probably, he had not yet put Urijah the prophet to death, (as we find afterward he did, ch. xxvi. 22, 23.) for then he would have been told of it here; but the crimes for which he is here reproved, are, (1.) Pride, and affection of pomp and splendor. God had been so rich a king, as to look great, and to do good were to be the least of his care. He must build him a stately palace, a wide house, and large chambers, v. 14. He must have windows cut out after the newest fashion, perhaps like sash-windows with us. The rooms must be ceiled with cedar, the richest sort of wood. His house must be as well roofed and wainscotted as the temple itself, or else it must look like a poorハウス, as Kings vi. 15. Nay, it must exceed that, for it must be painted with minim, or vermilion, which dyes red, or, as some read it, with indigo, which dyes blue. No doubt, it is lawful for princes and great men to build and beautify and furnish their houses, so as is agreeable to their dignity; but he that knows what is in men, knew that Jeconiah did this in the pride of his heart, that it might be as a vainglorious reproach to the temple of the Lord. And (2.) Covetousness, which is in itself lawful. Those therefore that are enlarging their houses, and making them more sumptuous, have need to look well to the frame of their own spirits in the doing of it, and carefully to watch against all the workings of vanity. But that which was particularly amiss in Jehoiakim's case, was, that he did this when he could not but perceive, both by the word of God, and by his providence, that divine judgments were breaking in upon him. He reigned his three first years like other monarchs of his house, and not as one who had been the governor of Egypt, and all the rest by the permission and allowance of the king of Babylon; and yet he that was no better than a viceroy, will covet to vie with the greatest monarch in building and furniture. Observe how preposterous it is in this resolution; "I will build me a wide house; I am resolved I will, whoever advises me to the contrary." Note, It is often against the interest of kings to spend much in building, to keep up their estates, to covet to make a fair show. Many have unhallowed hearts under humbling providences, and look most naughtily then when God is bringing them down. This is striving with our Maker. (2.) Carnal security and confidence in his wealth, depending upon the continuance of his prosperity, as if his mountain now stood so strong, that it could never be moved; when he must reign without any disturbance or interruption, and he had himself in cedar, (v. 15.) as if that were too fine to be assaulted, and too strong to be broken through, and as if God himself could not, for pity, give up such a stately house as that to be burned. Thus when Christ spake of the destruction of the temple, his disciples came to him, to show him what a magnificent structure it was, Matt. xxiii. 21. It is good to think of this. See xxxv. 25. 1. Note, Those were the wise ones among themselves, who think their present prosperity is a lasting security, and dream of reigning, because they are enclosed in cedar. It is but in his own conceit, that the rich man's wealth is his strong city. (3.) Some think he is here charged with sacrilege, and robbing the house of God to beautify and adorn his own houses. He cuts him out my windows; so it is in the margin, which some understand as if he had taken windows out of the temple to put into his own palace, and then painted them (as it follows) with vermilion, that it might not be discovered, but might look of a piece with his own building. Note, Those cheat themselves, and ruin themselves at last, who think to enrich themselves by robbing God and his house; and however they may disguise their actions by such seeming advantages, it will be found in the end that they have been the poor instruments of extortions and oppression, violence and injustice. He built his house by unrighteousness, with money unjustly got, and materials which were not honestly come by, and perhaps upon ground obtained as Ahab obtained Naboth's vineyard. And because he went beyond what he could afford, he defrauded his workmen of their wages, which is one of the greatest crimes in the ears of the Lord of hosts, Jer. v. 4. God takes notice of the wrong done by the greatest of men to their poor servants and laborers, and will repay them, in justice, that will not in justice pay those whom they employ, but use their neighbours' service without wages. Observe, The greatest of men must look upon the meanest as their neighbours, and he just to them accordingly, and love that cries themselves the inhabitation of Jehovah, Psa. vii. 19. So Jeconiah, not only in his buildings, but in the administration of his government. He did not do justice, made no conscience of shedding innocent blood, when it was to serve the purposes of his ambition, avarice, and revenge. He was all for oppression and violence; not to threaten it only, but to do it; and when he was set upon any act of injustice, nothing should stop him, but he would go through with it. And this was as much as to say, Do as you please, with any impudence, and no one will tell you it is unseasonable, that love of money, which is the root of all evil. Thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetousness; they were for that, and nothing else. Observe,
In covetousness the heart walks after the eyes: it is therefore called the lust of the eye, 1 John ii. 16. Job xxxi. 7. It is setting the eyes upon that which is not, Prov. xxxix. 5. "The eyes and the heart are then for covetousness, when the aims and affections are wholly set upon the wealth of this world; and where they are so, the temptation is strong to murmur, oppress and murder, and murder, and murder!" (v. 15.) Than which aggravated all his sins, was, that he was the son of a good father, who had left him a good example, if he would but have followed it; (v. 15, 16.) Did not thy father eat and drink? When Jehoiakim enlarged and enlightened his house, it is probable that he spoke scornfully of his father for containing himself with such a mean and inconvenient dower, as he and his family were possessed of. That which was a dull fancy, a low spirit, that could not find in his heart to lay out his money, nor cared for what was fashionable; that should not serve him, that served his father: but God, by the prophet, tells him that his father, though he had not the spirit of building, was a man of an excellent spirit, a better man than he, and did better for himself, and for his father's sake, that did not abuse his power for the support of wrong, but he used it for the maintaining of right. He judged the cause of the poor and needy, was ready to hear the cause of the meanest of his subjects, and do them justice. Note, The care of magistrates must be, not to support their grandeur and take their case, but to do good; not only not to oppress the poor themselves, but to defend those that are oppressed.

[2.] That he was encouraged to do his duty by his father's prosperity. First, God accepted him; "Was not this to know me, saith the Lord? Did he not hereby make it to appear that he rightly knew God, and worshipped him, and, consequently, was known and owned of him?" Note, The right knowledge of God consists in doing our duty, pursuant to his will, and, for that, God will own and, for that, God will own and value us. Those that despise the duty of their place and station in the world. Secondly, He himself had the comfort of it; Did he not eat and drink soberly and cheerfully, so as to fit himself for his business, for strength, and not for drunkenness? Exod. x. 17. He did eat, and drink, and do judgement; he did not (as perhaps Jehoiakim and his princes did) drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgement of the afflicted, Prov. xxxix. 5. He did eat and drink; God blessed him with great plenty, and he had the comfortable enjoyment of it himself, and gave handsome entertainments to his friends, was very hospitable, and very charitable. It was Jehoiakim's pride, that he had built a fine house, but Josiah's true praise, that he kept a good house. Many times those who have least in them of true generosity, yet excel in the duties of their station in life; so did the afflicted (Prov. xxxix. 5.) He did eat and drink; he lived comfortably, his own subjects, and all his neighbours, respected him; and, whatever he put his hand to, prospered. Note, While we do well, we may expect it will be well with us. This Jehoiakim knew, that his father found the way of duty to be the way of comfort, and yet he would not tread in his steps. Note, It should engage us to keep up religion in our day, that our godly parents kept it up in theirs, and recommended it to us from their own experience of the benefit of it. They told us that they had found the promises which godliness has, of the enjoyment of prosperity, and piety are friendly to outward prosperity.

So that we are inexcusable, if we turn aside from that good way.

2. Here we have Jechiah's doom faithfully read, v. 18, 19. We may suppose that it was in the utmost peril of his own life, that Jeremiah here foretold the shameful death of Jechiah; but Thus shall it be with the Levites, foretold by Haggai, ii. 10, 11, was written some years after, and according to the style of the prophet, to tell Jechiah that he should be lamented at his death, for he conducted himself better than Jechiah had done, ch. xxxiv. 5. His relations shall not lament him; no, not with the common expressions of grief used at the funeral of the meanest, where they cried, Ah, my brother! or, Ah, sister! His subjects shall not lament him, nor cry cut, as they used to do at the graves of their princes, Ah, lord! or, Ah, his glory! It is said for any to live so, that, when they die, none will be sorry to part with them. Nay, (2.) He shall be uncircumcised; this is worse than the former. Even these that have no tears to grace the funerals of the dead with, would willingly have them buried out of their sight; but Jechiah shall be buried with the burial of an ass, he shall have no burial at all, but his dead body shall be cast into a ditch, or upon a dunghill; it shall be drawn, or dragged, ignominiously, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem. It is said, in the story of Jechiah, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6.) that Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon, and (Ezek. xix. 9.) that he was brought in chains to the king of Babylon. But it is probable that he died a prisoner, before he was carried away to Babylon, as was intended; perhaps he died for grief, or, in the pride of his heart, hastened his own destruction. He was then in the prime of his age, as self-murderers usually are with us. Josephus says that Nebuchadnezzar slew him at Jerusalem, and left his body thus exposed, somewhere at a great distance from the gates of Jerusalem. And it is said, (2 Kings xxiv. 6.) He slept with his fathers. When he built himself a stately house, no doubt he designed himself a stately sepulchre; but see how he was disappointed. Note, Those that are lifted up with great pride, are commonly reserved for some great disgrace in life or death.

20. Go up to Lebanon, and cry; and lift up thy voice in Bashan, and cry from the passages; for all thy lovers are destroyed. 21. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyest not my voice. 22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness. 23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that maketh thy nest in the cedars, low grumous shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee,

Vol. iv.—3
the pain as of a woman in travail. 21. As I said, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; 22. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. 23. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. 24. But to the land wherein they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

28. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure! wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? 29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord: 30. Thus saith the Lord. Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

This prophecy seems to have been calculated for the ungracious, inglorious reign of Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, who succeeded him in the kingdom, resigned but three months, and was then carried captive to Babylon, where he lived many years, Jer. li. 31. We have, in these verses, a prophecy,

1. Of the desolations of the kingdom, which were now hastening on, v. 20. 23. Jerusalem and Judah are here spoken to, or the Jewish state as a single person, and we have it here under a threefold character.

1. Very haughty in a day of peace and safety; (v. 21.) "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; spake, by my servants the prophets, reproves, admonitions, counsels, but thou saidst, I will not hear, I will not heed, thou obeyedst not my voice, and wasd resolved that thou wouldst not, and hast the front to tell me so." It is common for those that live at ease, to live in a nest of the word of God. Jehovah waved fat, and kicked. This is so much the worse, that they had it by kind; This has been thy manner from thy youth. They were called transgressors from the womb, Isa. xlvii. 8.

2. Very timorous upon the alarms of trouble; (v. 26.) "When thou seest all thy lovers destroyed, when thou findest thine ideals unable to help thee, and thy foreign alliances failing thee, then wilt thou go up to Babylon, and cry, as one mourns; and giving up all for lost, cry with a bitter cry; then wilt cry, Help, help, or we are lost; thou wilt lift up thy voice in fearful shrieks, upon Lebanon and Bashan, two high hills, in hope to be heard from thence by the advantage of the rising ground. Thou wilt cry from the passages, from the roads, where thou wilt ever and anon be in distress." Thou wilt cry from Assyria, as the other land, a famous mountain in the border of Moab. Thou wilt cry, as those that are in great consternation use to do, to all about thee; but in vain, for, (v. 22.) the wind shall eat up all thy pastors, or rulers, that should protect and lead thee, and provide for thy safety; they shall be blasted, and withered, and brought to nothing, as buds and blossoms are by a bleak or freezing wind; they shall be devoured sunder, insensible, and irresistibly, as fruits by the wind. Thy lovers, that thou didst depend on, and hast an attraction for, shall go into captivity, and shall be so far from saving thee, that they shall not be able to save themselves."

3. Very tame under the heavy and lasting pressures of trouble; "When there appears no relief from any of thy confederates, and thy own priests are at a loss, then shall thou be ashamed and confounded all thy wickedness;" v. 22. Note, Many will never be ashamed of their own sins, but are brought by them to the last extremity; and it is well if we get this good by our straits, by them to be brought to confession for our sins. The Jewish state is here called an inhabitant of Lebanon, because that famous forest was within their border, (v. 23.) and all their country was wealthy, and well guarded with Lebanon's natural fastnesses; but so proud and haughty were they, that they are said to make their nest in the cedars, where they thought themselves out of the reach of all danger, and whence they looked with contempt upon all about them. "But, how gracious wilt thou be when tidings come upon thee! Then thou wilt humble thyself before God, and promise amendment. "When they art overthrown in stony places, thou wilt be glad to hear them cry, I am in miseries, and in desolations, thou wouldst not hear, Ps. cxlii. 6. Then the Lord will endeavour to make thyself acceptable with that God whom, before, thou most light of." Note, Many have their pangs of piety, who, when the pangs are over, show that they have no true piety. Some give another sense of it; "What will all thy pangs, and state, and wealth avail thee! What will be of all, or what comfort shall thou have of it, when thou wilt be in these distresses? No more than a woman in travail, full of pains and fears, can take comfort in her ornaments while she is in that condition." So Mr. Gataker, Note, Those that are proud of their worldly advantages, would do well to consider how they will look when pangs come upon them, and how they will then have lost all their beauty.

11. Here is a prophecy of the disrace of the king; his name was Jeconiah, but he is here once and again called Coniah, in contempt. The prophet shortens his name, and gives him, as we say, a nickname, perhaps to denote that he should be despised of his dignity, that his reign should be shortened, and the number of his months cut off in the midst. Two instances of dishonour are here put upon him. He shall be ashamed, and covered with shame, and shall spend and end his days in bondage. He was born to a crown, but it should quickly fall from his head, and he should exchange it for fetters. Observe the steps of this judgment.

(1.) God will abandon him, v. 24. The God of truth says it, and confirms it with an oath; "Though he were the signet upon my right hand, (his predecessors had been so, and he might have been so, but he had done well; but he had done ill,) I will pluck him thence." The godly kings of Judah had been as signets on God's right hand, near and dear to him; he had gloried in them, and made use of them as instruments of his government, as the prince does of his signet-ring, or signet-manual: but Coniah has made himself utterly unworthy of the honour, and therefore the privilege of being God's signet, or seal. Hence the property of the signet, not being his by right or law, and standing that, he shall be thrown off. Answerable to this threatening against Jeconiah is God's promise to Zerubbabel, when he made him his people's guide in their return out of captivity; (Hag. ii. 23.) I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and make thee as a signet. Those that think themselves as signets on God's right hand, must not be secure, but fear lest they be plucked thence.
(2.) The king of Babylon shall seize him. Those who knew not what enemies and mischances they were exposed to had reason to look to their lives out of God's protection, v. 25. The Chaldeans are here said to be such as had a spite to Coniah, they sought his life; no less than that, they thought, would satisfy their rage; they were such as he had a dread of. (They are those whose face thou forgettest,) which would make it the more terrible to him to fall into their hands, especially when he thought of himself that gave him into their hands. And if God deliver him to them, who can deliver him from them? He and his family shall be carried to Babylon, where they shall wear out the many tedious years of their lives in a miserable captivity; he and his mother, (v. 26.) he and his seed, (v. 28.) he and all the royal family, (for he had no children of his own when he went into captivity;) or, he and his children of his lots; they shall all be cast out to another country, to a strange country, a country where they were not born, nor such a country as that where they were born, a land which they knew not, in which they have no acquaintance with whom to converse, or from whom to expect any kindness. Thither they shall be carried, from a land where they were, to a country where they were not. Which lands and countries they shall be compelled to servitude. Have they no hopes of seeing their own country again? No, To the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return, v. 27. They conduct ed themselves ill in it, when they were in it, and therefore they shall never see it more. Jehoahaz was carried to Egypt, the land of the south, (v. 10.) Jeconiah to Babylon, the land of the north, both for remote, the quite contrary way. Which lands and countries they shall be compelled to servitude. Have they no hopes of seeing their own country again? Those that had abused the dominion they had over others, were justly brought thus under the dominion of others. Those that had indulged and gratified their sinful desires, by their oppression, luxury, and cruelty, were justly denied the gratification of their own desire to see their own native country again. We may observe something very emphatical in that part of this threatening, (v. 26.) To the country where ye were not born, there shall ye die. As there is a time to be born, and a time to die, so there is a place to be born in, and a place to die in. We know where we were born, but where we shall die we know not; it is enough that God knows it. Let it be known to every nation, that we die in Christ, and then it will be well with us wherever we die, though it should be in a far country.

(4.) This shall render him very mean and despis able in the eyes of all his neighbours. They shall be ready to say, (v. 28.) "Is this Coniah a despised, broken idol? Yes, certainly he is, and much despised from what he was." [1.] Time was when he was exalted, i.e., when he was most thought of; this people, when he saw his father lately despised, were ready to adore him when they saw him upon the throne; but now he is a despised, broken idol, which, when it was whole, was worshipped, but, when it is rotten and broken, is thrown by and despised, and nobody regards it, or remembers what it has been. Note, What is idolized will, first or last, be despised and broken; what is unaccountably honoured, will in a short time be contemptible and rivals with God will be the scorn of man. Whatever we idolize we shall be disappointed in, and then shall despise. [2.] Time was, when he was delighted in; but now he is a vessel in which is no pleasure, or to which there is no desire, either because grown out of fashion, or because cracked or dirtied, and so rejected by the ubiquitous. Those that have been, in the sight of God, has no pleasure in, will, some time or other, be so mortified, that men will have no pleasure in them. He shall leave no posterity to inherit his honours. The prediction of this is ushered in with a solemn prefix, (v. 29.) "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." Let all the inhabitants of the world take notice of these judgments of God upon a nation and a family that had been near and dear to him, and hence infer that God is impartial in the administration of justice. Or, it is an appeal to the earth itself, on which we tread, since those that dwell on earth are so dear and careless, like Jeconiah, (Isa. 24.) Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, that is, the earth itself; for its ear has been heard; the earth itself will be made to hear it, and yield to it, when it, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Or, it is a call to men that mind earthly things, that are swallowed up in those things, and are inordinate in the pursuit of them; such have need to be called upon again and again, and a third time, to hear the word of the Lord. Or, it is a call to men, considered as mortal, of the earth, and hastening to the earth again; we all are so, earth we are, dust we are, and, in consideration of that, are concerned to hear and regard the word of the Lord, that, though we are earth, we may be found among those whose names are written in heaven.

Now this which is here to be taken notice of, is that Jeconiah is written childless, (v. 30.) that is, as it follows, No man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David. In him the line of David was extinct as a royal line. Some think that he had children born in Babylon, because mention is made of his seed being cast out there, (v. 28.) and that they died before him. We read in the genealogy, (1 Chron. 3.) of seven sons of Jeconiah Assur, that is, Jeconiah the captive, of which Salathiel is the first. Some think that they were only his adopted sons, and that, when it is said, (Matth. i. 12.) Jeconiah begat Salathiel, no more is meant than that he bequeathed to him what claims and pretensions he had to the government; the rather, because Salathiel is called the son of Levi, (Luke iii. 27.) of the house of Nathan, v. 31. Whether he had children begotten, or only adopted, this far he was childless, that none of his seed ruled as kings in Judah. He was the Augustus of that empire, in whom it determined. Whoever are childless, it is God that writes them so; and those who take no care to do good in their days, cannot expect to prosper in their days.

CHAP. XXIII.

In this chapter, the prophet, in God's name, is dealing with the reproofs and threatenings, 1. Among the careless princes, or pastors of the people; (v. 1, 2.) yet promising to take care of the flock, which they had been wanting in the duty to, v. 3. 8. II. Among the wicked prophets and priests, whose bad character is here given at large in divers instances, especially their imposing upon the people with their pretended inspirations, at which the prophet is astonished, and for which they must expect to be punished, v. 9. 32. III. Among the profane people, who ridiculed God's prophets, and hasted them, v. 33. 40. When all have thus corrupted their way, they must all expect to be told faithfully of it.

1. Wo be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord. 2. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord. 3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring
them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4. And I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD. 5. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. 6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. 7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; 8. But, The LORD liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Here is, 1. A word of terror to the negligent shepherds; the day is at hand when God will reckon with them concerning the trust and charge committed to them; Go be to the pasture, to the rulers, both in church and state, who are to be the watchmen, as pastors to lead them, feed them, protect them, and take care of them. They are not owners of the sheep; God here calls them the shefih of my pasture, whom I am interested in, and have provided good pasture for. Wo be to those therefore who are commanded to feed God's people, and pretend to do it; but who, instead of that, scatter the flock, and drive them away, by their violence and oppression, and have not visited them, nor taken any care for their welfare, nor concerned themselves at all to do them good. In not visiting them, and doing their duty to them, they did in effect scatter them, and drive them away. The beasts of prey scattered them, and the shepherds are in the fault, who should have kept them together. Wo be to them, when God will visit upon them the evil of their doings, and deal with them as they deserve. They would not visit the flock in a way of duty, and therefore God will visit them in a way of vengeance.

II. Here is a word of comfort to the neglected sheep. Though the under-shepherds take no care of them, no pains with them, but betray them, the chief Shepherd will look after them; When my Father and I are in agreement, there shall be no lack. Though the interests of God's church in the world are neglected by those who should take care of them, and postponed to their own private secular interests, yet they shall not therefore sink. God will perform his promise, though those he employs do not perform their duty. 1. The dispersed Jews shall at length return to their own land, and be glad when the Lord be exalted upon mount Zion, and is over all the earth. 2. And God will make them fruitful and increase in numbers. And though their former shepherds took no care of them, it does not therefore follow that they shall have no more. If some have abused a sacred office, that is no good reason why it should be abolished; "They destroyed the sheep, but I will set shepherds over them, which shall feed them," says he. Formerly, they were continually exposed and disturbed with some alarm or other; but now they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed; they shall be in no danger from without, in no fright from within. Formerly, some or other of them were ever and anon picked up by the beasts of prey; but now none of them shall be lacking, none of them missing. Though the times may be long ere this promise should have its accomplishment; the days come, but they are not yet; I shall see him, but not now; but all the rest intimate that the accomplishment of them will be glorious.

(1.) Christ is here spoken of as a Branch from David, the Man the Branch; (Zech. iii. 8.) his appearance mean, his beginnings small, like those of a bud or sprout, and his rise seemingly out of the earth, but growing to be great, to be lifted up with glory, and to sit upon the right hand of the Majesty on high, when it seemed to be a root in a dry ground, buried, and not likely to revive. Christ is the Root and Offspring of David, Rev. xvii. 16. In him doth the horn of David bud, Ps. cxviii. 17, 18. He is a Branch of God's raising up; he sanctified him, and sent him into the world, gave him his commission and qualifications. He is a righteous Branch, Lamb and cedar, in which all the righteous are made; and many, even all that are his, are made righteous; as an Advocate, he is Jesus Christ the righteous.

(2.) He is here spoken of as his church's King. This Branch shall be raised as high as the throne of his father David, and there he shall reign and prosper, not as the kings that now were of the house of David, who went backward in all their affairs; no, but Goliath slain, and the Philistines and Amalekites overthrown, victorious over all opposition. In the chariot of the everlasting gospel he shall go forth, he shall go on conquering and to conquer. If God raise him up, he will prosper him, for he will own the work of his own hands; what is the good pleasure of the Lord, shall prosper in the hands of those to whom it is committed. He shall prosper, for he shall execute judgment and justice in the earth, all the world over, Ps. cv. 13. The present kings of the
house of David were unjust and oppressive, and therefore it is no wonder that they did not prosper; but Christ shall, by his gospel, break the usurped power of Satan, institute a perfect rule of holy living, and, as far as it prevails, make all the world righteous. The effect of this shall be a holy society and serenity of mind in all his faithful, loyal subjects. In his days, under his dominion, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; all the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob shall be protected from the curse of heaven and the malice of hell; shall be privileged from the arrests of God’s law, and delivered from the attendant guilt and dominion of it, and then shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of all evil. See Luke i. 74, 75. Those that shall be saved hereafter from the wrath to come, may dwell safely now; for if God be for us, who can be against us? In the days of Christ’s government in the soul, when he is uppermost there, the soul dwells at ease.

(3.) He is here spoken of as The Lord our Righteousness. Observe, [1.] Who said what he is. As God, he is Jehovah, the incomunicable name of God, denoting his eternity and self-existence. As Mediator, he is our righteousness; by making satisfaction to the justice of God for the sin of man, he has brought in an everlasting righteousness, and so made it over to us in the covenant of grace, that, upon our believing, coming to God through him, we are pronounced righteous. His name Jehovah our Righteousness implies that he is so our righteousness, as no creature could be. He is a sovereign, all-sufficient, eternal Righteousness. All our righteousness has its being from him, and by him it subsists, and we are made the righteousness of God in him. [2.] The profession and declaration of this; This is the name whereby he shall be called, not only he shall be so, but he shall be known to be so. God shall call him by this name, for he shall appoint him to be our Righteousness. By this name Israel shall call him, every true believer shall call him, and call upon him. That is our righteousness, by which, as an allowed plea, we are justified before God, acquitted from guilt, and accepted into favour; and nothing else have we to plead but this, “Christ has died, yea, rather is risen again,” and we have taken him for our Lord.

3. This great salvation, which will come to the Jews in the latter days of their state, after their return out of Babylon, shall be so illustrious as far to outshine the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt; (v. 7, 8.) They shall no more say, The Lord liveth, that brought up Israel out of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought them up out of the north. This was said before, ch. xvi. 14, 15. But here it seems to point more plainly than it did there to the days of the Messiah, and to compare not so much the two deliverances themselves, giving the preference to the latter, as the two states to which the church by degrees grew after these deliverances. Observe the proportion: Just 480 years after they were come out of Egypt, Solomon’s temple was built, (1 Kings vi. 1.) and at that time that nation, which was so wonderfully brought up out of Egypt, was gradually arrived to its height, to its zenith. Just 490 years (70 weeks) after they came out of Babylon, Messiah the Prince set up the gospel-temple, which was the greatest glory of that nation that was so wonderfully brought out of Babylon; see Dan. ix. 24, 25. Now the spiritual glory of the second part of that nation, especially as transferred to the gospel-church, is much more admirable and illustrious than all the temporal glory of the first part of it in the days of Solomon; for that was no glory, compared with the glory which excelleth.

9. My heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake: I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness. 10. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth, the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right. 11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. 12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness; they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the Lord. 13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err. 14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem a horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evil-doers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. 15. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the prophets, Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profundeness gone forth into all the land. 16. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you; they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. 17. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you. 18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it? 19. Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. 20. The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed, the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly. 21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. 22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings. 23. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? 24. Can any hide
himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord. 25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. 26. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart: 27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams, which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. 28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. 29. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? 30. Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my word, every one from his neighbour. 31. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. 32. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.

Here is a long lesson for the false prophets. As none were more bitter and spiteful against God's true prophets than they, so there were none on whom the true prophets were more severe, and justly. The prophet had complained to God of those false prophets, (ch. xiv. 13.) and had often foretold that they should be involved in the common ruin; but here they have woes of their own. Jeremiah was a man that laid things much to heart, and what was any way threatening to his country, made a deep impression upon his spirits. He is here in trouble. Because of the prophets, and their sin, the false doctrine they preached, the wicked lives they lived; especially it filled him with horror, to hear them making use of God's name, and pretending to have their instructions from him. Now Jeremiah was a man who used the words of his holiness, as by these men. Note, The dishonour done to God's name, and the profanation of his holy word, are the greatest grief imaginable to a gracious soul. 2. Because of the Lord, and his judgments, which by this means are brought in upon us like a deluge. He trembled to think of the ruin and desolation which were coming from the face of the Lord, (so the word is,) and from the face of the word of his holiness, which will be inflicted by the power of God's wrath, according to the threatening of his word, confirmed by his holiness. Note, Even those that have God for them, cannot but tremble to think of the miseries of those that have God against them.

II. He laments the abounding abominable wickedness of the land, and the present tokens of God's displeasure they were under for it. (v. 10.) The land is full of adulterers, it is full both of spiritual and corporal whoredom; they go a whoring from God, and, having cast off the fear of him, no marvel that they abandon themselves to all manner of lewdness; and having dishonoured themselves and their own bodies, they dishonour God and his name by rash and false swearing, because of which the land is barren. Both the profest and common swearers are sins, for which a great deal must be laid to the charge of the church; and, if it be not soon stopped, or it will be made to mourn under the judgments of God. Their land mourned now under the judgment of famine; the pleasant places, or, rather, the features, or, as some read it, the habitations of the wilderness, are dried up for want of rain, and yet we see no signs of repentance; they answer not the end of the correction; the tenour and tendency of it is to make the people yet more wicked, their name, as bad as ever, and they will not be diverted from it. They have a great deal of resolution, but it is turned the wrong way, they are zealously affected, but not in a good thing, their force is not right; their heart is firmly set in them to do evil, and they are not valiant for the truth, have not courage enough to break off their evil courses, though they see God thus bringing in judgments against them.

III. He charges it all upon the prophets and priests, especially the prophets. They are both profane; (v. 11.) the priests profane the ordinances of God they pretend to administer, the prophets profane the word of God they pretend to deliver; their converse and all their conversation are profane, and then it is not strange that the people are so debauched. They both play the hypocrite; so divine read it; under sacred pretensions they carry on the vilest designs; yea, not only in their own houses, and the bad houses they frequent, but in my house have I found their wickedness; in the temple, where the priests ministered, where the prophets prophesied, there were they guilty both of idolatry and immorality. See a woful instance in Hepinie and Phinehas, 1 Sam. ii. 22. God searches his house, and finds it full of cherubim and false prophesies, and I will turn it out; and the nearer it is to him, the more offensive it is. Two things are charged upon them: 1. That they taught people to sin by their examples. He compares them with the prophets of Samaria, the head city of the kingdom of the ten tribes, which had been long since laid waste. It was the folly of the prophets of Samaria, that they prophesied in Baal, in Baal's name; so Ahik's prophet did, and so they caused my breath Israel to err, to forsake the service of the true God, and to worship Baal, v. 13. Now the prophets of Jerusalem did not so, they prophesied in the name of the true God, and valued themselves upon that, that they were not like the prophets of Samaria, who prophesied in Baal; but what the better, when they debouched the nation as much by their impiety as the nation did by their idolatry? It is a horrible thing in the prophets of Jerusalem, that they make use of the name of the holy God, and yet wallow in all manner of impurity! They make nothing of committing adultery, they make use of the name of the God of truth, and yet walk in lies, they not only prophesy lies, but in their common conversation one cannot believe a word they say. It is well either to contend with the fand or to be silent; Thus they encourage sinners to go on in their wicked ways; for every one will say, "Surely we may do as the prophets do; who can expect that we
be should be better than our teachers" By this means it is, that none returns from his wickedness but they all say that they shall have peace, though they go on, for their prophets tell them so. By this means Judah and Jerusalem are become as Sodom and Gomorrah, that were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly; and God looked upon the city with woe, and he caused to destroy them, as they were, with fire and brimstone.

2. That they encouraged people in sin by their false prophecies. They made themselves believe that there was no harm, no danger in sin, and practiced accordingly; and then no marvel that they made others believe so too, v. 16. They speak a vision of their own heart; it is the product of their own imagination; they have no regard to the plain statement, but it is not out of the mouth of the Lord; he never dictated it to them, nor does it agree either with the law of Moses, or with what God has spoken by other prophets. They tell sinners that it shall be well with them, though they persist in their sins, v. 17. See here who they are that they encourage; those that despise God, that slight his authority, and have low and mean thoughts of his institutions, and those that walk after the imagination of their own heart, that are worshippers of idols, and slaves to their own lusts; those that are devoted to their pleasures, put contempt upon their God. Yet see how these prophets caressed and flattered them; they should have been still saying, There is no peace to them that go on in their evil ways; Those that shall have peace, though they go on. Wo, and a thousand woes, to them; but they still said, Ye shall have peace, no evil shall come upon you. And, which was worst of all, they told them, God has said so; so making him to patronize sin, and to contradict himself. Note, Those that are resolved to go on in their evil ways, will justly be given up to believe the strong delusions of those who tell them that they shall have peace, though they go on. Wo, and a thousand woes, to them; but they still said, Ye shall have peace, no evil shall come upon you.

IV. God disowns all that these false prophets said to soothe people up in their sins; (v. 21.) I have not sent these prophets; they never had any mission from God, they were not only not sent by him on his errand, but they were never sent by him on any errand, he never had employed them in any service or business for him; and as to this matter, what good would it have done to have sent them to him to assure this people of peace, he declares that he never gave them any such instructions; yet they were very forward, they ran, they were very bold, they prophesied without any of that difficulty with which the true prophets sometimes struggled. They said to sinners, You shall have peace. But v. 18. "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord? Who of you has, that are so confident of this? You deliver this message with a great deal of assurance; but have you consulted God about it? No, you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished. You have not perceived and heard his word, nor marked that, you have not compared this with the scriptures of life; You take that message, you deliver this message, with a great deal of assurance; but have you consulted God about it? No, you never considered whether it be agreeable to the discoveries God has made of himself, whether it will consist with the honour of his holiness and justice, to let sinners go unpunished.

2. They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching; they would have done all they could to turn people from their evil way in general, from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted, the reformation of manners, they would have made that their work in all their preaching, to part between the living and the dead; but it appeared that this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sins. 5. They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it; If they had stood in my counsel, and the words they had preached had been my words, then they should have continued according to the evil way; a divine power should have gone along with them, and for the conviction of sinners; God would bless his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule; Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to turn from their evil way.

V. God threatens to punish these prophets for their wickedness. They promised the people peace; to show them the folly of that, God tells them that they should have no peace themselves. They have been very unfit to warrant the people, and pass their word to them, that no evil shall come upon them, when all evil is coming upon themselves, and they are not aware of it, v. 12. Because the prophets and priests are profane, therefore their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness. They pretend to think they have the light, but they mislead them, and know they do so, they shall themselves have no comfort in their way. 1. They pretend to show others the way, but they shall themselves be in the dark, or in a mist; their light or sight shall fail, so that they shall not be able to look before them, shall have no forecast for themselves. 2. They pretend to give assurances to others, but they themselves shall find no firm footing; Their ways shall be unto them as slippery ways, in which they shall not go with any steadiness, safety, or satisfaction. 3. They pretend to make the people easy with their f equalities, but they shall themselves be uneasy: They shall be driven, forced forward as captives, or making their escape as those that are pursued, and they shall fail in the way by which they say they have got where they are. 4. They pretend to prevent the evils that threatens others, but God will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, the time fixed for calling them to an account; such a time is fixed concerning all that do not judge themselves, and it will be an evil time. The year of visitation is the year of recompenses. It is further threatened, (v. 15.) I will feed them with wormwood, or poison, in which that is not only nauseous, but noxious, and make them drink waters of gall, or, as some read it, juice of hemlock; see ch. ix. 15. Justly is the cup of trembling put into their hand first, for from the prophets of Jerusalem, who should have been patterns of piety and every thing that is pious and virtuous, even from them to profaneness gone forth into the land, and thence has spread abroad, and debauched a nation, than the debauchery of ministers.

VI. The people are here warned not to give any credit to these false prophets; for though they flattered them with hopes of impunity, the judgments of God would certainly break out against them, unless they repented (v. 16.) "Take notice of what God says, and hearken not to the words of these prophets; for you will find, in the issue, that God's word shall stand, and not theirs. God's word will make you sin us, but they make you vain, feed you with vain hopes, which will fail you at last. They tell you, No evil shall come upon you; but hear what God says, (v. 19.) Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is there is no light in them. 2. They would have made the conversion of souls their business, and would have aimed at that in all their preaching; they would have done all they could to turn people from their evil way in general, from all the particular evil of their doings. They would have encouraged and assisted, the reformation of manners, they would have made that their work in all their preaching, to part between the living and the dead; but it appeared that this was a thing they never aimed at, but, on the contrary, to encourage sinners in their sins. 5. They would have had some seals of their ministry. This sense our translation gives it; If they had stood in my counsel, and the words they had preached had been my words, then they should have continued according to the evil way; a divine power should have gone along with them, and for the conviction of sinners; God would bless his own institutions. Yet this is no certain rule; Jeremiah himself, though God sent him, prevailed with but few to turn from their evil way.

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gone forth in fury: they tell you, All shall be calm and serene; but God tells you, There is a storm coming, a whirlwind of the Lord, of his sending, and therefore there is no standing before it; it is a whirlwind raised by divine wrath; it is gone forth in fury, a wind that is brought forth out of the treasures of divine vengeance, and therefore it is a grievous whirlwind, and shall shake the earth, and shall tread upon the head of the wicked, which they cannot avoid, nor find any shelter from. It shall fall upon the wicked prophets themselves who deceived the people, and the wicked people who suffered themselves to be deceived. A horrible tempest shall be the portion of their end. Ps. xi. 6. This sentence is bound on as irreversible; (v. 20.) The anger of the Lord shall be raised against them, when they are gone forth, God will not alter his mind, nor suffer his anger to be turned away, till he have executed the sentence, and performed the thoughts of his heart. God's whirlwind, when it comes down from heaven, returns not thither, but accomplishes that for which he sent it, Isa. lv. 11. This they will not consider now; but in the latter days he shall consider it perfectly, consider it with understanding, (so the word is,) and shall have no doubt but that the stream will not fear the threatenings, shall feel the execution of them, and will then perfectly understand what they will not now admit the evidence of, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of a just and jealous God. They that will not consider in time, will be made to consider when it is too late. Son, remember.

VII. Divers things are here offered to the consideration of these false prophets for the conviction of their impostures, that, if possible, they might be brought to recant their error, and acknowledge the cheat they had put upon God's people.

1. Let them consider, that though they may impose upon men, God is too wise to be imposed upon. Men cannot see through their fallacies, but God can, and does. Here.

(1.) God assigns his own omnipresence and omniscience in general, v. 23, 24. When they told the people that no evil should befall them though they went on in their evil ways, they went upon atheistical principles, that the Lord doeth not see their sin, that he cannot judge through the dark cloud, that he will not require it; and therefore they must be taught the first principles of their religion, and confronted with the most incontestable, self-evident truths, that God's throne is prepared, in the heavens, and this earth seems to be at a distance from him, yet he is a God here in this lower world, which seems to be afar off, as well as in the upper world, which seems to be at hand. v. 23. The eye of God is the same on earth that it is in heaven; here it runs to and fro as well as there; (2 Chron. xvi. 9,) and what is in the minds of men, whose spirits are veiled in flesh, is as clearly seen by him, as what is in the mind of angels, those inviolate spirits above, that surround his throne. The power of God is the same on earth among its inhabitants that it is in heaven among his armies. With us, nearness and distance make a great difference both in our observations and in our operations, but it is not so with God; to him darkness and light, at hand, and afar off, are all alike. [2. 3.] They have no secrets from him, nor can he distinguish themselves and their own characters and counsels, they cannot possibly be concealed from God's all-seeing eye; (v. 24.) "Can any hide himself in the secret places of the earth, that I shall not see him? Can any hide his projects and intentions in the secret places of the heart, that I shall not see them? No arts of concealment can hide from the eye of God, nor deceive his judgment of them. [3.] That he is every where present; he does not only rule heaven and earth, and uphold both by his universal providence, but he fills heaven and earth by his essential presence, Ps. cxlviii. 7, 8, &c. No place can either include him, or exclude him.

(2.) He applies this to these prophets, who had a notable art of disguising themselves; (v. 25, 26.) I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name. They thought that he was so far from knowing the arts they used to hide the truth, that he had no leisure to take cognizance of what passed in this. But God will make them know that he knows all their impostures, all the shams they have put upon the world, under colour of divine revelation. What they intended to humour the people with, they pretended to have had from God in a dream, when there was no such thing. This they could not discover; if a man tell me that he dreamed so and so, I cannot contradict him, because God discovered the fraud. Perhaps the false prophets whispered what they had to say in the ears of such as were their confidants, saying, So and so I have dreamed; but God overheard them. The heart-searching eye of God traced them in all the methods they took to deceive the people, and he cries out, How long? Shall I always bear with them? Is it possible (so much do I love them) to be ever prophesying lies, and prophesying the deceits of their own hearts? Will they never see what an affliction they put upon God, what an abuse they put upon the people, and what judgments they are preparing for themselves?

2. Let them consider that their palming upon people counterfeit revelations, and gathering their own strength upon divine inspiration, was the real God's way to bring all religion into contempt, and make men turn atheists and infidels; and this was the thing they really intended, though they frequently made mention of the name of God, and prefaced all they said with, Thus saith the Lord. Yet, says God, They think to cause my people to forget my name, by their dreams. They designed to draw people off from the worship of God, from all regard to God's laws and ordinances, and the true prophets, as their fathers forgot God's name for Baal. Note, The great thing Satan aims at, is, to make people forget God, and all that whereby he has made himself known; and he has many subtle methods to bring them to this: sometimes he does it by setting up false gods; (bring men in love with Baal, and they soon forget the name of God;) sometimes by misrepresenting God's revealed word, and perhaps such a one as ourselves. Pretences to new revelation may prove as dangerous to religion as the denying of all revelation; and false prophets in God's name may perhaps do more mischief to the power of godliness than false prophets in Baal's name, as being less guarded against.

3. Let them consider what a vast difference there was between these impostures and those that were delivered by the true prophets of the Lord; (v. 28.) The prophet that has a dream, which was the way of inspiration that the false prophets most pretended to, if he has a dream, let him tell it as a dream; so Mr. Gataker reads it. "Let him lay by no more stress upon it than men do upon their dreams, nor expect any more regard to be had to it; let them only take it for a dream. They pretend they have a message from God; let them own it, and call it a false dream or vision, and God will declare it, and it will easily appear which is of God, and which is not. Those that have spiritual senses exercised will be able to distinguish; for what is the
chaff to the wheat? The promises of peace which these prophets make to you, are no more to be compared to God's promises, than chaff to wheat. Men's fancies are light, and vain, and worthless, as the chaff which the wind drives away. But the travail of the earth, the substance in it; the very food for the soul, the bread of life. Wheat was the staple commodity of Canaan, that valley of vision, Deut. viii. 8. Ezek. xxvii. 17. There is as much difference between the vain fancies of men, and the pure word of God, as between the chaff and the wheat.

(1.) The law was a fiery law; (Deut. xxxii. 2) and of the gospel, Christ says, I am come to send fire on the earth, Luke xii. 49. Fire has different effects, according as the matter is on which it works; it hardens clay, but softens wax; it consumes the dross, but purifies the gold; so the word of God is to some a savour of life unto life, to others of death unto death. God appeals here to the conscience of those to whom the word was sent: "Is not my word like a fire, saith the Lord? Is there no one to enter in? Has it the power and efficacy that the word of God has? Nothing like it; there is no more comparison between painted fire and real fire. There is like an ignus furiosus—a deceiving meteor, leading men into by-paths and dangerous precipices. Note, The word of God is like fire.

2. Let them consider that while they went on in the course of things against the truth, they were told this, v. 2, 31, 32. Behold, I am against the prophets. They pretended to be for God, and made use of his name, but were really against him; he looks upon them as they were, really, and is against them. How can they be long safe, or at all easy, that have a God of almighty power against them? While these prophets were promising peace to the people, God was proclaiming war against them. They stood indicted here.

(1.) For robbery: They steal my word every one from his neighbour. Some understand it of that word which the good prophets preached; they stole their sermons, their expressions, and mingled them with their own, as hucksters mingled bad wares with some that are good, to make them vendible. In some that were strangers to the spirit of the true prophets, mimicked their language, picked up some good sayings of theirs, and delivered them to the people as if they had been their own, but with an ill grace; it was not of a piece with the rest of their discourses. The legs of the lambs are not equal, so is a parable in the mouth of fools, Prov. xxvi. 7. Others understand it of the word of God as it was received by some corrupted, not wholly uncorrupted, but they stole it out of their hearts, as the wicked one in the parable is said to steal the good seed of the word, Matt. xiii. 19. By their insinuations they diminished the authority, and so weakened the efficacy, of the word of God upon the minds of those that seemed to be under convictions by it.

(2.) They stand indicted for conspiring the destruction of the house of God. Thus I am against them, (v. 31.) because they use their tongues at their pleasure in their discourses to the people, say what they themselves think fit, and then father it upon God, pretend they had it from him, and say, He saith it. Some read it, They smooth their tongues; they are very complaisant to the people, and say nothing but what is pleasing and plausible; they never reprove them or threaten them, but their words are smoother than butter; thus they ingratiate themselves with them, and get money by them, and they have the impudence and impiety to make God the Patron of their lies; they say, "He saith so." What greater indignity can be done to the God of truth than to have the blots of the father of lies at his door?

(3.) They stand indicted as common cheats; (v. 32.) I am against them, for they prophesy false dreams, pretending that to be a divine inspiration, which is but an invention of their own; this is a horrid fraud; nor will it excuse them to say, Correct corruptor—Let the buyer take care of himself, and Sip Julietus unde decept, deception—if people will be deceived, let them. No, it is the people's fault that they err, that they take things upon trust, and do not try the spirits; but it is much more their fault, that they cause God's people to err by their lies, and by their lightness, by the flatulencies of their preaching, soothing them up in their sins, and by the looseness and lewdness of their conversation, en couraging them to persist in it. [1.] God dis owns their having any commission from him; I sent them not, nor commanded them; they are not God's messengers, nor is what they say his message. [2.] He therefore justly denies his blessing with them, Therefore they shall not profit this people at all. All the profit they aim at, to make them easy; but they shall not so much as do that, for God's providences will at the same time be making them uneasy. They do not profit God's people, whose care is implied as is expressed; they not only do them no good, but do them a great deal of hurt. Note, Those that corrupt the word of God, while they pretend to preach it, are so far from edifying the church, that they do it the greatest mischief imaginable.

33. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the Lord? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden! I will even forsake you, saith the Lord. 34. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the Lord, I will even punish that man and his house. 35. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the Lord answered? and, What hath the Lord spoken? 36. And the burden of the Lord shall ye mention no more; for every man's word shall be his burden: for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God. 37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the Lord answered thee? and, What hath the Lord spoken? 38. But since ye say, The burden of the Lord; therefore thus saith the Lord, Because you say this word, The burden of the Lord, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the Lord; 39. Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: 40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

The profaneness of the people, with that of the
priests and prophets, is here reproved in a particular instance, which may seem of small moment in comparison of their greater crimes; but profaneness in common discourse, and the debauching of the language of a nation, being a notorious evidence of the prevalence of wickedness in it, we are not to think it strange that this matter was so largely and warmly insisted on.  

1. The sin here charged upon them is, bantering God's prophets, and the dialect they used, and jesting with sacred things. They asked, What is the burthen of the Lord? v. 33, and v. 34. They say, The burthen of the Lord, v. 38. This was the word that gave great offence to God, that, whenever they spoke of the word of the Lord, they called it, in scoffing and derision, the word of a actor. (1.) They called it a word that the prophets much used, and used it seriously, to show what a weight the word of God was upon their spirits, of what importance it was, and how pressingly it should come upon those that heard it. The words of the false prophets had nothing ponderous in them, but God's words had; those were as chaff, these as wheat. Now the preface scoffers took this word, and made a jest out of it, as if there were nothing serious in it, that so, when the prophets used it, they might not make people serious with it. Note, It has been the artifice of Satan, in all ages, to obstruct the efficacy of sacred things by turning them into matter of sport and ridicule; the mocking of God's messengers was the buffing of his messages. (2.) Perhaps this word was caught at and reproached by the scoffers as an improper word, now adopted by the prophets, and pronounced by any一字less. It was only in this and the last age, that the word of the Lord was called the burthen of the Lord, and it could not be found in their lexicons to have that signification. But if men take a liberty, as we see they do, to form new phrases which they think more expressive and significant in other parts of learning, why not in divinity? But especially we must observe it as a rule, that the Spirit of God is not tied to our rules of speaking. (3.) Some think that, because, when the word of the Lord is called a burthen, it signifies some word of reproof and threatening, which would lay a load upon the hearers, (yet I know not whether that observation will always hold,) that in using this word, the burthen of the Lord, in a cajoling way, they reflected upon God as always bearing hard upon them, always to call them to account for their faults, doing the word of God a perpetual unseasoness to them. They make the word of God a burthen to themselves, and then quarrel with the ministers for making it a burthen to them. Thus the scoffers of the latter days, while they slight heaven and salvation, reproach faithful ministers for preaching hell and damnation. Upon the whole, we may observe, That light he who ever may make of it, the great God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, those who burlesque sacred things, and who, that they may make a jest of scripture-truths and laws, put jests upon scripture-language. In such wit as this I am sure there is no wisdom, and so it will appear at last. Be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Those that were here grief of this sin, were some of the priests, who perhaps came to seek occasions against them, on which to ground an information, and some of the people, who had learned of the profane priests and prophets to play with the things of God. The people would not have affronted the prophet and his God thus, if the priests and the prophets, those ringleaders of men, had not shown them the way.  

2. When they are reproved for this profane way of speaking, they are directed how to express them selves more decently. We do not find that the prophets are directed to make no more use of this word; we find it used long after this; (Zech. ix. 1, Mal. i. 1. Nah. i. 1, Hab. i. 1,) and we do not find it once used in this sense by Jeremiah either before or after. It is true indeed, that in many cases it is advisable to make no use of such words and things as some have made bad use of, and it may be prudent to avoid such phrases as, though innocent enough, are in danger of being perverted and made stumblingblocks. But here God will have the prophet keep to his rule; (ch. xv. 19.) Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Do not thou leave off using this word, but let them leave off abusing it; ye shall not mention the burthen of the Lord any more, and remember that, when you are in the business of perverting the words of the living God, and making a bad use of them, which is an impious, dangerous thing; for consider, he is the Lord of hosts our God. Note, If we will but look upon God, as we ought to do, in his greatness and goodness, and be but duly sensible of our relation and obligation to him, it may be hoped that we shall not dare to abuse either his name or his word, by using a sacred and imprudent thing to abuse him that is the living God, the Lord of hosts and our God. How then must they express themselves? He tells them, (v. 37.) Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, when thou art inquiring of him, What hath the Lord answered thee? And what hath the Lord spoken? And they must say thus, when they inquire of their neighbors, v. 35. Note, We must always speak of the things of God reverently and seriously, and as becomes the oracles of God. It is a commendable practice to inquire after the mind of God, to inquire of our brethren what they have heard, to inquire of our prophets what they have to say from God; but then, to show that we do it for a right end, we must do it after a right manner. Ministers may learn here, when they reprove people for what they say and do amiss, to teach them how to say and do better.  

3. Because they would not leave off this bad way of speaking, though they were admonished of it, God threatens them here with utter ruin. They would still say, The burthen of the Lord, though God had sent to them to forbid them, v. 38. What little regard have those to the divine authority, that will not be persuaded by it to leave an idle word! Be it seen what a tremendous terror God is here afraid to give. (1.) Those shall be severely reckoned with, that thus pervert the words of God, that put a wrong construction on them, and make a bad use of them; and it shall be made to appear that it is a great provocation to God, to mock his messengers; I will even punish that man and his house, whether he be prophet or priest, or one of the common people, it shall be visited upon him, v. 34. Reverting God's word, and ridiculing the preachers of it, are sins, that bring ruinous judgments upon families, and entail a curse upon a house. Another threatening we have, v. 36. Every man's word shall be his own burthen; the guilt of this sin shall be so heavy upon him, as to sink him into the pit of destruction. God shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves, verses 34, 35. It is as if God had said, so that the burthen of the Lord they shall have no heart to mention any more; it will be too heavy to make a jest of. They are as the madman that casts firebrands, arrows, and death, while they pretend to be in sport. (2.) The words of God, though thus perverted, shall be accomplished. Do they ask, What is the burthen of the Lord? Let the prophet ask them, What burthen do you mean? Is it this? I will even forsake you, v. 35. This is the burthen that shall
be laid and bound upon them, (v. 39. 40.) "Behold, I even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and have no thoughts of returning to you. Those are miserable indeed, that are forsaken and forgotten of God; and men's bantering God's judgments will not baffle them. Jerusalem was the city God had taken to himself as a holy city, and then given to them and their fathers; but that shall now be forsaken and forgotten. God had taken them to be a people near to him, but they have despised the days of their birth. They had been great and honourable among the nations, but now God will bring upon them an everlasting reproach and a perpetual shame; both their sin and their punishment shall be their lasting disgrace. It is here upon record, to their infamy, and will remain so to the world's end. Note, God's word will be magnified and made honourable, when those that mock it shall be vilified and made contemptible. They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

CHAP. XXIV.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a general pre-duction of the utter ruin of Jerusalem, that it should be forsaken and forgotten; which, whatever effect it had upon others, we have reason to think, made the prophet himself very melancholy. Now, in this chapter, God encourages him, by showing him that though the destruction of Jerusalem, and all the miseries of the people, be universal, yet all were not equally involved in it, but God knew how to distinguish, how to separate, between the precious and the vile. Some were gone into captivity already, and were over there at Jerusalem lamented, but God tells him that it should turn to their good; others yet remained hardened in their sins, against whom Jeremiah had a just indignation; but those, God tells him, should go into captivity, and it should prove to their hurt. To inform the prophet of this, and affect him with it; here is, I. A vision of two baskets of figs, one very good, and the other very bad, v. 1-5. II. The explication of this vision, applying the good figs to the good, and the bad figs to the bad, as fruit for their good, (v. 4. 7.) the bad figs to those that should hereafter be sent into captivity for their hurt, v. 8. 10.

1. THE Lord showed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the Lord, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad. 3. Then said the Lord unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 4. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 5. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah; whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. 6. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. 7. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart. 8. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the Lord, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain, in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt; 9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. 10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

This short chapter helps us to put a very comfortable construction upon a great many long ones, by showing us that the same providence which to some is a savour of death unto death, may by the grace and blessing of God be made to others a savour of life unto life; and that though God's people were with others in the same calamity, yet that it is not the same to them that it is to others, but is designed for their good, and shall issue in their good; to them it is a correcting rod in the hand of a tender Father, while to others it is an avenging sword in the hand of a righteous Judge.

Observe, I. The date of this sermon. It was after, a little after, Jeconiah's captivity, v. 1. Jeconiah was himself a despised, broken reed, but with him were carried away some very valuable persons, Ezekiel for one; (ch. i. 2.) many of the princes of Judah then went into captivity; Daniel and his fellows were carried off a little before; of the people only the carpenters and the smiths were forced away, either because the Chaldeans needed some ingenious men of those trades, (they had a great plenty of astrologers and stargazers, but a great scarcity of carpenters and smiths,) or because the Jews would severely feel the loss of them, and would, for want of them, be unable to fortify their cities, and furnish themselves with weapons of war. Now, it should seem, there were many good people carried away in that captivity, which the pious prophet laid much to heart, while there were those that triumphed in it, and insulted over those to whom let it fall to go into captivity. Note, We must not conclude concerning the first and greatest sufferers, that they were the worst and greatest sinners; for perhaps it may appear quite otherwise, as it did here.

II. The vision by which this distinction of the captives was represented to the prophet's mind. He saw two baskets of figs, before the temple, which were ready to fall, the one containing good figs, and the other of God. Perhaps the priests, being remiss in their duty, were not ready to receive them, and dispose of them, according to the law, and therefore Jeremiah sees them standing before the temple. But that which was the significance of the vision, was, that the figs in one basket were extraordinarily good, those in the other basket extremely bad. The children of men are all as the fruits of the first tree, capable of being made serviceable to God and man; (Judg. ix. 11.) but some are as good figs, than which nothing is more pleasant, others as damaged, rotten figs, than which nothing is more nauseous. What creature viler than a wicked man, and what more valuable than a godly man? The good figs were like those that are first ripe, which are most acceptable,
JEREMIAH, XXIV.

(Mic. vii. 1.) and most prized, when newly come into season. "The bad figs are such as could not be eaten, they were so evil; they could not answer the end of their creation, were neither pleasant, nor good for food; and what then were they good for? If Corinthians were the worst of men, hypocrites, the rest of sinners, and any service, they are even like the bad figs, that cannot be eaten, that will not answer any good purpose; if the salt have lost its savour, it is thenceforth fit for nothing but the dunghill. Of the persons that are presented to the Lord at the door of his tabernacle, some are sincere, and they are very good; others dissimulate with God, and they are very bad; some are the worst of men, hypocrites, the rest of sinners. Corruptio optimiti est progressio—That which is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst.

III. The exposition and application of this vision. God intended by it to raise the dejected spirits of those that were gone into captivity, by assuring them of a happy return, and to humble and awaken the proud and secure spirits of those who continued yet in Jerusalem, by assuring them of a miserable captivity.

1. Here is the moral of the good figs, that were very good, the first ripe; these represented the pious captives, that seemed first ripe for ruin, for they went first into captivity, but should prove first ripe for mercy, and their captivity should help to ripen them; these are pleasing to God, as good figs are to us, and shall be carefully preserved for use. Now observe it is thus.

1. Those that were already carried into captivity, were the good figs that God would own. This shows, [1.] That we cannot determine of God's love or hatred by all that is before us. When God's judgments are abroad, they are not always the worst that are first seized by them. [2.] That early sufferings sometimes prove for the best to us. The sooner the child is corrected, the better effect the correction is likely to have: those that went first into captivity were as the son whom the father loves, and chastens betimes, chastens while there is hope, and it did well; but those that stayed behind were like a child long left to himself, who, when afterward corrected, is stubborn, and made worse by it, Lam. iii. 27.

2. Those that are carried into captivity to be his doing; whoever are the instruments of it, he ordered and directed it; (v. 5.) I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans. It is God that puts his gold into the furnace, to be tried; his hand is, in an especial manner, to be eyed in the afflictions of good people. The judge orders the malefactor into the hand of an executioner, but the father corrects the child with his own hand.

3. Even this disgraceful, uncomfortable captivity, God intended for their benefit; and we are sure that his intentions are never frustrated; I have sent them into the land of the Chaldeans for their good. It seemed to be every way for their hurt, not only as it was the ruin of their estates, honours, and liberties, parted them from their relations and friends, and put them under the hand of the world, myriads and opposers, but as it sunk their spirits, discouraged their faith, deprived them of the benefit of God's oracles and ordinances, and exposed them to temptations; and yet it was designed for their good, and proved so, in the issue, as to many of them. Out of the eater came forth meat. By their afflictions they were convinced of sin, humbled under the sight of their own weakness, and the sins of their parents, taught to pray, and turned from their iniquity, particularly they were cured of their inclination to idolatry: and thus it was good for them that they were afflicted, Ps. exix. 67, 71.

4. God promises that he will own them in their captivity; though they seemed abandoned, they shall be acknowledged; the scornful relations they left behind will scarcely own them, or their kindred to them, but God says, I will acknowledge them. Note, The Lord knows them that are his, and will own them in all conditions; nakedness and inward shame shall be the occasion of the glory of their person, and their foreign excellency, and their beauteous and preciousness.

5. God assures them of his protection in their trouble, and a glorious delivery out of it in due time, v. 6. Being sent into captivity for their good, they shall not be lost there; but it shall be with them as it is with gold which the refiner puts into the furnace. [1.] He has his eye upon it while it is there, and it is a careful eye, to see that it sustain no damage; [2.] I will set mine eyes upon them for good, to order every thing for the best, that all the circumstances of the affliction may concur to the answering of the great intention of it. [2.] He will be sure to take it out of the furnace again, as soon as the work designed upon it is done; I will bring them again to this land. They were sent abroad for improvement awhile, under a divine discipline: but they shall be fetched back, when they have gone through their trial there, to their Father's house. [3.] He will fashion his gold when he has refined it, will make it a vessel of honour fit for his use; so, when God has brought them back from their trial, he will build them, and make them a habitation for himself, will plant them, and make them a vineyard for himself. Their captivity was a contrary to their expectations, but they are fit for his building, to prune up the young trees, and make them fit for his planting.

6. He engages to prepare them for these temporal mercies which he designed for them, by bestowing spiritual mercies upon them, v. 7. It is this that will make their captivity be for their good; this shall be both the improvement of their affliction, and their qualification for deliverance; we shall not be wholly delivered, sanctified to us, then we may be sure that they will end well. Now which is promised, is, [1.] That they should be better acquainted with God; they shall learn more of God by his providences in Babylon than they had learned by all his oracles and ordinances in Jerusalem; thanks to divine grace, for if that had not wrought mightily upon them in Babylon, they would for ever have been a forgotten people. It is promised, I will give them, not so much a head to know me, as a heart to know me, for the right knowledge of God consists not in notion and speculation, but in the convictions of the practical judgment directing and governing the will and affections. A good understanding have all they that do his commandments, Ps. cxii. 10. Where God gives a sincere desire and inclination to know him, he will give that knowledge. It is God himself that gives a heart to know him, else we should perish for ever in our ignorance.

[2.] That they should be entirely converted to God; to his will as their rule, his service as their business, and his glory as their end; They shall return to me with their whole heart. God himself undertakes for them that they shall; and if he does so, we shall be as sure of this as of any event that is for the interest of those that have a heart to know God aright, will not only turn to him, but turn with their whole heart; for those that are either obstinate in their rebellion, or hypocritical in their religion, may truly be said to be ignorant of God. [3.] That thus they should be again taken into covenant with God, as much to their comfort as ever they have been before; and we will be their God, God will own them, as formerly, for his people, in the discoveries of himself to them, in his acceptance of their services, and in his gracious appearances on their behalf, and they shall have liberty to own him for their God, in their prayers to him, and their expectations from him. Note, Those that have back-
hidden from God, if they do in sincerity return to him, are admitted as freely as any to all the privileges and comforts of the everlasting covenant, which is hereina well ordered, that every transgres-
sion in the covenant does not throw us out of cove-
Hant, and that affections are not only consistent with, but flowing from covenant.

2. Here is the moral of the bad fics, Zedekiah and his princes and partisans yet remain in the land, proud and secure enough, Ezek. xi. 3. Many were led into Egypt for shelter, and they thought they had shifted well for themselves and their own safety, and boasted that though therein they had gone contrary to the command of God, yet they had acted prudently for themselves. Now as to these that looked so scornfully upon those that were gone into captivity, it is here threatened, (1.) That, whereas those who were already car-
ried away were settled in one country, where they had the comfort of one another's society, though in captivity, these should be dispersed and removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, where they should have no joy one of another.

(2.) That, whereas those were carried away captives for their good, these should be removed into all countries for their hurt. Their afflictions should be so far from humbling them, that they should harden them; not bring them nearer to God, but set them at a greater distance from him. Doubtless, this is a hard thing for them who should have the honour of being owned of God in their troubles, should have the shame of being abandoned by all mankind: In all places whither I shall drive them, they shall be a reproach and a proverb. "Such a one is as false and proud as a Jew;" "Such a one is as poor and miserable as a Jew." All their neigh-
bours shall make a jest of them, and the calamities brought upon them shall be the occasion of mirth.

(4.) That, whereas those should return to their own land, these shall be consumed from that land, never to see it more, and it shall be of no avail to them to plead, that it was the land God gave to their fathers, for they had it from God, and he gave it them upon condition of their obedience.

(5.) That, whereas those were reserved for better times, these were reserved for worse: whereas they are removed, the sword, and famine, and festi-
tleness, shall be sent after them, shall soon overtake them, and, coming with commission so to do, shall overcome them. God has variety of judgments wherewith to prosecute those that fly from justice; and those that have escaped one, may expect another, till they are brought to repent and reform.

Doubtless, this prophecy had its accomplishment in the men of that generation; yea, because we read not of any such remarkable difference between those of Jeconiah's captivity and those of Zedeki-
ah's, it is probable that this was a typical reference to the last destruction of the Jews by the Romans, in which those of them that believed were taken care of, but those that continued obstinate in unbe-
liefs, were cut off without mercy, for a torment and a curse, and so they remain to this day.

CHAP. XXV.

The prophecy of this chapter bears date some time before those prophecies in the chapters next foregoing, for they are not ordered of time in which they were delivered. This is dated in the first year of Nebu-
chadrezzar, that remarkable year when the sword of the Lord began to be drawn and furnished. Here is, I. A review of the prophecies that had been delivered to Judah and Jerusalem for many years past, by Jeremiah himself and other prophets, with the little regard given to them, and the little success of them, v. 1. II. A very full description of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, by the king of Babylon, for their contempt of God and their continuance in sin, v. 8. To which is annexed a promise of their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, after 70 years, v. 12. III. A prediction of the devastation of divers other nations about, by Nebuchadrezzar, represented by a cup of fury put into the mouth of Nebuchadrezzar, (v. 13.) by a hand sustaining them, (v. 29-33.) and a desolation made among the shepherds, and their flocks and pastures; (v. 34-38.) so that we have here judgment beginning at the house of God, but not ending there.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; 2. The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the in-
habitants of Jerusalem, saying, 3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, (that is the third and twentieth year,) the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. 5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever; 6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. 7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

We have here a message from God concerning all the people of Judah, (v. 1.) which Jeremiah de-
ivered, in his name, unto all the people of Judah, v. 2. Note, That which is of universal concern, ought to be of universal cognizance. It is fit that the word which concerns all the people, as the word of God does, the word of the gospel particularly, should be divulged to all in general, and as far as may be, addressed to each in particular. Jeremiah had been sent to the house of the king, (ch. xxii. 1.) and he took courage to deliver his message there; here he is sent to all the people, and he takes the pains to deliver his message to them, prob-
ably when they were all come up to Jerusalem, to worship at some of the solemn feasts; then he had them together, and it was to be hoped then, if ever, that they would be well disposed to hear counsel and re-
ceive instruction.

This prophecy is dated in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and the 1st of Nebuchadrezzar. It was in the latter end of Jehoiakim's 3d year, that Nebuchad-
rezzar began to reign himself alone, (having reigned some time before in conjunction with his father,) as appears, Dan. i. 1. but Jehoiakim's 4th year was three years before Nebuchadrezzar's 1st year was completed. Now that that active, daring, martial prince began to set up for the world's master, God, by his pro-
phets, gives notice that he is his servant, and inti-
mates what work he intends to employ him in, that his growing greatness, which was so formidable to the nations, might not be construed as any reflection upon the power and providence of God in the-

JEREMIAH, XXV.

VERMERNENT of the world. Nebuchadrezzar should not bid so far for universal monarchy, (I should have said universal tyranny,) but that God had purposes of his own to serve by him; in the execution of which, the world shall see the meaning of God's all-perpetting and ordering a thing that seemed such a reflection on his sovereignty and goodness.

Now in this message we may observe the great pains that had been taken with the people to bring them to repentance, which they are here put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin, and a justification of God in his proceedings against them.

1. Jeremiah, for his part, had been a constant preacher of this prophecy for 25 years; he began in the 13th year of Josiah, who reigned 19 years, so that he prophesied about 18 or 19 years in his reign, then in the reign of Jehoiakim, and now 4 years of Jehoiakim's reign. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, how long we have enjoyed the means of grace; and the longer we have enjoyed them, the heavier will our account be if we have not improved them. These three years (these three and twenty years) have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree. All this while, (1.) God had been constant in sending messages to them, as there was occasion for them; "From that time to this very day, the word of the Lord has come unto me, for your use." Though they had the substance of the warning sent them already in the books of Moses, yet, because they were not duly regarded and applied, God sent to enforce them, and make them more particular, that they might be without excuse. Thus God's Spirit was striving with them, as with the old world, Gen. vi. 3. (2.) Jeremiah had been faithful and industrious in delivering these messages; he could appeal to themselves, as well as to God and his own conscience, concerning this: I have spoken to you, rising early and speaking. The high esteem of God, he had taken a great deal of care and pains to discharge his trust in such a manner as might be most likely to win and work upon them. What men are solicitous about and intent upon, they rise up early to prosecute. It intimates that his head was so full of thoughts about it, and his heart so intent upon doing good, that it broke his sleep, and made him get up before his proper hour as a man might not, to act with that care and carelessness he would be most likely to do them good. He rose early, both because he would lose no time, and because he would lay hold on and improve the best time to work upon them, when, if ever, they were sober and sedate. Christ came early in the morning to preach in the temple, and the people as early to hear him, Luke xxii. 38. Morning-lectures have their advantages. My voice shall they hear in the morning.

2. Beside him, God had sent them other prophets, on the same errand, ver. 4. Of the writing prophets, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk, were a little before him, and Zephaniah contemporary with him. But, beside these, there were many other of God's servants the prophets, who preached awakening sermons, which were never published. They are here called, and all the public preaching of him himself is said to rise early and send them; intimating how much his heart also was upon it, that this people should turn and live, and not go on and die, Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

3. All the messages sent them were to the purpose, and much to the same purpose, ver. 5, 6. (1.) They all told them of their faults, their evil way, and the evil of their doing. Those are not of God's servants, who will not tell them of the evil that is among them. (2.) They all reproved them particularly for their idolatry, as a sin that was in a special manner provoking to God; their going after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, gods that were the work of their own hands. (3.) They all called on them to repent of their sins, and to reform their lives. This was the burden of every song. Turn ye now every one from his evil way. Note, Personal and particular reformation must be insisted on as necessary to national deliverance; every one must turn from his own evil way. The street will not be clean unless every one sweep before his own door. (4.) They all assured them, that, if they did so, it would certainly be the lengthening out of their troubles. The mercies they enjoyed should be continued to them; You shall dwell in the land, dwell at ease, dwell in peace, in this good land, which the Lord has given you and your fathers. Nothing but sin will turn you out of it, and that shall not if you turn from it. The judgments they feared should be prevented; Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt. Note, We should never receive from God the evil of punishment if we did not provoke him by the evil of sin. God deals fairly with us, never corrects his children without cause, nor causes grief to us unless we give offence to him.

4. Yet all was to no purpose. They were not wrought upon to take the right and only method to turn away the wrath of God. Jeremiah was a lively, affectionate preacher, yet they hearkened not to him, ver. 3. The other prophets dealt faithfully with them, but neither did they hearken to them, nor incline their ear, ver. 4. That very particular sin which they were told of, all others, was most offensive to God, and made them obnoxious to his justice, they wilfully persisted in; You provoke me with the works of your hands, to your own hurt. Note, What is a provocation to God will prove, in the end, hurt to ourselves, and we must bear the blame of it. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself.

5. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Because ye have not heard my words, ver. 5. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and a hissing, and perpetual desolations. Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the Lord, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. 13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations. 14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them accord-
ing to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

Here is the sentence grounded upon the foregoing charge. "Because ye have not heard my words, I must take another course with you," v. 8. Note, When men will not regard the judgments of God's mouth, they may expect to feel the judgments of his hands; to hear the rod, since they would not hear the word; for the sinner must either be parted from his sin, or perish in it. Wrath comes not without remedy against those who continue in sin without repentance. It is not so much men's turning aside that ruins them as their not returning.

1. The ruin of the land of Judah by the king of Babylon's armacles is here decreed, v. 9. God sent them, his servants the prophets, and they were not heeded, and therefore God will send for his servant the king of Babylon, whom they cannot mock, and despise, and persecute, as they did his servants the prophets. Note, The messengers of God's wrath will be sent against those that would not receive the messengers of his mercy. One way or other, God will be heeded, and will make men know that he is the Lord. Nebuchadrezzar, though a stranger to the true God, the God of Israel, nay, an enemy to him, and afterward a rival with him, was yet, in the descent he made upon this country, God's servant, and Nebuchadrezzar's act was not a sin, but was an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was really serving God's designs when he thought he was serving his own ends. Justly therefore does God here call himself, The Lord of hosts, (v. 8.) for here is an instance of his sovereign dominion, not only over the inhabitants, but over the armies, of this earth, in which he made use of Nebuchadrezzar, and an instrument in his hand for the correction of his people. He was them all at his command; the most potent and absolute monarchs are his servants. Nebuchadrezzar, who is an instrument of his wrath, is as truly his servant, as Cyrus is an instrument of his mercy. The land of Judah being to be made despised, God here musters his army that is to do it, gathert it together, takes all the families of the north, if there be occasion for them, lends them on as their Commander in chief, brings them against this land, gives them success, not only against Judah and Jerusalem, but against all the nations round about, that there might be no dependence upon them as allies, or assistants against that threatening force. The utter destruction of this and all the neighbouring lands is but the prelude of it. If, that shall be total; The whole land shall be a desolation, not only one city, but a desolation itself, both city and country shall be laid waste, and all the wealth of both be made a prey of; it shall be lasting, even perpetual desolations; they shall continue so long in ruins, and after long waiting there shall appear so little prospect of relief, that every one shall call it perpetual. This desolation shall be then in their credit among the heathen, and shall show them, that in the dust, shall make them an astonishment and an hissing; every one will be amazed at them, and hiss them off the stage of action with just disgrace, for deserting God who would have been their protection, for impostors who would certainly be their destruction. It will likewise be the ruin of all their comfort among themselves; it shall be final and everlasting, and therefore these words are prefixed to the doom of the land, not only because it is the most illustrious part of it, and of which the people more particularly lamented the destruction, but because it is the means of the destruction of the city and country. God would not have them boast of their mirth, hang their harps on the willow trees, and put them out of tune for songs. I will take from them the voice of mirth; they shall neither have cause for it, nor hearts for it. They would not hear the voice of God's word, and therefore the voice of mirth shall no more be heard among them. They shall be deprived of food; the sound of the milestone shall not be heard, for when the enemy has seized their stores, the sound of the grinding must needs be low, Eccl. xii. 4. An end shall be put to all business, there shall not be seen the light of a candle, and there shall be no work to be done worth candle-light. And lastly, they shall be stripped of all their liberty; Those nations shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years. The fixing of the time during which the captivity should last, would be of great use, not only for the confirmation of the prophecy, when the event (which in this particular could by no human sagacity be foreseen) should exactly answer the prediction, but for the comfort of the people of God in their calamities; and the carrying out of this prophecy by means of his providence and grace. Daniel, who was himself a prophet, had an eye to it, Dan. ix. 2. Nay, God himself had an eye to it, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 22.) for thereby he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, that the word spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world; which appears by this, that, when he has thought fit, some of them have been made known to his servants the prophets, and by them to his church.

2. The ruin of Babylon, at last, is here likewise foretold, as it had been, long before, by Isaiah, v. 12.—14. The destroyers must themselves be destroyed, and the rod thrown into the fire, when the correcting-work is done with it. This shall be done when 70 years are accomplished, the period which the king of Babylon must make way for the deliverance of the captives. It is a great doubt when these 70 years commence; some date them from the captivity in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, and 1st of Nebuchadrezzar; others from the captivity of Jehoiachin eight years after. I rather incline to the former, because then these nations began to serve the king of Babylon, and because historically God has taken the earliest time from which to reckon the accomplishment of a promise of mercy, as will appear in computing the 400 years' servitude in Egypt. And if so, 18 or 19 years of the 70 were run out before Jerusalem and the temple were quite destroyed in the 11th year of Zedekiah. However that be, when the time, the set time, to favour Zion is come, the king of Babylon must be visited, and all the instances of his tyranny reckoned for; then that nation shall be punished for their iniquity, as the other nations have been punished for theirs. That land must then be a perpetual desolation, such as they had made other lands; for the Judge of all the earth will both do right, and avenge wrong, as King of nations, and King of saints. Let proud conquerors and oppressors be made rash in the sight of God, for power and success, for it will come at last to their own turn to suffer; their day will come to fall. In this destruction of Babylon, which was to be brought about by the Medes and Persians, reference shall be had, (1.) To what God had said; I will bring upon that land all my words; for all the wealth and honour of Babylon shall be sacrificed to the truth of what God foretold. The divine word being rather than one iota or title of God's word shall fall to the ground. The same Jeremiah that prophesied the destruction of other nations by the Chaldeans, foretold also the destruction of the Chaldeans themselves; and this must be brought upon them, v. 13. It is with reference to this very event, that God says, I will confirm the word of my servant, and perform the words of my servant. (2.) To what they had done; (v. 14.) I will recommence them according to their deeds, by which they transgressed the law of God, even then when they were made to serve his purposes. They had made many nations to serve them, and trampled upon them with the greatest insolence imaginable; but now that the measure of their iniquity is full, many nations and great kings, that are in alliance with,
and come in to the assistance of, Cyrus king of Persia, shall serve themselves of them also, shall make them selves masters of their country, enrich themselves with their spoils, and make them the footstool by which to mount the throne of universal monarchy. They shall make use of them for servants and soldiers. He that leads into captivity, shall go into captivity.

15. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee, to drink it. 16. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. 17. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me: 18. To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse; (as it is this day;) 19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people; 20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod. 21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon, 22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the Isles which are beyond the sea, 23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners, 24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, 25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, 26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. 27. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you. 28. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thy hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink. 29. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished; for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.

Under the similitude of a cup going round, which all the company must drink of, is here represented the universal desolation that was now coming upon that part of the world, which Nebuchadrezzar, who just now began to reign and act, was to be the instrument of, and which should at length recoil upon his own country. The cup in the vision is to be a sword in the accomplishment of it: so it is explained, v. 16. It is the sword that I will send among them, the sword of war, that should be irresistibly strong and implacably cruel. Observe,

1. Whence this destroying sword should come; from the hand of God, it is the sword of the Lord, (ch. xlvii. 6.) bathed in heaven, Isa. xxxxiv. 5. Wicked men are made use of as his sword, Ps. xxvii. 13. It is the wine-cup of his fury. It is the just anger of God that sends this judgment; the nations have provoked him by their sins, and they must fall under the tokens of his wrath. They are herefore compelled to some intoxicating liquor, which they shall be forced to drink of, as formerly condemned malefactors were sometimes executed by being compelled to drink poison. The wicked are said to drink the wrath of the Almighty, Job xxi. 20. Rev. xiv. 10. Their share of troubles in this world is represented by the drinks of a cup of red wine full of mixture, Ps. lxxv. 8. See Ps. xi. 6. The wrath of God in this world is but as a cup, in comparison of the full streams of it in the other world.

2. By whose hand it should be sent them; by the hand of Jeremiah, as the judge set over the nations, (ch. iv. 10.) to pass this sentence upon them; and by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, as the executioner. What a much greater figure then does the poor prophet make, that we may see, when we look upon their relation to God, though in the eye of the world it was the reverse of it! Jeremiah must take the cup at God's hand, and compel the nations to drink it. He foretells no hurt to them, but what God appoints him to foretell; and what is foretold by a divine authority, will certainly be fulfilled by a divine power.

3. On whom it should be sent; on all the nations within the sphere of Israel's acquaintance, and the lines of their communication. Jeremiah took the cup, and made all nations to drink of it, that is, he prophesied concerning each of the nations here mentioned, that they should share in this great desolation that was coming. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah are put first; (v. 18.) for judgment begins at the house of God, (1 Pet. iv. 17.) at the sanctuary, Ezek. xvi. 18. Zorohbaal had his eye principally upon Jerusalem and Judah in this expedition or no, does not appear; probably he had; for it was as considerable as any of the nations here mentioned; however, God had his eye principally to them. And this part of the prophecy was already begun to be accomplished; this is denoted by that melancholy parenthesis, (as it is this day;) for in the 4th year of Jehoiakim things were come into a very bad posture, and all the foundations were cut of course. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, comes next, because the Jews trusted to that broken reed; (v. 19.) the remains of them fled to Egypt, and then Jeremiah particularly foretold the destruction of that country, ch. xlvii, 10. 11. All the other nations that bordered upon Canaan, must pledge Jerusalem in this bitter cup, this cup of trembling. The mingled people, the Aramians, so some; some rovers of divers nations that lived by rapine, so others; the kings of the land of Uz, joined to the country of the Edomites. The Philistines had been vexatious to Israel, but now their cities and their lords became a prey to this mighty conqueror. Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, and Zidon, are places well known to border upon Israel; the Isles beyond, beside, to whom the potent banece makes its Phœnicia and Syria, that lay upon the coast of the Mediterranean sea. Dedan, and the other countries mentioned, (v. 23, 24.) seem to have lain upon the confines of Idumea and Arabia the desert. These of Elam are the Persians, with whom the Medes
are joined, now looked upon as incomconsiderable, and yet afterward able to make reprisals upon Babylon for themselves and all their neighbours. The kings of the north, that lay nearer to Babylon, and others that lay up at some distance, will be sure to be seized on, and made a prey of, by the victorious sword of Nebuchadrezzar. Nay, he shall push on his victories with such incredible fury and success, that all their hopes. Whatever they may call it, shall be bloody. That is, if they are not known, should be sacrifices to his ambition. Thus Alexander is said to have conquered the world, and the Roman empire is called the world, Luke ii. 1. Or it may be taken as reading the doom of all the kingdoms of the earth; one time or other they shall feel the dreadful effects of war. The world has been, and will be, a great cockpit, while mankind as a war as they do till their members, Jam. iv. 1. But that the conquerors may see their fate with the conquered, it concludes, The king of Sheshach shall drink after them, that is, the king of Babylon himself, who has given his neighbours all this trouble and vexation, shall at length have it return upon his own head. That by Sheshach is meant Babylon, is plain, from ch. li. 41. but whether it be the former name of the same city, or the name of another city of the same kingdom, is uncertain. Babylon's ruin was foretold, v. 12, 13. Upon this prophecy of its being the author of the ruin of so many nations, it was very fitly repeated here again. 4. What should be the effect of it? The desolations which the sword should make in all these kingdoms, are represented by the consequences of eating, and drinking, and being moved, and being mad. They shall be drunken and spue, and fall and rise no more, v. 27. Now this may serve, (1.) To make us loathe the sin of drunkenness, that the consequences of it are made use of to set forth a most woful and miserable condition. Drunkenness deprives men, for the present, of the use of their reason, makes them mad. It takes from them likewise that which, next to reason, is the most valuable blessing, and that is health; it makes them sick, and endangers the bones and the life. Men in drink often fall, and rise no more; it is a sin that is its own punishment. How wretchedly are they intoxicated and besotted, that suffer themselves at any time to be intoxicated, especially to be, by the frequent commission of this sin, besotted with wine or strong drinking. (2.) To make us loathe the sin of war. When God sends the sword upon a nation, with warrant to make it desolate, it soon becomes like a drunken man, filled with confusion at the alarms of war, put into a hurry; its counsellors mad, and at their wit's end, staggering in all the measures they take, all the motions they make; sick at heart with continual vexation; vomiting up the riches they have greedily swallowed it on; (Job xx. 13.) feeling do not before the enemy, and as unable to get up again, or do any thing to help themselves, as a man dead drunk is, Hab. ii. 16. 5. The undoubted certainty of it, with the reason given for it, v. 28, 29. They will refuse to take the cup at thy hand; not only they will be loath that the judgment should come, but they will be loath to backward; ch. xvii. 28. They have no longer credit to the prediction of so despicable a man as Jeremiah; but he must tell them that it is the word of the Lord of hosts, he hath said it; and it is in vain for them to struggle with Omnipotence: Ye shall certainly drink. The prophet must give them this reason, It is a time of visitation, it is a reckoning day, and Jerusalem has been called to an account for every encroachment they have committed; it is called by my name; its relation to me will not exempt it from punishment, and should ye be utterly unpunished? No, If this be done in the green tree,
of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the Lord hath spoiled their pasture. 37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down, because of the fierce anger of the Lord. 38. He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate, because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

We have in these verses, a further description of those terrible desolations which the king of Babylon with his armies should make in all the countries and provinces over which the empire of Nebuchadnezzar extended, and over which God had erected his temple; there were his oracles and ordinances which the neighboring nations should have attended to, and might have received benefit by; thither they should have applied themselves for the knowledge of God and their duty, and then they might have had reason to bless God for their neighbourhood to Jerusalem; but they, instead of that, took the opportunity which they had, not to disturb that holy city, when God came to reckon with Jerusalem, (because it learned so much of the way of the nations,) he reckoned with the nations because they learned so little of the way of Jerusalem.

They will soon be aware of Nebuchadnezzar’s making war upon them; but the prophet is here bidden to tell them that it is God himself that makes war upon them, a God with whom there is no contending.

1. The war is here proclaimed; (v. 50.) The Lord shall roar from on high; not from mount Zion and Jerusalem, (as Joel iii. 16. Amos i. 2.) but from heaven, from his holy habitation there; for now Jerusalem is one of the places against which he roars; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation on earth from that above. He has been longsighed, and seemed not to take notice of the wickedness of the nations; the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now he shall give a shout, as the assailants in battle do, against all the inhabitants of the earth, to whom it shall be a shout of terror, and yet a shout of joy in heaven, as theirs that tread the grapes; for when God is reckoning with the proud enemies of his kingdom among men, there is a great voice of much people heard in heaven, saying, Hallelujah. Rev. xiv. 1. He roars as a lion, (Amos iii. 4, 8.) as a lion that has forsaken his covert, (v. 38.) and is going abroad to seek his prey, upon which he roars, that he may the more easily seize it.

2. The manifesto is here published, showing the causes and reasons why God proclaims this war; (v. 31.) The Lord has a controversy with the nations; he has just cause to contend with them, and he will make them feel the weight of his anger. His quarrel with them is, in one word, for their wickedness, their contempt of him, and his authority over them, and kindness to them; He will give them that are wicked to the sword. They have provoked God to anger, and thence comes all this destruction; it is because of the fierce anger of the Lord, (v. 37.) and again (v. 58.) the fierceness of the oppressor; or as in a better read, the fierceness of the oppressing sword (for the word is feminine) is because of his fierce anger; and we are sure that he is never angry without cause; but who knows the power of his anger?

3. The alarm is here given and taken; A noise will come even to the ends of the earth, so loud shall it roar, so far shall it reach, v. 31. The alarm is not given by sound of trumpet, or beat of drum, but by a whirlwind, a great whirlwind, storm or tempest, which shall be raised up from the coasts, the remote coasts of the earth, v. 32. The Chaldean army shall be like a hurricane raised in the north, but thence carried on with incredible fierceness and swiftness, bearing down all before it. It is like the whirlwind out of which God answered Job, which was exceeding terrible, Job xxxvii. 1.—xxxviii. 1. And when the wrath of God thus roars like a lion from heaven, no marvel if it be bound to work wonders from earth; for who can choose but tremble when God thus speaks in displeasure? See Hosea xi. 10. Now the shepherds shall howl and cry, the kings and princes, and great ones of the earth, the principal of the flock; they used to be the most courageous and secure, but now their hearts shall fail them, they shall swallow themselves in the ashes, v. 34. Seeing that they once contended against the enemy, and seeing their country, which they have the charge of, and a concern for, inevitably ruined, they shall abandon themselves to sorrow. There shall be a voice of the cry of the shepherds, and a howling of the principal of the flock shall be heard, v. 36. Those are great calamities indeed, that strike such a terror upon the great and powerful, and so dishearten them; The Lord hath spoiled their pastures, in which they kept their flocks, and out of which they fed themselves; the spoiling of that makes them cry out thus. Perhaps, carrying on the metaphor of a lion roaring, it alludes to the great fright that shepherds are in when they hear a roaring lion coming toward their flocks, and find they have no way to flee (v. 33.) for their war is secure, neither can the principal of the flock escape. It is an enemy to the nations so furious, so sedulous, and the extent of their armies so vast, that it will be impossible to avoid falling into their hands. Note, As we cannot outface, so we cannot outrun, the judgments of God. This is that for which the shepherds howl and cry.

4. The progress of this war is here described; (v. 32.) Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation; as the cup gets round, so every nation shall have its share, and take its turn, because one does not take warning by the calamities of another to repent and reform. Nay, as if this were to be a little representation of the last and general judgment, it shall reach from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth, v. 33. The day of vengeance is in his heart, and now his hand shall find out all his enemies wherever they are, Ps. xxxi. 5. Note, With our neighbour’s failure and catastrophe we should be concerned for our own. When one nation is a seat of war, every neighbouring nation should hear, and fear, and make its peace with God.

5. The dismal consequences of this war are here foretold; The days of slaughter and dissipations are accomplished, they are fully come, (v. 34.) the time fixed in the divine counsel for the slaughter of some and the dispersal of the rest which will make the nations completely desolate. Multitudes shall fall by the sword of the merciless Chaldeans, so that the slain of the Lord shall be every where found; they are slain by commission from him, and are sacri- ficed to his justice. The slain for sin are the slain of the Lord. To complete the misery of their slaughter, they shall not be lamented in particular, so general shall the number of lambs which are reduced, that they have not to be buried, for they shall have no friends left to do it, and the enemies shall not have so much humanity in them as to do it; and then they shall be as dung upon the earth, so vile and noisome: and it is well, as dung manures the earth, and makes it fruitful, so these horrid spectacles, which lie as monuments of divine justice, might be a means to awaken the inhabitants of the earth to learn righteousness. The effect of this war will be the desolation of the whole land that is the seat of it, (v. 38.) one land after another. But here are two
expressions more, that seem to make the case in a particular manner piteous, (1.) Ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel, v. 34. The most desirable persons among them who most valued themselves, and were most valued, shall fall by the sword; who were led upon as vessels of honour. Ye shall fall as a Venice glass or a China dish, which is soon broken all to pieces: even the tender and delicate shall share in the common calamity; the sword devours one as well as another. (2.) Even the peaceable habitation are cut down. Those that used to be quiet, and not molested, the habitations in which ye have long dwelt in peace, shall now be no longer such, but cut down by the war; or, Those who used to be quiet, and not molesting any of their neighbours, those who lived in peace, easily, and gave no provocation to any, were then those that were to escape. Told was of and of the direful effects of war, that even those who were most harmless and insensible suffered hard things. Blessed be God, there is a peaceable habitation above for all the sons of peace, which is out of the reach of fire and sword.

CHAP. XXVI.

As in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, that of their preaching and that of their sufferings are not over, even it is in the account we have of the prophet Jeremiah; witness this chapter, where we are told, I. How faithfully he preached, v. 1, 6. II. How spiritually he was persecuted for so doing by the priests and the prophets, v. 7—11. III. How bravely he stood to his doctrine, in the face of his persecutors, v. 12—15. IV. How wonderfully he was protected and delivered by the providence of the princes and elders, v. 16—19. Though he is not here called the Lord's prophet, yet Jeremiah met with those that sheltered him, v. 24.

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word from the Lord, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them: diminish not a word: 3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. 4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord. If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law which I have set before you, 5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened; 6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

We have here the sermon that Jeremiah preached, which gave such offence, that he was in danger of losing his life for it. It is here left upon record, as it were, by way of appeal to the judgment of impartial men in all ages, whether Jeremiah was worthy to die for delivering such a message as this from God, and whether his persecutors were not very wicked and unreasonable men.

2. God directed him where to preach this sermon, and when, and to whom auditory, v. 2. Let not even Jeremiah be as indirect in the choice of place and time, nor say that he might have delivered his message more privately, in a corner, among his friends that he could confide in, and that he deserved to smart for not acting more cautiously; for God gave him orders to preach in the court of the Lord's house, which was within the peculiar jurisdiction of his sworn enemies the priests, and who would therefore take themselves to be in a particular manner afflicted. He must preach this, as it would seem, at the time of one of the most solemn festivals, when persons were come from all the cities of Judah to worship in the Lord's house. These worshippers, we may suppose, had a great veneration for their priests, would credit the character they gave of men, and be exasperated against those whom they defamed, and would, consequently, side with them and strengthen their hands against Jeremiah; but none of these things must move him to the least fear, he was sent to bear this message to them, which, if it were mere preaching, would be very provoking. And because the prophet might be in some temptation to palliate the matter, and make it better to his hearers than God had made it to him, to exchange an offensive expression for one more plausible, therefore God charges him particularly not to diminish a word, but to speak the truth. He might, indeed, have said to the people, the words that he had commanded him. Note, God's anointed, must not keep close to their instructions, and not in the least vary from them, either to please men, or to save themselves from harm. They must neither add nor diminish, Deut. iv. 2.

II. God directed him what to preach, and it is that which could not give offence to any but such as were resolved to go on still in their trespasses. 1. He must assure them that if they would repent of their sins, and turn from them, though they were in imminent danger of ruin, and desolating judgments were just at the door, yet a step should be put to them, and God would proceed no further in his controversy with them; (v. 3.) this was the main thing God intended in sending him to them, to try if they would return from their sins, that so God might turn from his anger, and turn away the judgments that threatened them; which he was not only willing, but very desirous, to do, as soon as he could do it without prejudice to the honour of his justice and holiness. See how God waits to be gracious, waits till we are duly qualified, till we are fit for him to be gracious to, and in the mean time tries a variety of methods to bring us to be so.

2. He must, on the other hand, assure them that if they continued obstinate to all the calls God gave them, and would persist in their disobedience, it would certainly end in the ruin of their city and temple, v. 4—6. (1.) That which God required of them, was, that they should be observant of what he had said to them, both by the written word and by his ministry. This was the true test of all his laws, which he set before them, the law of Moses, with the ordinances and commandments of it; and that they should hearken to the words of his servants the prophets, who pressed nothing upon them but what was agreeable to the law of Moses, which was set before them as a touchstone to try the spirits by: and by this they were distinguished from the false prophets, whose delusions they should reject, and instead of drawing them to them. The law was, that God would himself set before them. The prophets were his own servants, and were immediately sent by him to them, and sent with a great deal of care and concern, rising early to send them, lest they should come too late, when their prejudices had got possession, and were become invincible. They had hitherto been deaf both to the law and to the prophets; Ye have not hearkened; all he expects now, is, that at length they should heed what he said,
and make his word their rule. A reasonable demand! (2.) That which is threatened in case of refusal, is, that this city, and the temple in it, shall fare as their predecessors did, Shiloh and the taber-
nacle there, for a like refusal to walk in God’s law and hearken to his prophets, then when the present
dispensation of prophecy just began in Samuel.
Now could a sentence be expressed more unex-
cceptionably? Is it not a rule of justice, Parium fur-
 sit ratio—Let those whose cases are the same, be
dealt with alike? If Jerusalem be like Shiloh in
respect of sin, why should it not be like Shiloh in
respect of punishment? Can any other be expected?
This was not the first time he had given them warn-
ing to this effect; see ch. xii. 14. When the
temple, which was the glory of Jerusalem, was de-
stroyed, the city was thereby made a curse; for the
temple was that which made it a blessing. If the
salt lose that savour, it is thenceforth good for
nothing.
It shall be a curse, it shall be the pattern of
a curse; if a man would curse any city, he would
say, God make it like Jerusalem! Note, Those that
will not be subject to the commands of God, make
themselves subject to the curse of God.

7. So the priests, and the prophets, and all
the people, heard Jeremiah speaking
these words in the house of the Lord. 3.
Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had
made an end of speaking all that the Lord
had commanded him to speak unto all the
people, that the priests, and the prophets,
and all the people, took him, saying, Thou
shalt surely die. 9. Why hast thou pro-
hesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This
house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall
be desolate without an inhabitant? And all
the people were gathered against Jeremiah
in the house of the Lord. 10. When the
princes of Judah heard these things, then
they came up from the king’s house unto
the house of the Lord, and sat down in the
entry of the new gate of the Lord’s house.
11. Then spake the priests and the prophets
unto the princes, and to all the people, say-
ging, This man is worthy to die; for he hath
prophesied against this city, as ye have heard
with your ears. 12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes, and to all the
people, saying, The Lord sent me to pro-
hesy against this house, and against this
city, all the words that ye have heard. 13.
Therefore now amend your ways and your
doings, and obey the voice of the Lord
your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced
against you. 14. As for me, behold, I am in your
hand; do with me as seemeth good and meet
unto you: 15. But know ye for certain,
that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely
bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and
upon this city, and upon the inhabitants
thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me
unto you, to speak all these words in
your ears.

One would have hoped that such a sermon as that in
the foregoing verses, so plain and practical, so
rational and pathetic, and delivered in God’s name,
should have wrought upon even this people, espe-
cially meeting them now at their devotions,
and should have prevailed with them to repent and
reform; but instead of awakening their convictions,
it did but exasperate their temptations, as appears
by this account of the effect of it.
I. Jeremiah is charged with it as a crime, that he
had preached such a sermon, and is apprehended
for it as a criminal. The priests and false pro-
hets, heard him speak these words, v. 7.
They had patience, it seems, to hear him out, did
not disturb him when he was preaching, nor give
him any interruption till he had made an end of
speaking a few words against Jerusalem; for so
far they were fairer with him than some of the
persecutors of God’s ministers have been; they let
him say all he had to say, and yet perhaps with a
bad design, in hopes to have something worse yet
to lay to his charge; but, having no worse, this shall
suffice to ground an indictment upon; He hath said,
This house shall be like Shiloh. See how unfair
they were in representing his words. He had had
nothing in God’s name. If ye will not hearken to me, then
will I make this house like Shiloh; but they leave
out God’s hand in the desolation, (I will make it so,) and
their own hand in it, in not hearkening to the
voice of God, and charge it upon him, that he
blasphemed this holy place; the crime charged both
on our Lord Jesus and on Stephen; He said, This
house shall be like Shiloh. Well might he complain,
as David does, (Ps. cxlv. 5.) I heard not the voice
of the Lord; and we must not think it strange if we,
and what we say and do, be thus misrepresented.
When the accusation was so weakly grounded, no
marvel that the sentence passed upon it was unjust,
Thou shalt surely die. What he had said agreed
with what God had said when he took possession
of the temple, (1 Kings ix. 6—8.) If you shall at
all turn from following after me, then this house
shall be abandoned; and yet he is condemned to die
for saying it. It is not out of any concern for the
honour of the temple, that they appear thus warm,
but because they are resolved not to part with their
sins, in which they flatter themselves with a conceit
that the temple of the Lord will protect them;
therefore, right or wrong, Thou shalt surely die.
This outcry of the priests and prophets, we are
told, was made against Jeremiah, in a popular tumult,
ready to pull him to pieces; were gathered about him; (so
some read it;) they fetched together, some crying
one thing, and some another. The people that were
at first present, were at last against him, (v. 8.) but
their clamours drew more together, only to see
what the matter was. 11. He is brought before and indicted for it before the
highest court of judicature they had. Here, 1. The
princes of Judah were his judges, v. 10. These
that filled the thrones of judgment, the thrones of
the house of David, the elders of Israel, they, hear-
ing of this tumult in the temple, came up from
the king’s house, where they usually sat near the court,
to the house of the Lord, to inquire into this matter,
to see how this thing was done disorderly. They
sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord’s
house, and held a court, as it were, by a special
commission of Oyer and Terminer. 2. The priests
and prophets were his persecutors and accusers,
and were violently set against him. They appealed
to the princes and to all the people, to the court and
the jury, whether this man be not worthy to die, v.
11. The corrupt priests and counterfeit prophets
have always been the most bitter enemies of
the prophets of the Lord; they had ends of their own
serve, which they thought such preaching as this would be an obstruction to. When Jeremiah prophesied in the house of the king concerning the fall of the royal family, (ch. xxii. 1.) the court, though very corrupt, bore it patiently, and we do not find that they persecuted him for it; but when he comes into the house of the Lord, and touches the copyhold of the priests, and contradicts the lies and histories of the false prophets, then he is adjudged worthy of death by false guilt, and the priests bore by rule their means, Jer. v. 31. Observe, When Jeremiah is indicted before the princes, the stress of his accusation is laid upon what he said concerning the city, because they thought the princes would be most concerned about that. But concerning the words spoken, they appeal to the people, Ye have heard what he hath said, it be given in evidence."

III. Jeremiah makes his defence before the princes and the people. He does not go about to deny the words, or to diminish aught from them; what he has said he will stand to, though it cost him his life; he owns that he had prophesied against this house, and this city.

1. He asserts that he did this by good authority: not maliciously, not falsely, not out of any ill-will to his country, or any disaffection to the government in church or state, but, The Lord sent me to prophesy thus; so he begins his apology, (v. 12.) and so he concludes it, for this is that he resolves to abide by as sufficient to hear him out; (v. 13.) Of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you, to speak all these words. As long as ministers keep close to the instance they have from heaven, they need not fear the opposition they may meet with from hell or earth. He pleads that he is but a messenger, and if he faithfully deliver his message, he must bear no blame; but he is a messenger from the Lord, to whom they were accountable as well as he, and therefore might demand regard. If he speak but what God appointed him to speak, he is under the divine protection, and whatever affront they offer to the ambassador, will be resented by the Prince that sent him.

2. He shows them that he did it with a good design, and that it was their fault if they did not make a good use of it. It was said, not by way of fatal sentence, but of fair warning; if they would take the warning, they might prevent the execution of the sentence. 14. If it were so that I spake by the mouth of the Lord, and ye said, The innovation of the Lord; I have heard it, I have forgotten it, or I have made it not my business to attend to it; it would be no matter, I have indeed (says Jeremiah) prophesied against this city; but if you will now amend your ways and your doings, the threatened ruin shall be prevented, which was the thing I aimed at in giving you the warning. They are very unjust who complain of ministers for preaching hell and damnation, when it is only to keep them from that place of torment, and to bring them to heaven and salvation.

3. He therefore warns them of their danger, if they proceeded against him; (v. 14.) As for me, the matter is not great what becomes of me; behold, I am in your hand; you know I am; I neither have any property nor estate; I am the vine, you are the branches, you nor is it so much my concern to save my own life; do with me as seems meet unto you; If I be led to the slaughter, it shall be as a lamb. Note, It becomes God's ministers, that are warm in preaching, to be calm in suffering, and to behave submissively to the powers that are over them, though they be persecuting powers. But for themselves, he tells them, I will not only put them on their guard to death; Ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, v. 15. They might think that killing the prophet would help to defeat the prophecy, but they would prove wretchedly deceived, it would but add to their guilt, and aggravate their ruin. Their own consciences could not but tell them, that if Jeremiah was (as certainly he was) sent of God to bring them this message, it was at their utmost peril if they treated him for it as a malefactor. Those that persecute God's ministers, hurt not them so much as themselves.

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets, This man is not worthy to die; for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God. 17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, 18. Micah the Morashite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls. 20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the Lord, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jeirmim, who prophesied against this city, and against this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah: 21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death; but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt; 22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt; namely, Eliakim the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt: 23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt; and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people. 24. Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death. Here is, 1. The acquitting of Jeremiah from the charge exhibited against him. He had indeed spoken the words as they were laid in the indictment, but they are not looked upon to be seditions or treasonable, ill-intended, or of any bad tendency, and therefore the court and country agree to find him not guilty. The priests and prophets, notwithstanding his rational plea for himself, continued to demand judgment against him; but the princes, and all the people, are clear in it, This man is not worthy to die; (v. 16.) for (say they) he hath spoken to us, not of himself, but in the name of the Lord our God. And are they willing to own that he did indeed speak to them in the name of the Lord, and that that Lord is their God? Why then did they not amend their ways and doings, and take the method
he prescribed to prevent the ruin of their country? If they say, His prophecy is from God, it may justly be asked, and how then can we not then believe it? Matth. xxi. 25. Note, It is pity that those who are so far convinced of the divine original of gospel-preaching, as to protect it from the malice of others, do not submit to the power and influence of it themselves.

2. A precedent quoted to justify them in acquitting Jeremiah. Some of the elders of the land, either the same before mentioned, or the more ancient men of the people, stood up, and put the assembly in mind of a former case, as is usual with us in giving judgment; for the wisdom of our predecessors is a direction to us. The case referred to is that of Micah. We have extant the book of his prophecy among the minor prophets. (1.) Was it thought strange that Jeremiah prophesied against this city and the temple? Micah did so before him, even in the reign of Hezekiah, that reign of reformation, v. 18. Micah said it as publicly as Jeremiah had now spoken to the same purport, Zion shall be ploughed like a field, the building shall be all destroyed, so that nothing shall hinder but it may be ploughed; Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built shall be as the high places of the forest, overrun with briars and thorns. This prophet not only spake this, but wrote it, and left it on record; we find it, Mic. iii. 12. By this it appears that a man may be, as Micah was, a true prophet of the Lord, and yet may prophesy the destruction of Zion and Jerusalem. When we threaten secure sinners with the taking away of the Spirit of God and the kingdom of God from them, and declining churches with the removal of the candlestick, we say no more than what he did: we say nothing that we have warrant from the word of God to say. (2.) Was it thought fit by the princes to justify Jeremiah in what he had done? It was what Hezekiah did before them in a like case. Did Hezekiah, and the people of Judah, the representatives of the people, the commons in parliament, did they complain of Micah the prophet? Did they imprison him, or make an act to silence him, and put him to death? No; on the contrary, they took the warning he gave them, Hezekiah, that renowned prince, of blessed memory, set a good example before his successors, for he feared the Lord as Noah, who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear. Micah's preaching drove him to his knees; he besought the Lord to turn away the judgment threatened, and to be reconciled to them; and he found it was not in vain to do so, for the Lord repented him of the evil, and returned in mercy to them; he sent an angel, who routed the army of the Assyrians, that threatened to have ploughed Zion like a field, v. 19. Hezekiah got good by the preaching, and then you may be sure he would do no harm to the preacher. These elders conclude that they might as well behave toward them, the commonwealth, as the Lord, and both commonwealth and state, if they should gratify the importunity of the priests and prophets in putting Jeremiah to death; Thus might we procure great evil against our souls, for it would be adding sin to sin. Jehoiakim, the present king, had slain one prophet already, and now this man threatened to kill another. Hezekiah, who protected Micah, was preserved; but did Jehoiakim prosper, who slew Urijah? No, they all saw the contrary. As good examples, and the good consequences of them, should encourage us in that which is good, so the examples of bad men, and the bad consequences of them, should deter us from that which is evil. But some good interpreters think this narrative from the historian who penned the book, Jeremiah, and his immediate or Belochick, who, to make Jeremiah's deliverance by means of the princes the more wonderful, takes notice of this that happened about the same time; for both were in the reign of Jehoiakim, and this in the beginning of his reign, v. 1. Observe, (1.) Urijah's prophecy; it was against this city, and this land, according to all the words of Jeremiah. The prophets of the Lord are proved in their testimony, and one would have thought that cut of the mouth of so many witnesses the word should have been regarded. (2.) The prosecution of him for it, v. 21. Jehoiakim and his courtiers were exasperated against him, and sought to put him to death; in this wicked design the king himself was principally concerned. (3.) His abounding thereupon; When he heard that the king was determined against him, he removed his life, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt. This was certainly his fault, and an effect of the weakness of his faith, and it sped accordingly. He distrusted God, and his power to protect him and bear him out; he was too much under the power of that fear of man, which brings a snare. It looked as if he durst not stand to what he had said, or was ashamed of his Master, who was so justly looking to abandon the land of Israel, and to throw himself quite out of the way of being useful. Note, There are many that have much grace, but they have little courage; that are very honest, but withal very timorous. (4.) His execution notwithstanding. Jehovah's malice, one would have thought, might have contented itself with his banishment, and it might have been more just for God to have given him his life; but they are blood thirsty that hate the upright; (Prov. xxix. 10.) it was the life, that precious life, that he hunted after, and nothing else would satisfy him. So implacable is his revenge, that he sends a party of soldiers into Egypt, some hundreds of miles, and they bring him back by force of arms. It would not sufficiently gratify him to have him slain in Egypt, but he must feed his eyes with the bloody spectacle; they brought him to Jehoiakim, and he slew him with the sword, for aught I know, with his own hands. Yet neither did this satisfy his insatiable malice, but he loads the dead body of the good man with infamy, would not allow it the decent respects usually and justly paid to the remains of men of distinction, but cast it into the graves of the common people, and he列为 the people of the Lord; thus was the shield of Saul violently cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil. Thus Jehovah hoped to ruin his reputation with the people, that no heed might be given to his predictions, and to deter others from prophesying in like manner; but in vain; Jeremiah says the same. There is no contending with the word of God. Herod though he had given God the point of a needle, could not baptize the Baptist's head, but found himself deceived, when, soon after, he heard of Jesus Christ, and said, in a fright, This is John the Baptist. 4. Here is Jeremiah's deliverance. Though Urijah was lately put to death, and persecutors, when they have tasted the blood of saints, are apt to thirst after more, (as Herod, Acts xii. 2, 3,) yet God wonderfully preserved Jeremiah, though he did not
IN the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord to me, Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck. 3. And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah; 4. And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your masters: 5. I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my out-stretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. 6. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given even also to serve him. 7. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. 8. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your enchanter, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: 10. For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. 11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.
II. He is to send this, with a sermon annexed to it, to all the neighbouring princes; those, as mentioned, (v. 3.) that lay next to the land of evanam. It should seem, there was a treaty of alliance or gott between the King of Judah and all those other kings. Jerusalem was the place appointed for the first, that they should bind themselves in a league offensive and defensive, to stand by one another, in opposition to the common enemy, Nebuchadnezzar, and to reduce his exorbitant power. They had great confidence in their strength thus united, and were ready to call themselves the High Allies; but when the envoys were returning to their respective masters, with the ratification of this treaty, Jeremiah gives each of them a yoke to carry to his master, to signify to him, that he must either by consent or by compulsion become a servant to the king of Babylon, let him choose which he will. In the sermon upon this sign,

1. God asserts his own indisputable right to dispose of kingdoms as he pleases. (v. 5.) He is the Creator of all things; he made the earth at first, established it, and abides; it is still the same, though one generation passeth away, and another comes; he still by a continued creation maintains the beast upon the earth, and it is by his great power and outstretched arm. His arm has infinite strength, though it be stretched out. Upon this account, he may give and convey a property and dominion to whomsoever he pleases. As he hath graciously given the earth to the children of men in general, (Ps. cxv. 16.) so he gives to each his share of it, be it more or less. Note, Whatever aid and help he can bestow upon the good of his creatures, it is what God sees fit for their good: we ourselves should therefore be content, though we have ever so little, and not envy any their share, though they have ever so much.

2. He publishes a grant of all these countries to Nebuchadnezzar. Know all men by these presents. Scint presents of futuri.—Let those of the present and those of the future age know. This is to certify all whom it may concern, that I have given all these lands, with all the wealth of them, into the hands of the king of Babylon, even the beasts of the field, whether tame or wild, have I given to him, parks and pastures, they are all his own. Nebuchadnezzar was a proud, wicked man, an idolater; and yet God, in his providence, gives him this large dominion, these vast possessions. Note, The things that are the best things, for God often gives the largest share of them to bad men, that are rivals with him, and rebels against him. He was a wicked man, and yet what he had, he had by divine grant. Note, Dominion is not founded in grace. Those that have not any colourable title to eternal happiness, may yet have a justifiable title to their temporal good things. Nebuchadnezzar is that wise man, wisdom and understanding, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute, (Gen. xlv. 14, 15.) as these are here advised to do; Serve the king of Babylon, and you shall till the land and dwell therein. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, which yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest yoke of Providence, makes the best of bad: it is better to do so, than by struggling to make it worse.

6. He puts them in a fair way to prevent their destruction, by a quiet and easy submission, v. 11. The nations that will be content to serve the king of Babylon, and pay him tribute for seventy years, (ten apprenticeships,) those will I let remain still in their own land. They that will bend shall not break. Perhaps the dominion of the king of Babylon may bear no harder upon them than that of their own kings had done. It is often more a point of honour than true wisdom, to prefer liberty before life. It is not mentioned to the disgrace of Issachar, that because he was great in understanding and pleasant, that he might peaceably enjoy it, he bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant to tribute, (Gen. xlv. 14, 15.) as these are here advised to do; Serve the king of Babylon, and you shall till the land and dwell therein. Some would condemn this as the evidence of a mean spirit, but the prophet recommends it as that of a meek spirit, which yields to necessity, and by a quiet submission to the hardest yoke of Providence, makes the best of bad: it is better to do so, than by struggling to make it worse.

12. I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying Bring thy necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live 13 Why will ye die, thou and Medes and Persians, served themselves of him, as before, xxv. 14. Thus Adonibezek was trampled upon himself, as he had trampled on other kings.
thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the Lord hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon? 14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 15. For I have not sent them, saith the Lord, yet they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you. 16. Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you. 17. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste? 18. But if they be prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon. 19. For thus saith the Lord of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, 20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem; 21. Yea, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; 22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord: then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

What was said to all the nations, is here with a particular tenderness applied to the nation of the Jews, for whom Jeremiah was sensibly concerned. The case at present stood thus; Judah and Jerusalem had often contended with the king of Babylon, and still were worsted; many both of their valuable persons and their valuable goods were carried to Babylon already, and some of the vessels of the Lord's house particularly. Now, how this struggle would issue, was the question. They had those among them at Jerusalem, who pretended to be prophets, who bade them hold out, and they should, in a little time, be too hard for the king of Babylon, and recover all that they had lost. Now Jeremiah is sent to bid them yield and knock under; for that, instead of recovering what they had lost, they should otherwise lose all that remained; and to press them to this, is the scope of these verses.

1. Jeremiah humbly addresses the king of Judah, to persuade him to surrender to the king of Babylon; his act would be the people's, and would determine them, and therefore he speaks to him as to them all; (v. 12.) Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and live. Is it their wisdom to submit to the heavy iron yoke of a cruel tyrant, that they may secure the lives of their bodies; and is it not much more our wisdom to submit to the freedom and yoke of our rights? James 4:13. Whether then ye be wise or foolish hath no matter; be ye humble, and submit to the yoke of Christ, and it will be found of great advantage to you.

11. He addresses himself likewise to the priests and the people, (v. 16.) to persuade them to serve the king of Babylon, that they might live, and might prevent the desolation of the city; (v. 17.) And the better for their doing it be, if it be to be well with you. They were well advised to serve Nebuchadnezzar, and return from Babylon, the case being so uncertain, whether they would be better in Babylon, or else where, and what would be the effect of remaining in Babylon. It is the case of all who are compelled to leave their homes, and the cities of their choice, to live under a government which they do not approve of, and to have to do with governors, of whom they can have no confidence. We are to serve them, whether we like it or not, and our duty is to do all in our power for our preservation.

12. In these addresses he warns them against giving credit to the false prophets that mocked them asleep in their security, because they saw that they loved to slumber; *Hearken not to the words of the prophets, (v. 14.) your prophets, v. 16. They are not God's prophets, he never sent them, they do not serve him, nor seek to please him; they are yours, for they say what you would have them say, and aim at nothing but to please you.* Two things their prophecies flattered them into the belief of.

1. That the power which the king of Babylon had gained over them, should now shortly be broken. They said, (v. 14.) *You shall not serve the king of Babylon; you need not submit voluntarily, for you shall not be compelled to submit.* This was the false philosophy in the name of the Lord, (v. 13.) as if God had sent them to the people on this errand, in kindness to them, that they might not disspare themselves by an inglorious surrender. But it was a lie. They said that God sent them; but that was false, he disowns it, *I have not sent them, saith the Lord.* They said that they should never have brought into subjection to the king of Babylon; but this was false too, the event proved it so. They said that to hold out to the last would be the way to secure themselves and their city; but that was false, for it would certainly end in their being driven out and perishing. So that it was all a lie, from first to last; and the prophets that deceived the people with these
lies, did, in the issue, but deceive themselves, the blind leaders and the blind followers fell together into the ditch; that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you; which will be so far from warranting your security, that they will be the means of securing them. Note, They that encourage sinners to go on in their sinful ways, will in the end perish with them.

2. They prophesied that the vessels of the temple, which the king of Babylon had already carried away, should now shortly be brought back; (v. 16.) this they fed the priests with the hopes of, knowing how to propound it so as to be to them a golden treasure of the temple better than the temple that sanctified the gold. These vessels were taken away when Jeremiah was carried captive into Babylon, v. 20. We have the story, and it is a melancholy one, 2 Kings xxiv. 13.-15. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 10. All the goodly vessels, that is, all the vessels of gold that were in the house of the Lord, with all the treasures, were taken as prey, and brought to Babylon. This was grievous to them above any thing, for the temple was their pride and confidence, and the stripping of that was too plain an indication of that which the true prophet told them, that their God was departed from them. Their false prophets therefore had no other way to make them easy than by telling them that the king of Babylon should be forced to restore them in a little while. Now, here, (1.) Jeremiah thinketh of preserving the vessels that remained, by their prayers, rather than of bringing back those that were gone, by their prophecies; (v. 18.) If they be prophets, as they pretend, and if the word of the Lord be with them—if they have any intercourse with Heaven, and any interest there, let them improve it for the stopping of the progress of the judgment, let them step into the gap, and stand between the Lord and the sanctuary, the living and the dead; between that which is carried away and that which remains, that the plague may be stayed; let them make intercession with the Lord of hosts, that the vessels which are left go not after the rest. [1.] Instead of prophesying, let them pray. Note, Prophets must be praying men; by being much in prayer they must make it to appear, that they keep up a correspondence with Heaven. We may have all their prophecies, but none of their prayers. Do we not often hear those, who do not frequently by prayer send thither, By praying for the safety and prosperity of the sanctuary they must make it to appear that, as becomes prophets, they are of a public spirit; and by the success of their prayers it will appear that God favours them. [2.] Instead of being concerned for the retrieving of what they had lost, they must betake themselves for the securing of what was left, and take it as a great favour if they can gain that point. When God's judgments are abroad, we must not seek great things, but be thankful for a little.

(2.) He assures them that even this point should not be gained, but the brazen vessels should go after the golden ones, v. 19.-22. Nebuchadnezzar had found so good a booty once, that he would be sure to come again, and take all he could find, not only in the holy temple, but in the king's house. They shall all be carried to Babylon in triumph, and there shall they be. But he concludes with a gracious promise, that the time should come when they should all be returned; Until the day that I visit them in mercy, according to appointment, and then I will bring those vessels up again, and restore them to this place, to their place. Surely they were under the protection of a special Providence, they had been melted down, and put to some other use; but there was to be a second temple, for which they were to be reserved. We read particularly of the return of them, Ezra i. 8. Note, Though the return of the church's prosperity do not come in our time, we must not therefore despair of it, for it will come in God's time. Though they who said, The vessels of the Lord's house shall shortly be brought again, prophesied a lie, (v. 16.) yet he that said, They shall at length be brought again, prophesied the truth. We are apt to set our clock before God's dial, and then to quarrel because they do not agree; but the Lord is a God of judgment, and it is fit that we should wait for him.

CHAP. XXVIII.

In the foregoing chapter, Jeremiah had charged those prophets with lies, who foretold the speedy breaking of the yoke of the king of Babylon, and the speedy return of the vessels of the sanctuary; now here we have his contest with a particular prophet upon those heads. I. Hananiah, a pretender to prophecy, in contradistinction to Jeremiah, foretold the sinking of Nebuchadnezzar's power, and the return both of the persons and of the vessels that were carried away; (v. 1. 4.) and, as a sign of this, he brake the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, v. 10, 11. II. Jeremiah wished his words might prove true, but appealed to the event, whether they were so or no, not doubting but they would disprove them, v. 5. 9. III. The doom both of the deceived and the deceiver is here read. The people that were deceived, should have their yoke of wood turned into a yoke of iron, (v. 12. 14.) and the prophet that was the deceiver, should be shortly cut off by death, and he was so, accordingly, within two months, v. 15. 17.

1. And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeah, spake unto me in the house of the Lord, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon. 3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 4. And I will bring again into this place all the vessels of the Lord's house that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried them to Babylon: 5. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah, in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the Lord. 6. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so; the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the Lord's house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place. 7. Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people; 8. The prophets that have been before me, and before thee of old, prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. 9. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then
shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him.

This struggle between a true prophet and a false one, is said here to have happened in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, and yet in the fourth year, long four years after it. God could not have been called the beginning, or former part of it, because during these years he reigned under the dominion of the King of Babylon, and as a tributary to him; whereas the rest of his reign, which might well be called the latter part of it, in distinction from that former part, he reigned in rebellion against the king of Babylon. In this fourth year of his reign, he went in person to Babylon, (as we find, ch. ii. 39,) and it is probable that this gave the people some time that his negotiation in person would put a good end to the war, in which hope the false prophets encouraged them, this Hananiah particularly, who was of Gibeah, a priest's city, and therefore probably, himself a priest, as well as Jeremiah. Now here we have,

The prediction which Hananiah delivered publicly, solemnly, in the house of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord, in an august assembly, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, who, probably, were expecting to have some message from heaven. In delivering this prophecy, he faced Jeremiah, he spake it to him, (v. 1.) designing to confront and contradict him, as much as to say, "Jeremiah, thou liest." Now his prediction is, that the Lord "will speedily break within two full years the vessels of the temple, should be brought back, and Jerusalem, and all the captives that were carried away with him, should return; whereas Jeremiah had foretold that the yoke of the king of Babylon should be bound on yet faster, and that the vessels and captives should not return for 70 years, v. 2. Now, upon the reading of this sham prophecy, and comparing it with the messages that God sent by the true prophets, we may observe what a vast difference there is between them. Here is nothing of the spirit and life, the majesty of style and sublimity of expression, that appear in the discourses of God's prophets, nothing of that divine flame and fluxus. But that which is especially wanting here, is an air of prayer; he speaks with a great deal of confidence of his own prosperity, in that prosperity, but here is not a word of good counsel given them to repent and reform, and return to God, to pray, and seek his face, that they might be prepared for the favours God had in reserve for them. He promises them temporal mercies, in God's name, but makes no mention of those spiritual mercies which God always promised should go along with them, ch. xxvii. 2. I will give thee that which is good. By all which it appears that, whatever he pretended, he had only the spirit of the world, not the Spirit of God, (1 Cor. ii. 12.) that he aimed to please, not to profit. II. Jeremiah's reply to this pretended prophecy: 1. He heartily wishes it might prove true; such an affliction has he for his country, and so truly desires, is he of the welfare of it, that he would be content to lie under the imputation of a false prophet, that their ruin might be prevented. He said, Amen, the Lord do so, the Lord perform thy words, v. 5, 6. This was not the first time that Jeremiah had prayed for his people, though he had prophesied against them, and deprecated the judgments that should follow upon their refractory. Jeremiah, v. 20. Christ prayed, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me, when yet he knew it must not pass from him. Though, as a faithful prophet, he foresaw and foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, yet, as a faithful Israelite, he prayed earnestly for the preservation of it, in obedience to that command, Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Though the will of God's purpose is the rule of prophecy and patience, the will of his precept is the rule of prayer and practice. God himself, though he has determined, does not desire, the death of sinners, but would have all men to be saved. Jeremiah often interceded for his people, ch. xxviii. 20. The false prophets thought it fit to ingratiate themselves with the people by promising them peace; now the prophet shows that he bore them as great a good-will as their prophets did, whom they were so fond of; and though he had no warrant from God to promise them peace, yet he earnestly desired it, and prayed for it. How strangely they besought, who earnestly loved them, and persecuted him who did them the greatest service imaginable by interceding for them! See ch. xxviii. 18. 2. He appeals to the event, to prove it false, v. 7. —9. The false prophets reflected upon Jeremiah, as Ahab upon Micaiah, because he never prophesied concerning them, but evil; now he pleads that this had been the case of some house prophets, as well as other prophets had delivered, so that it ought not to be looked upon as a strange thing, or as rendering his mission doubtful, for prophets of old prophesied against many countries and great kingdoms, so bold were they in delivering the messages which God sent by them, and so far from fearing men, or seeking to please them, as Hananiah did; they made no account of that, so boldly, I say, that the destruction foretold, whether good or evil, came to pass, as the case of Jonah, the destruction of Nineveh, that destroy ing war, famine, and pestilence, and was at last regarded as coming from God; who then should Jeremiah be run down as a pestilent fellow, and a sower of sedition, who preached no otherwise than God's prophets had always done before him? Other prophets had foretold destruction, and sometimes the destruction did not come, which yet did not disprove their divine mission, as in the case of Jonah, for God is gracious, and ready to turn away his wrath from those that turn away from their sins: but the prophet that prophesied of peace and prosperity, especially as Hananiah did, absolutely and unconditionally, without adding that necessary proviso, that they do not by wilful sin put a bar in their own door, and stop the current of God's favours, will be proved a true prophet, and only by the accomplishment of his prediction; if it come to pass, then it shall be known that the Lord has sent him, but if not, he will appear to be a cheat and an impostor. 10. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it. 11. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations, within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way. 12. Then the word of the Lord came into Jeremiah the prophet, (after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah,) saying, 13. Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron. 14. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall
serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also. 15. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, The Lord hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie. 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord.

17. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year, in the seventh month.

We have here an instance,

1. Of the insolence of the false prophet. To complete the affront he designed Jeremiah, he took the yoke from off his neck, which he carried as a mark of what he had prophesied concerning the enslaving of the nations to Nebuchadnezzar, and he brake it, that he might give a sign of the accomplishment of his prophecy, as Jeremiah had given of his, and might seem to have conquered him, and to have defeated the intention of his prophecy. See how the lying spirit in the mouth of this false prophet mimics the language of the Spirit of truth: Thus said the Lord, and made brake the yoke of the king of Babylon, not only from the neck of this nation, but from the neck of all nations, within two full years. Whether by the force of a heated imagination Hananiah had persuaded himself to believe this, or whether he knew it to be false, and only persuaded them to believe it, does not appear; but it is plain that he speaks with abundance of assurance. It is no new thing for lies to be fathered upon the God of Truth.

11. Of the patience of the true prophet. Jeremiah quietly went his way, and, when he was reviled, he reviled not again, and would not contend with one that was in the height of his fury, and in the midst of the priests and people that were violently set against him. The reason why he went his way, was not because he had nothing to answer, but because he was willing to stay till God was pleased to furnish him with a direct and immediate answer, which as yet he had not received. He expected that God would send a special message to Hananiah, and he would say nothing till he had received that; I, as a deaf man, heard not, for thou wilt hear, and thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. It may sometimes be our wisdom rather to retreat than to contend.

111. Of the justice of God in giving judgment between Jeremiah and his adversary. Jeremiah went his way, as a man in whose mouth there was no re- buke, but God soon put a word into his mouth, for he will appear for those who silently commit their cause to him.

1. The word of God, in the mouth of Jeremiah, is ratified and confirmed. Let not Jeremiah himself dispute the truth of what he had delivered in God's name, because it met with such a daring opposition and contradiction. If what we have spoken be the truth of God, we must not unsay it because men gainsay it; for great is the truth, and will prevail. It will stand, therefore let us stand to it, and not fear that men's unbelief or blasphemy will make it not so. Hananiah had broken the yoke of wood, but Jeremiah must make for them yokes of iron, which cannot be broken; (v. 13.) for (says God) I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, which shall lie heavier, and bind harder, upon them, (v. 14.) that they may serve the king of Babylon, and not be able to shake off the yoke; however they may struggle, for they shall serve him whether they will or no; and who is he that can contend with God's counsel? What was said before is repeated again, I have given him the beasts of the field also, and all the following things, in such a manner that men had by their wickedness made themselves like the beasts that perish, and therefore deserved to be ruled by an arbitrary power, as beasts are ruled, and such a power Nebuchadnezzar ruled with, for whom he would be sted, and whom he would he kept alive.

2. Hananiah is sentenced to die for contradicting it, and Jeremiah, when he has received commission from God, boldly tells him so to his face; though, before he received that commission, he went away, and said nothing.

(1.) The crimes of which Hananiah stands convicted, are, cheating the people, and affronting God; Thou makest this people to trust in a lie, encouraging them to hope that they shall have peace, which will make their destruction the more terrible to them when it comes; yet this was not the worst; Thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord, thou hast taught them to despise all the good counsel given them in God's name by the true prophets, and hast rendered it ineffectual. Those have a great deal to answer for, who, by telling sinners that they shall have peace though they go on, harden their hearts in a contempt of the reprovs and admonitions of the word, and the means and methods he has given to them to repentance.

(2.) The judgment given against him, is, I will cast thee off from the face of the earth, as unworthy to live upon it; then shalt be buried in it; this year thou shalt die, and die as a rebel against the Lord, to whom death will come with a sting and a curse.

This sentence was executed, v. 17. Hananiah died the same year, within two months: for his prophecy had come to pass (1.) and his death came in the seventh. Good men may perhaps be suddenly taken off by death, in the midst of their days, and in mercy to them, as Josiah was; but this being foretold, as the punishment of his sin, and coming to pass accordingly, it may safely be construed as a testimony from Heaven against him, and a confirmation of Jeremiah's mission. And if the people's hearts had not been wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, it would have prevented their being further hardened by the deceitfulness of their prophets.

CHAP. XXIX.

The contest between Jeremiah and the false prophets was carried on before by preaching; here by writing: there we had sermon against sermon; here we have letter against letter; for some of the false prophets are now carried away into captivity in Babylon, while Jeremiah remains in his own country. Now here is, 1. A letter which Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, against their prophets that they had there, (v. 1-13.) in which letter, 1. He endeavours to reconcile them to their captivity, to be easy under it, and to make the best of it, v. 4-7. 2. He cautions them not to give any credit to their false prophets, who foretold speedy release, v. 8, 9. 3. He assures them that God would restore them in mercy to their own land again, at the end of 70 years, v. 10-14. 4. He foretells the destruction of those prophets, and the continuance of their calamities, v. 15-19. 5. He promises the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon, and to show them that they should be persecuted with one judgment after another, and sent at last into captivity, v. 15-19. 6. He promises that he that prophesied the destruction of two of their false prophets that they had in Babylon shall be put to a hard school, that they should set them bad examples; (v. 20, 21.) and this is the purport of Jeremiah's letter. 11. Here is a letter which Shemaiah, a false prophet in Babylon, wrote to the priests at Jerusalem, to stir them up to persecute Jeremiah, (v. 24-29.) and a denunciation of God's wrath against him for writing such a letter, v. 30, 32. Such struggles as these have there always been between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent.

1. Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent.
from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon. 2. (After that Jeremiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem.) 3. By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,) saying, 4. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, 5. Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; 6. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. 7. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

We are here told,

1. That Jeremiah wrote to the captives in Babylon, in the name of the Lord. Jeremiah had surrendered himself a prisoner, with the queen his mother, the chamberlains of his household, called here the eunuchs, many of the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, who were at that time the most active men; the carpenters and smiths likewise, being demanded, were yielded up, that those who remained might not have any proper hands to fortify their city, or furnish themselves with weapons of war; by this tame submission it was hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would be pacified; such fierce conquerors (Jer. 10:8) are disposed to be content when their hands are on, and carries them to Babylon. The case of these captives was very melancholy, the rather, because they, being thus distinguished from the rest of their brethren who continued in their own land, looked as if they were greater sinners than all men who dwelt at Jerusalem. Jeremiah therefore writes a letter to them to comfort them, assuring them that they had no reason either to despair of the Lord's mercy, or to envy their brethren that were left behind. Note, 1. The word of God written, is as truly given by inspiration of God as his word spoken was; and this was the proper way of spreading the knowledge of God's will among his children scattered abroad. 2. We may serve God, and do good, by writing to our friends at a distance pious letters of seasonable comfort and wholesome counsels. Whom we cannot speak to, we may write to; that which is written remains. This letter of Jeremiah's was sent to the captives in Babylon by the hands of the ambassadors whom king Zedekiah sent to Nebuchadnezzar, probably to seek his tribute, and renew his submission to him, or to treat of peace with him, in which treaty the captives might perhaps hope that they should be included, v. 3. By such messengers Jeremiah chose to send this message, to put an honour upon it because it was a message from God. Or, perhaps, because there was no settled way of sending letters to Babylon, but as such an occasion as this offered. And then it made the condition of the captives there the more melancholy, that they could rarely hear from their friends and relations they had left behind, which is some reviving and satisfaction to those that are separated from one another.

II. We are here told what he wrote. A copy of a letter at large follows here to v. 24. In these verses,

1. He assures them that he wrote in the name of the Lord of hosts the God of Israel, who entitled the letter; Jeremiah was but the scribe or amanuensis. It would be comfortable to them, in their captivity, to hear that God is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts; and is therefore able to help and deliver them; and that he is the God of Israel still, so God in covenant with his people; that he will be concerned with them, and their enemies for the present are too hard for them; this would likewise be an admonition to them to stand upon their guard against all temptations to the idolatry of Babylon, because the God of Israel, the God whom they served, is Lord of hosts. God's sending to them in this letter might be an encouragement to them in their captivity, as it was an evidence that he had not cast them off, had not abandoned them and dispossessed them, though he was displeased with them and corrected them; for if the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have written to them.

2. God by him owns the hand he had in their captivity; I have caused you to be carried away, (v. 4.) and again, v. 7. All the force of the king of Babylon could not have done it, if God had not ordered it; nor could he have any power against them, but what was given him from above. If God caused them to be carried captives, they might be sure that he neither did them any wrong, nor meant them any hurt. Note, It will help very much to reconcile us to our troubles, and to make us patient under them, to consider that they are what God appoints and ordains, and may be for our good; I offended not my mouth, because they did it.

3. He bids them think of nothing but settling there; and therefore let them resolve to make the best of it; (v. 5, 6.) Build ye houses, and dwell in them, &c. By all this it is intimated to them, (1.) That they must not feed themselves with hopes of a speedy return out of that place, but keep themselves still unsettled, and, consequently, uneasy; they would apply themselves to no business, take no comfort, but be always tiring themselves, and provoking their conquerors, with the expectations of relief; and their disappointment at last would sink them into despair, and make their condition much more miserable than otherwise it would be. Let them therefore make up their minds to remain there, and accommodate themselves to it as well as they can. Let them build, and plant, and marry, and dispose of their children there, as if they were at home in their own land; let them take a pleasure in seeing their families built up and multiplied, for though they must expect themselves to die in captivity, yet their children may live to see better days. If they live in the fear of God, why should hinder them but they may live comfortably in Babylon? They cannot but reap sometimes
when they remember Zion; but let not weeping hinder sowing, let them not sorrow as those that have no hope, no joy, for they have both. Note, In all conditions of life, it is our wisdom and duty to make the best of that which is, and not to throw away the comfort of what we may have, because we have not all we would have. We have a natural affection for our native country, it strangely draws our minds; but it is with a wise mind that we can give no good account of the sweet attraction; and therefore if Providence remove us to some other country, we must resolve to live easily there, to bring our mind to our condition, when our condition is not in every thing to our mind; if the earth be the Lord's, then, wherever a child of God goes, he does not go off his father's ground; Patria est ubicunque bene est. That place is our country in which we are well off. If thins be not as they have been, instead of fretting at that, we must live in hopes that they will be better than they are.

JEREMIAH, XXIX.

3. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed. 9. For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name; I have not sent them, saith the Lord. 10. For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place. 11. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. 12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. 13. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. 14. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

To make the people quiet and easy in their captivity,

1. God takes them off from building upon the false bottom which their pretended prophets laid, v. 8, 9. They told them that their captivity should be short, and therefore that they must not think of taking root in Babylon, but be upon the wing to go back: "Now, herein, they deceive you," (saith God,) "they prophesy a lie to you, though they prophesy in my name. But let them not deceive you, suffer not yourselves to be deluded by them." As long as we have the word of truth to try the spirits by, it is our own fault if we be deceived; for by it we may be undeceived. Hearken not to your dreams, which ye cause to be dreamed. He means either the dreams or fancies which the people pleased themselves with, and with which they filled their own heads; by thinking and speaking of nothing else but a speedy enlargement when they were awake, they caused themselves to dream of it when they were asleep, and then took that for a good omen, and with it strengthened themselves in their vain expectations; or, the dreams which the prophets dreamed, and grounded their prophecies upon. God tells the people, They are your dreams, because they pleased them, were the dreams that they desired and wished for; they caused them to be dreamed, for they hearkened to them, and encouraged the prophets to put such decrees upon them, desiring them to prophesy nothing but smooth things, Isa. Lxxx. 18. Be not deceived. False prophets would not flatter people in their sins, but that they love to be flattered, and speak smoothly to their prophets that their prophecies may speak smoothly to them.

11. He gives them a good bottom to build their hopes upon. We would not persuade people to pull down the house they have built upon the sand, but that there is a rock underneath. Here God here promises them, that though they should not return quickly, they should return at length, after 70 years be accomplished. By this it appears, that the 70 years of the captivity are not to be reckoned from the last captivity, but the first. Note, Though the delivery of the church do not come in our time, it is sufficient that it will come in God's time, and we are sure that that is the best time. The promise is, that God will visit them in
mercy; though he had long seemed to be strange to them, he will come among them, and appear for them, and put honour upon them, as great men do upon their inferiors, by coming to visit them. He will put an end to their captivity, and turn away all the calamities of it. Though they are dispersed, some in one country, and some in another, he will gather them from all the places whither they are driven, will set up a standard for them all to resort to, and will be with them again. When they are at a great distance, they shall be brought again to their own land, to the place whence they were carried captive, v. 14.

Now, 1. This shall be the performance of God's promise to them; (v. 10.) I will perform my good word toward you. Let not the failing of those predictions which are delivered as from God, lessen the reputation of his word, or his people. That which is indeed God's word, is a good word, and therefore it will be made good, and not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? This will make their return out of captivity very comfortable, that it will be the performance of God's good word to them, the product of a gracious promise.

2. This shall be in accordance of God's purposes concerning them; (v. 11.) I knew the thoughts that I think toward you. Known unto God are all his works, for known unto him are all his thoughts, (Acts xv. 18.) and his works agree exactly with his thoughts: he doeth all according to the counsel of his will. We often do not know our own thoughts, not know our own mind, but God is never at any uncertainty within himself. We are sometimes ready to fear that God's designs concerning us are all against us; but he knows the contrary concerning his own people, that they are thoughts of good, and not of evil; even that which seems evil, is designed for good. His thoughts are all working toward the expected end, which he will give in due time. The end they expect will come, though perhaps not when they expect it. Let them have patience till the fruit is ripe, and then they shall have it. He will give them an end, and expectation; so it is in the original. (1.) He will give them to see the end, the comfortable period of their trouble; though it last long, it shall not last always; the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, will come; when things are at the worst, they will begin to mend; and he will give them the glorious perfection of their deliverance; for, as for God, his work is perfect. He that in the beginning finished the heavens and the earth, and all the hosts of both, will finish all the blessings of both to his people. When he begins in ways of mercy, he will make an end. God does nothing by halves. (2.) He will give them to see the expectation, that end which they desire and hope for, and have been long waiting for. He will give them to know the expectations of their fears, or the expectations of their fancies, but the expectations of their faith; the end which he has promised, and which will turn for the best to them.

3. This shall be in answer to their prayers and supplications to God, v. 12.-14. (1.) God will stir them up to pray; Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go, and ye shall call upon me. When God has been pleased to bless his people the expected good, he pours out a spirit of prayer, and it is a good sign that he is coming toward them in mercy. Then when you see the expected end approaching, then you shall call upon me. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer; and when deliverance is coming, we must be sure to go forward to meet it. When Israel understood that the 70 years were near expiring, then he set his face with more fervency than ever to seek the Lord, Dan. ix. 2, 3. (2.) He will then stir up himself to come and save them, (Ps. lxxv. 2.) I will hearken unto you, and I will be found of you. God has said it, and we may depend upon it; seek, and ye shall find. We have a general rule laid down, (v. 13.) Ye shall find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. In seeking God, we must search for him, accomplish a diligent search, search for directions in seeking him, and encouragements to our faith and hope. We must continue seeking, and take pains in seeking, as others do to search; and this we must do with our heart, in sincerity and uprightness, and with our whole heart, with vigour and fervency, putting forth all that is within us, in prayer; those who thus seek God, shall find him, and shall find him their bountiful Rewarder, Heb. xi. 6. He never said to such, Seek ye me in vain.

15. Because ye have said, The Lord hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; 10. Know that thus saith the Lord of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; 17. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. 18. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: 19. Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the Lord, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the Lord. 20. Hear ye, therefore, the word of the Lord, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon: 21. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Koaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name, Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall slay them before your eyes; 22. And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The Lord make thee as Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire; 23. Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord.

Jeremiah, having given great encouragement to those among the captives whom he knew to be serious and well-affected, assuring them that God had very kind and favourable intentions concerning them, here turns to those among them who slighted
the counsels and comforts that Jeremiah ministered to them, and depended upon what the false prophets flattered them with. When this letter came from Jeremiah, they would be ready to say, "Why should he make himself so busy, and take upon him to advise us? The Lord has raised us up prophets in Babylon," v. 15. We are satisfied with those prophets, and can depend upon them, and have no occasion to hear from any prophets in Jerusalem. So are they with the wickedness of this people; as the prophets, when they prophesied lies, said that they had them from God, so the people, when they invited those prophets thus to flatter them, fathered it upon God, and said that it was the Lord that raised them up those prophets. Whereas we may be sure that those who harden people in their sins, and deceive them with false and groundless hopes of God's mercy, are no prophets of God's raising up. These prophets of their own told them that no more should be carried captive, but that those who were in captivity should shortly return. Now, in answer to this,

1. The prophet here foretells the utter destruction of those who remained still at Jerusalem, notwithstanding what those false prophets said to the contrary. As God's judgments were to be renovation, the first, now, by whom, you think, will be ready to bid you welcome when you return, you are deceived, they shall be followed with one judgment after another, sword, famine, and pestilence, which shall cut off multitudes; and the poor and miserable remains shall be removed into all kingdoms of the earth," v. 16—18. And thus God will make them, or rather deal with them, like vile figs; they have made them selves so by their wickedness, and God will use them accordingly; as the salt that has lost its savour, which, being good for nothing, is cast to the dung-hill; and so are rotten figs. This refers to the vision, and the prophecy upon it, which we had, ch. xxix. And the reason given for these proceedings against them, is the same that has often been given, and will justify God in the eternal ruin of impenitent sinners, (v. 19.) Because they have not hearkened to my words; I called, but they refused.

2. He foretells the judgment of God upon the false prophets in Babylon, who deceived the people of God there. He calls upon all the children of the captivity, who boasted of them as prophets of God's raising up; (v. 20.) "Stand still, and hear the dooms of the prophets you are so fond of." The two prophets are named here, Ahf and Zedekiah, v. 21. Others of these prophets charged upon them impiety and immorality; They prophesied lies in God's name, (v. 21.) and again, (v. 23.) They have spoken lying words in my name. Lying was bad, lying to the people of God to delude them into a false hope was worse, but fathering their lies upon the God of truth was worst of all. And no marvel if they that had the face to do it, could allow themselves the confession of the false affections to which God, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up. They have done villany in Israel, for they have committed adultery with their neighbours' wives. Adultery is villany, and it is an aggravation of it, if it be villany in Israel, and in such as pretend to be prophets, who by such wickedness manifestly disprove their own pretensions. They are, as such, proved to be the most abominable morons. He is the Lord God of the holy prophets, not of such impure ones. Here it appears why they flattered others in their sins—because they could not reprove them without condemning themselves. These low practices of theirs they knew how to conceal from the eye of the world, that they might preserve their credit; but I knew it, and I am a Witness, with the Lord. The most secret sins are known to God, he can see the villany that is covered with the thickest cloak of hypocrisy, and there is a day coming when he will bring to light all these hidden works of darkness, and every man will appear in his own colours. (2.) The judgments threatened against them; "The king of Babylon shall slay them before your eyes; nay, he shall put them to a miserable death, must them in the fire," v. 22. We may suppose that it was not for their impiety and immorality that Nebuchadnezzar punished them thus severely, but for the insubordination and some of their turbulent spirits upon the public peace, and stirring up the people to revolt and rebel. So much of their wickedness shall then be detected, and in such a wretched manner they shall end their days, that their names shall be a curse among the captives in Babylon, v. 22. When men would improve the greatest evil upon one they hated, they would think they could not load them with a heavier curse, in fewer words, than to say, "The Lord make thee like Zedeki,' and like Ahf!" Thus were they made ashamed of the prophets they had been proud of, and convinced at least of their folly in hearkening to them. God's faithful prophets were sometimes charged with being the troublemakers of the land, and, as such, were tortured and slain but their work was blessed when they were gone; their memory sweet, not as those here. As malefactors are attended with infamy and disgrace, so martyrs with glory and honour.

24. Thus shalt thou also speak to She'mai'hah the Nehelamite, saying, 25. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying, 26. The Lord hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the Lord, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, a prophet shalt thou put him in prison, and in the stocks; 27. Now, therefore, why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? 28. For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long; build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 29. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet. 30. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, 31. Send to all of them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the Lord concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie; 32. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed; he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord.

We have perused the contents of Jeremiah's letter to the captives in Babylon, who had reason, with a
great deal of thanks to God and him, to acknowledge the receipt of it, and lay it up among their treasures. 2. Zech. viii. 16. The false prophets had among them were enraged at it, for it gave them their true character. Now here we are told concerning one of them, 1. How he discovers his malice against Jeremiah. 

This base fellow is called Shemaiah the Nethaneel; the dreamer, (so the margin reads it,) because all his prophecies he pretended to have received from God, and therefore to be as certain as if they would be made to capitalize their captives, or had heard it read, or information was given to him concerning it, and it met them exceedingly; and he will take pen in hand, and answer it, yea, that he will. But how? He does not write to Jeremiah in justification of his own mission, nor offer any rational arguments for the support of his prophecies concerning the speedy return of the captives; but he writes to the priests, those faithful patrons of the false prophets, and instigates them to persecute Jeremiah. He writes in his own name, not so much as pretending to have the people's consent to it, but, as if he must be dictator to all mankind, he sends a circular letter (as it should seem) among the priests at Jerusalem, and the rest of the people, probably by the same messenger that brought the letter from Shemaiah. But it is chiefly directed to Zephaniah, who was either the immediate son of Maaseiah, or of the twenty-fourth course of the priests, of which Maaseiah was the father and head. He was not the High Priest, but sagan or suffragan to the High Priest, or in some other considerable post of command in the temple service. For perhaps he was chairman of that committee of priests that was appointed in a particular manner to take cognizance of those that pretended to be prophets, of which there were very many at this time, and to give judgment concerning them. Now, 1. He puts him and the other priests in mind of the duty of their place; (v. 26.) The Lord hath made thee priest instead of Jehoiada the priest. Some think that he refers to the famous Jehoiada, that great reformer in the days of Josiah; and (says Mr. Gataker) he would insinuate that this Zephaniah is for spirit and zeal such another as he, and raised up, as he was, for the glory of God and the good of the church; and therefore it was expected from him that he should proceed against Jeremiah. This may be true in many cases of such ambitious and sprin-gious, but that wicked wretches and false prophets will not only attempt it, but colour it also with some suspicious pretence of piety, and zeal for God's glory, Is. lxvi. 3. John xvi. 2. Or, rather, it was some other Jehoiada, his immediate predecessor in this office, who perhaps was carried to Babylon among the priests, v. 1. Zephaniah is advanced, sooner than they had this place of trust and power, and Shemaiah would have him think that Providence had preferred him, that he might persecute God's prophets, that he was come to this government for such a time as this, and that he was unjust and ungrateful, if he did not thus improve his power, or, rather, abuse it. Their hearts are wretchedly hard, who can justify the doing of mischievous things with this heart. 2. His priests' business was to examine every man that is mad, and makes himself a prophet. God's faithful prophets are here represented as prophets of their own making, usurpers of the office, and lay-intruders; and as men that were mad, actuated by some demon, and not divinely inspired; or as distracted men, and men in a frenzy. Thus the characters of the false prophets were set as a warning to all that if this had been indeed their character, they ought to be bound as madmen and punished as pretenders, and therefore he concludes that Jeremiah must be so done to. He does not bid them examine whether Jeremiah could produce any proofs of his mission, nor would it have been proper to ask him for no, that is taken for granted, and when once he has had a bad name given him, he must be run down of course. 2. He informs them of the letter which Jeremiah had written to the captives; (v. 28.) He sent unto us in Babylon, with the authority of a prophet, saying, This captivity is long, and therefore resolve to make the captivity short. The words of Shemaiah were there in this, that it should be objected to him as a crime? The false prophets had formerly said that the captivity would never come, ch. xiv. 13. Jeremiah had said that it would come, and the event had already proved him right, which obliged them to give credit to him, who now said that it would be long, rather than to them who said it would be short, but had once before been found liars. 3. He demands judgment against him; taking it for granted that he is mad, and makes himself a prophet. He expects that they will order him to be put in prison, and in the stocks, (v. 26.) that they will thus punish him, and by putting him to disgrace possess the people with prejudices against him, ruin his reputation, and so prevent the giving of any credit to his prophecies at Jerusalem, hoping that if they could gain that point, the captives in Babylon would not be influenced by him. Nay, he takes upon him to chide Zephaniah for his neglect, (v. 27.) Why hast thou not rebuked and restrained Jeremiah of Anathoth? See how insolent and impetuous these false prophets were grown, that though they were in captivity, they would give law to the priests, who were not only at liberty but in power. It is common for those that pretend to more knowledge than their neighbours, to be thus assuming. Now here is a remarkable instance of the hardness of the hearts of sinners, and it is enough to make us all fear, lest our hearts be at any time hardened. For here we find, (1.) That these sinners would not be convinced by the clearest evidence. God had confirmed his word in the mouth of Jeremiah, it had taken hold of them; (Zech. i. 6.) and yet, because he does not prophesy to them the smooth things they desired, they are resolved to look upon him as not duly called to the office of a prophet. None so blind as those that will not see. (2.) That they would not be reclaimed and reformed by the punishment of the man they were so very willing to put into a miserable thraldom for mocking the messengers of the Lord, and misusing his prophecies; this was the sin for which God now contended with them; and yet in their distress they treasppr yet more against the Lord, 2 Chron. xxxviii. 22. This very sin they are notoriously guilty of in their captivity, which shows that afflictions will not of themselves cure men of their sinfulness and grace. God work with them, but will rather extend his operations they are intended to mortify; so true is that adage of Solomon, (Prov. xxiv. 22.) Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him. 11. How Jeremiah came to the knowledge of this; (v. 29.) Zephaniah read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah. He could not but be highly pleased with the manner in which Shemaiah would have him, but, as it should seem, had great respect for Jeremiah, (for we find him employed in messages to him as a prophet, ch. xxi. 1.—xxviii. 3.) and therefore protected him. He that continued in his dignity and power, stood more in awe of God and his judgments than he that was now a captive. Nay, he made Jeremiah acquainted with the contents of the letter so that he might see what enemies he had even among the captives. Note, It is kindness to our friends, to let them know their foes. 11. What was the sentence passed upon She-
JEREMIAH, XXX.

manah for writing this letter. God sent him an answer, for to him Jeremiah committed his cause: it was ordered to be sent not to him, but to them of the captivity, who encouraged and countenanced him, as if he had been a prophet of God's raising up, v. 31, 32. Let them know,

1. That Shemaiah had made fools of them; he pretended to be a peac- tor, and they, as teaching. He had counterfeited the broad seal of Heaven to it, and made the people to trust in a lie, and by preaching false and lies to them deprived them of true conscience; nay, he had not only made fools of them, but, which was worse, had made traitors of them, he had taught rebellion against the Lord, as Hana-

2. That Shemaiah had done, ch. xxviii. 16. And if vengeance shall be taken upon them that rebel, much more upon them that teach rebellion by their doctrine and example.

2. That at his end he shall also be a fool; (as the expression is, ch. xvii. 11.) his name and family shall be extinct, and shall be buried in oblivion; he shall leave no issue behind him to bear up his name, his pedigree shall end in him; he shall not have a son, and his name shall go out from him, nor any that come from him, shall behold the good that I will do for my people. Note, Those are unworthy to share in God's favours to his church, that are not willing to stay his time for them. Shemaiah was angry at Jeremiah's advice to the captives, to see to the building up of their families in Babylon, that they might be increased, and thereby they and their children just as the written childless there. Those that slight the blessings of God's word, deserve to lose the benefit of them. See Amos vii. 16, 17.

CHAP. XXX.

The sermon which we have in this and the following chapter, is of a very different complexion from all those before

The prophet does indeed, by direction from God, change his voice. Most of what he had said hitherto, was by way of reproof and threatening; but these two chapters are wholly taken up with precious promises of a return out of captivity, and that typical of the glorious things reserved for the church in the days of the Messiah.

This is not only to preach this, but to write it, because it is in itself, and for the comfort of the generation to come, v. 1. 3. It is here promised, I. That they should hereafter have a joyful restoration. 1. Though they were now in a great deal of pain and terror, yet their condition would be very strong, v. 8, 9. 3. Though a full end was made of other nations, and they were not restored, v. 11. 4. Though all means of their deliverance seemed to fail and be off, v. 12, 14. Yet though God himself had sagged them into captivity, and justly, for their sins, v. 15, 16. 6. Though all about them looked upon their case as desperate, v. 17. II. That after their joyful restoration they should have a happy settlement; that their city should be rebuilt, (v. 18.) their numbers increased, (v. 19, 20.) their government established, (v. 21.) God's covenant with them renewed, (v. 22.) and their enemies destroyed and cut off, v. 23, 24.

1. THE word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. 3. For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord; and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. 4. And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel, and concerning Judah. 5. For thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. 6. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? 7. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. 3 For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: 9. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Here,

I. Jeremiah is directed to write what God had spoken to him; which perhaps refers to all the foregoing prophecies; he must write them and publish them, in hopes that they who had not profited by it upon once hearing it, might take more notice of it when, in reading it, they had leisure for a more considerate review. Or, rather, it refers to the promises of their enlargement, which had been often mixed with his other discourses. He must collect them and put them together, and God will now add unto them many like words. He must write them for the generations to come, who should see them accomplished, and thereby have their faith in the prophecy confirmed. He must write it not in a letter, as he might have done, to the captivity, but in a book, to be carefully preserved in the archives, or among the public rolls or registers of the state. Daniel understood by these books when the captivity was about coming to an end, Dan. ix. 2. He must write it in a book, not in loose papers; For the days come, and are yet at a great distance, when I will bring again the captivity of Israel and Judah great numbers of the ten tribes, with those of the two, v. 3. And it must be written, that it may be read there also, that so it may appear how exactly the accomplishment answers the prediction, which is one end of the writing of prophecies. It is intimated that they shall be beloved for their fathers' sakes; (Rom. xi. 28.) for therefore God will bring them again to Canaan, because it was the land that he gave to their fathers, therefore they shall possess.

II. He is directed what to write. The very words are such as the Holy Ghost teaches, v. 4. These are the words which God ordered to be written; and those promises which are written by his order, are as truly his word as the ten commandments, which were written with his finger.

He must write a description of the right and consternation which the people were now in, and were likely to be still in upon every attack that the Chaldeans made upon them, which will much magnify both the wonder and the wellcomeliness of their deliverance; (v. 5.) We have heard a voice of trembling—the shrieks of terror echoing to the alarms of danger. The false prophets told them that they should have peace, but there was fear, and not peace; so the margin reads it. No marvel that when without are fightings, within are fears. The men, even the men of war, shall be quite overpluswhelmed with the calamities of their nation, shall sink under them, and yield to them, and shall look like women in labour, whose pains come upon them in great extremity, and they know that they cannot escape them, v. 6. You never heard of a man tra-
valing with child, and yet here you find not here and there a timorous man, but every man, with his hands on his loins, in the utmost anguish and agony, as women in travail, when they see their cities burnt and their countries laid waste. But this pain is compared to that of a woman in travail, not to that of a death-bed, because it shall end in joy at last, and the pain, like that of a travelling woman, shall be forgotten. All faces shall be turned into paleness. The word signifies not only such pale-
ness as arises from a sudden fright, but that which is the effect of a long-standing malady, the end of which is fatal sickness. The prophet laments the calamity, upon the foresight of it; (v. 7.). Alas, for that day is great, a day of judgment, which is culled the great day, the great and terrible day of the Lord; (Joel ii. 31. Jule 6.) great, so that there has been none like it. The last destruction of Jerusalem is thus spoken of by our Saviour as unparalleled, Matth. xxiv. 21. It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble, a sad time, when God’s professing people shall be in distress, above other people. The whole time of the captivity was a time of Jacob’s trouble; and such times ought to be greatly lamented by all that are concerned for the welfare of Jacob, and the honour of the God of Jacob.

He must write the assurances which God had given, that a happy end should at length be put to these calamities, (1.) Jacob’s troubles shall cease; He shall be saved out of them. Though the afflictions of the church may last long, they shall not last always. Salvation belongs to the Lord, and shall be wrought for his church. (2.) Jacob’s troubles shall be disabled to do him any further mischief, and shall be reckoned with for the mischief they have done him, v. 1. The Lord of hosts, who has all power in his hand, undertakes to do it; I will break his yoke from off thy neck, which has long lain so heavy, and hath so sorely galled thee; I will burst thy bonds and restore thee to liberty and ease, and thou shalt no more be at the beck and command of strangers, shalt no more serve them, nor shall they any more serve themselves of thee, they shall no more enrich themselves either by thy possessions or by thy labours.” And, (3.) That which crowns and completes the mercy is, that they shall be restored to the free exercise of their religion again, v. 9. They shall be delivered from serving their enemies, not that they may live at large, and do what they please but that they may serve the Lord their God, and have their king, and their king shall come again in order, under the established government both in church and state. Therefore they are brought into trouble and made to serve their enemies, because they had not served the Lord their God as they ought to have done, with joyfulness and gladness of heart, Deut. xxxvii. 47. But when the time is come the Lord shall be merciful, and end their trouble, God will prepare and qualify them for it, by giving them a heart to serve him; and will make it doubly comfortable, by giving them opportunity to serve him. Therefore we are delivered out of the hands of our enemies, that we may serve God, Luke i. 74, 75. And their deliverances out of temporal calamities are mercies indeed to us, when like James come to us, and shall be sorely vexed, and cast off in the service of God. They shall serve their own God, and neither be inclined, as they had been of old in the day of their apostasy, nor compelled, as they had been of late in the day of their captivity, to serve other gods. They shall serve David their king, such governors as God should from time to time put over them, the line of the house of David, and of the house of Jesse; or, at least, as set down on the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David, as Nebuchadnezzar. But certainly this has a further meaning. The Chaldee Paraphrase reads it, They shall obey, or hearken to, the Messiah, or Christ, the Son of David, their king. To him the Jewish interpreters apply it. That dispensation, which commenced at their return out of captivity, brought them to the Messiah. He is called David their king, because he was the Son of David, (Matth. xxii. 42.) and he answered to the name. Matth. xx. 31, 32. David was an illustrious type of him both in his humiliation and his exaltation. The covenant of royalty made with David had principal reference to him, and in him the promises of that covenant had their full accomplishment. God gave him the throne of his father David, he raised him up unto them, set him upon the holy hill of Zion. God is often in the New Testament said to have raised up Jesus, raised him up as a King, Acts iii. 26,—xxii. 23, 33. Observe, [1.] Those that serve the Lord as their God, must also serve David their King, must give up themselves to Jesus Christ, to be ruled by him. For all men must honour the Son as they honour the Father, and come into the service and worship of God by him as Mediator. [2.] Those that are delivered out of spiritual bondage, must make it appear that they are so by giving up themselves to the service of Christ. They to whom he gives rest, must take his yoke upon them.

10. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. 11. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee; though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished. 12. For thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. 13. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines. 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not: for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased. 15. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased I have done these things unto thee. 16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, delivered every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. 17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

In these verses, as in those foregoing, the deplorable case of the Jews in captivity is set forth, but many precious promises are given them, that in due time they should be relieved, and a glorious salvation wrought for them.
1. God himself appeared against them; he scattered them; (v. 11.) he did all these things unto them, v. 15. All their calamities came from his hands; whoever were the instruments, he was the principal Agent. And this made their case very sad, that God, even their own God, spake concerning them, to pull down and to destroy. Now, (1.) This was intended as a lively instance of the despair of their case; (v. 11.) "I will correct thee in measure, according to judgment, with discretion, no more than thou deservest, nay, no more than thou canst well bear." What God does against his people, is in a way of correction, and that correction is always moderated, and always proceeds from love. "I will not leave thee altogether unpunished, as thou art ready; this shall be the measure and condition of thy case," notes A. 2. A profession of religion, though ever so plausible, will be far from securing us impunity in sin. God is no Respecter of persons, but will show his hatred of sin, wherever he finds it, and that he hates it most in those that are nearest to him. God here corrects his people for the multitude of their iniquity, and because their sins were increased, v. 14. It is not he who has increased their sin and their calamity, but he who has counted their sin and their calamity, and made them more than they are, and do they increase? We must acknowledge that it is because our sins have been multiplied, and they have increased. Iniquities grow in us, and therefore trouble grows upon us. But, (2.) What God intended as a fatherly chastisement, they and others interpreted as an act of hostility; they looked upon him as having wounded them with the wound of an enemy, and with the chastisement of a gewl, a fearful thing. 3. If he had owned their ruin, and neither mitigated the correction, nor had any mercy in reserve for them. It did indeed seem as if God had dealt thus severely with them, as if he had turned to be their Enemy, and had fought against them. Isa. liii. 10. Job complains that God was become cruel to him, and multiplied his wounds. When troubles are great and long, we have need carefully to watch over our own hearts, that we entertain not such hard thoughts as these of God and his providence. His are the chastisements of a merciful one, not of a cruel one, however they may appear. 4. Their friends forsook them, and were shy of them; none of those who had counted them in their prosperity, would take notice of them now in their distress; nor of those who had been their professors of the commonwealth, or sham friends. In two cases we are glad of the assistance of our friends, and need their service; (1.) If we be impeached, accused, or reproached, we expect that our friends should appear in vindication of us, should speak a good word for us, when we cannot put on a face to speak for ourselves; but here there is none to plead their cause, none stand up in their behalf, nor need we to intercede for thee with thine oppressors; therefore God will plead their cause, for he might well wonder there was none to uphold a people that had been so much the favourites of heaven, Isa. liii. 5. (2.) If we be sick, or sore, or wounded, we expect our friends should attend us, advise us, sympathize with us, and, if possible, bend a hand for us as a fatherly clascing is meet. But here, there is none to do that, none to bind up thy wounds, and by counsel's and comforts to make proper applications to thy case; nor, v. (14.) All thy lovers have forgotten thee; out of sight out of mind; instead of seeking thee they forsake thee. Such as this has often been the case of religion and serious godliness in the world; those, that from their education, the relation to holy beings, our minds might have expected to have been its friends and lovers, its patrons and protectors, desert it, forget it, and have nothing to say in its defence, nor will do anything toward the healing of its wounds. Observe, Thy lovers have forgotten thee, for I have wounded thee. When God is against a people, who will be for them? Who can be for them, so as to do them any kindness? See Job xxxi. 11. Now, upon this account, their case seemed desperate and past relief; (v. 12.) Thy bruise is in incurable; and, v. 13. Thy wound is incurable; the condition of their lives in captivity was such as no human power could redress the grievances of; there they were like a valley full of dead and dry bones, which nothing less than omnipotence can put life into. Who could imagine that a people so diminished, so impoverished, should ever be restored to their own land, and restored there! So many were the aggravations of their calamity, that their sorrow would not admit of any alleviation, but they seemed to be hardened in it, and their souls refused to be comforted, till divine consolations proved strong ones, too strong to be borne down even by the floods of grief that overwhelmed them. Thy sorrow is incurable, because thy sins, instead of being repented of and forsaken, were increased. Note, Incurable griefs are incurable to them who will not appear in a reasonable and a consistent condition; they are looked upon with disdain; (v. 17.) They called thee an outcast, abandoned by all, abandoned to ruin; they said, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after. When they looked on the place where the city and temple had been built, they called that an outcast; now all was in ruins, there was no resort to it, no residence in it, none asked them where they went to. They go to the city, and no man seeks after it. When they looked on the people that formerly dwelt in Zion, but were now in captivity, (and we read of Zion dwelling with the daughter of Babylon, Zech. ii. 7.) they called them outcasts; these are they who belong to Zion, and talk much of it, and weep at the remembrance of it, but no man seeks after them, or inquires concerning them. Note, It is often the lot of Zion to be deserted and despised by those about her. 5. For all this, God will work deliverance and salvation for them in due time. Though no other hand, may, because no other hand, can cure their wound, his will and shall. (1.) Though he seemed to stand at a distance from them, yet he assures them of his presence with them, his powerful and gracious presence. 2 Tim. i. 7. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation. I will exalt him, I will not set up false gods beside thee; v. 11. When they are in their troubles, he is with them, to save them from sinking under them; when the time is come for their deliverance, he is with them, to be ready upon the first opportunity, to save them out of their trouble. (2.) Though they were at a distance, remote from their own land, afar off in the land of their captivity, yet there shall salvation find them out, he shall set it fetch them, them and their seed, for they also shall be known among the Gentiles, and distinguished from them, that they may return, v. 10. (3.) Though they were now full of tears, and continually alarmed, yet the time shall come when they shall be in rest and quiet, safe and easy, and none shall make them afraid, v. 10. (4.) Though the nations shall be scattered and dispersed, then, he shall bring to ruin, yet they should be preserved from that ruin; (v. 11.) Though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee, and there might be danger of thy being lost among them, yet I will not make a full end of thee. It was promised that in the peace of these nations they should have peace; (ch. xxix. 7.) and yet in the destruction of the Gentiles, the case of the Jews should be different. God's church may sometimes be brought very low, but he will not make a full end of it, ch. v. 10, 18. (5.) Though God correct them, and justly, for their sins, their manifold transgres-
with pain upon the head of the wicked.
24. **The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart:** in the latter days ye shall consider it.

We have here further intimations of the favour God had in reserve for them after the days of their captivity and bondage. It is probably,

1. **That the city and temple should be rebuilt.** (v. 18.) Jacob's tents, and his dwelling-places, felt the effects of the captivity, for they lay in ruins when the inhabitants were carried away captives: but when they are returned, the habitations shall be repaired, and raised up out of their ruins, and therein God will have mercy upon their dwelling-places, that had been monuments of his justice. Then the king of Jerusalem shall be built upon her own heap, her own hill; though now it be no better than a ruinous heap. The situation was unexceptionable, and therefore it shall be rebuilt upon the same spot of ground. He that can make of a city a heap, (Isa. xxxiii. 2.) can, when he pleases, make of a heap a city again.

2. **The palace, the temple, God's palace shall remain after the manner thereof.** It shall be built after the old model; and the service of God shall be constantly kept up there, and attended as formerly.

3. **That the sacred feasts should again be solemnized.** (v. 19.) Out of the city, and the temple, and all the dwelling-places of Jacob, shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry. They shall go with expressions of joy to the temple-service, and with the like shall return from it. Observe, The voice of thanksgiving is the same with the voice of them that make merry; for whatever is the matter of our joy, should be the matter of our praise. *Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.* What makes us cheerful should make us thankful. *Serve the Lord with gladness.*

4. **That the people should be multiplied and increased, and made considerable; They shall not be few, they shall not be small, but shall become numerous and illustrious, and make a figure among the nations; for I will multiply them and I will glorify them. It is for the honour of the church to have many added to it, that shall be saved; this would make them to be of some weight among their neighbours. Let a people be ever so much diminished and despised, God can multiply and glorify them. They shall be restored to their former honour, their children shall be as aforetime, playing in the streets; (Zech. viii. 5.) they shall inherit their parents' estates and honours as formerly, and their congregations shall, both in civil and sacred things, be established before me. There shall be a constant succession of faithful magistrates in the congregation of the elders, to establish that, and of faithful worshippers in the congregation of the saints. As one generation passes away, another shall be raised up, and so the congregation shall be established before God.**

18. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be built upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. 19. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. 20. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. 21. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the Lord. 22. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 23. Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind; it shall fall
his heart, made a covenant with it, and brought it into bonds, to approach unto me?" How few are there that do so! None can do it but by the special grace of God, causing them to draw near. Note, Whenever we are called to a task, in any body of ordi-
nance, we must engage our hearts to do it; the heart must be prepared for the duty, employed in it, and kept close to it. The heart is the main thing that God looks at and requires; but it is deceitful, and will start aside, if a great deal of care and pains be not taken to engage it to bind this sacrifice with cords.

Or, (2.) It may be understood of the govern-
ror, for it is a single person that is spoken of; their

governor being called for office, is to draw near to God to consult him upon all occasions. God will cause him to approach to him, for other-
wise, who would engage to take care of so weak a people, and let this ruin come under their hand? But when God has work to do, though attended with many discouragements, he will raise up in-
struments to do it. But it looks further, to Christ, to him as Mediator. Note, [1.] The proper work and office of Christ, as Mediator, is to draw near and approach unto God, not for himself only, but for us, and in our name and stead, as the High Priest of our profession. The priests are said to draw nigh to God, Lev. x. 3.—xxi. 17. Moses drew near, Exod. xx. 21. [2.] God the Father did cause Jesus Christ thus to draw near and ap-
proach to him, as Mediator. He commanded, and appointed him to do it, he sanctified and sealed him, commended him for this purpose, and accepted of him, and declared himself well-pleased in him. [3.] Je-

sus Christ, being caused by the Father to approach unto him as Mediator, did engage his heart to do it, he bound and obliged himself to it, undertook for his heart, (so some read it,) for his soul, that, in the fulness of time, it should be made an offering for sin. His own voluntary acceptance of the office, and of his Father's will, and in compassion to fallen man, engaged him, and then his own honour kept him to it. It also intimates that he was hearty and reso-
lute, free and cheerful, in it, and made nothing of the difficulties that lay in his way. Isa. lvi. 3.—

5. [4.] Jesus Christ was, in all this, truly won-
derful; we may well ask, with admiration, Who is this that engageth his heart to such an undertaking? [5.] That they shall be taken again into covenant with God, according to the covenant made with their fathers; (ver. 22.) Ye shall be my people; and it is God's good work in us, that makes us to him, a people, a people for his name, Acts xvi. 14. I will be your God; it is his good-will to us, that is the summary of that part of the covenant. [6.] That their enemies shall be reckoned with and brought down; (ver. 20.) I will punish all them that oppress them, so that it shall appear to all a danger-
ous thing to touch God's anointed, Ps. cv. 15. The two last verses come under this head, The whirl-
wind of the Lord shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. These two verses we had be-
fore: (ch. xxiii. 19, 20.) there they were a denun-
ciation of God's wrath against the wicked hypocrites in Israel; here, against the wicked oppressors of Israel; the expressions, exactly agreeing, speak the same with that, (Isa. li. 22, 25.) I will take the cup of trembling out of thy hand, and put it into the hand of them that afflict thee. The wrath of God against the wicked is here represented to be, (1.) Very terrible, like a whirlwind, surprising and irre-
sistible. (2.) Very grievous; it shall fall with pain to their souls, they shall be much hurt as frightened. (3.) It shall pursue them; whirlwinds are usually short, but this shall be a continuing whirlwind. (4.) It shall accomplish that for which it is sent; The anger of the Lord shall not return, till he have done it; the purposes of his wrath, as well as the purposes of his love, will all be fulfilled; he will perform the intents of his heart: and, (5.) Those that will not lay this to heart now, will then be unable to put off the thoughts of it; In the latter day we shall consider it, when it will be too late to prevent it.

CHAP. XXXI.

This chapter goes on with the good words and comforta-
ble words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God

would in due time return them or their children, to their

own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, especially by sending them the Mediator, in whose

kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment. 1. They shall be restored to peace and honour, and joy great and plenty, v. 1—14. Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end, v. 15—17. III. They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance, v. 18—20. IV. They shall be multiplied and in-
creased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been, v. 21—30. V. God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings, v. 31—34. VI. These blessings shall be secured to theirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel for ever, v. 35—37. VII. As an earnest of this, the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, v. 38—40. These exceeding great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope, and full foundations of joy, to the poor captives, and the莓may apply them to ourselves, and mix faith with them.

1. At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. 2. Thus saith the Lord, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. 3. The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. 4. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built; O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the moun-
tains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things. 6. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. 7. For thus saith the Lord, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. 8. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together; a great company shall return. 9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel. 10. And Ephraim is my first-born.
God here assures his people,

1. That he will again take them into a covenant-relationship to himself, from which they seemed to have been cut off. *At the same time, when God's anger breaks out against the wicked,* (ch. xxx. 24.) his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love; *I will be the God, I will show myself to be the God, of all the families of Israel,* (v. 1.) not only of Aaron, the family of the high priest, nor of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all of their families; not only their state in general, but their particular families, and the interests of them, shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family-capacity, may apply themselves to God, and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, Prov. iii. 33.

2. That he will do for them, in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of Egypt, and as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people. (1.) He puts them in mind of what he did for their fathers, and their fathers' fathers, when he brought them out of Egypt; (v. 2.) they were then, as these were, a people left of the sword, that sword of Pharaoh, with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born, (a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped,) and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off when he pursued them to the Red Sea. They were then in the wilderness, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, they wandered now in a strange land, and yet they found grace in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blessed with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going to cause them to rest in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and inapplicable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet that it has been raised up from its low estate, and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same. (2.) They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of? * (Jud. vi. 11.) *Lo, how have they been cut off old unto me,* in Egypt, in the wilderness, hath appeared with me, and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God; the years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise; what good will it do us, that he appeared of old to us, when now he is a God that hides himself from us? Is. xlv. 15. Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles, under present frowns. (3.) To this he answers, with an assurance of the constancy of his love, *Yea, I have loved thee, not only with an ancient love, but with an everlasting love,* a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is an everlasting love, therefore have I extended or drawn out loving-kindness unto thee also, as well as to thine ancestors; or, *with loving-kindness have I drawn into myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside.* Note, It is the happiness of those who are through grace interested in the love of God, that it is an everlasting love, (from everlasting in the counsels of it, to everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it,) and that nothing can separate them from that love. Those who have God's love with them, love all who draw into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will draw them with loving-kindness, with the cords of a man, and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

3. That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, v. 4. 5. *Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built,* Aye the parts of this building dispersed! They shall be collected, and be built up in that edifice, in their own place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it. *Is Israel a beautiful virgin? Is she now stripped of her ornaments, and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but thou shalt again be adorned,* and made fine, adorned with thy tabrets, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry. They shall resume their harps which had been laid upon the willow trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them; they shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable, it shall be a proper time for it, God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when great calamities were hanging over them, were a shame to them. Or, it may refer to the worship of their tabrets, that is, to the solemnizing of their religious feasts, and their going forth in dances then, as the daughters of Shiloh, Judg. xxi. 19, 21. Our mirth is then indeed an ornament to us, when we serve God and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it is promised, (v. 5.) *Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria,* which had been the head city of the kingdom of Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united, (Ezek. xxxvii. 22.) and there shall be such perfect peace and security, that *the orchardists shall plant,* and apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground; the planters shall plant, not fearing the soldiers coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves shall eat them freely, as common things, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God, (as they were till the fifth year, Lev. xix. 23—25.) not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, for each.

4. That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his worship, and shall have those encouragements and inclinations to do so; (v. 6.) *There shall be a day, and a glorious day it will be,* when the watchmen upon Mount Ephraim, that are set to stand sentinel there, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet, and that there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be charged from their post, that they may go up to Zion, to praise God for the public peace. Or, the watchmen that tend the vineyards, spoken of, v. 5. shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go, and keep the solemn feast at Jerusalem. Now this implies that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, Ps. cxix. 23. But that which is most observable here is, *that the watchmen of Ephraim are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem,** whereas formerly the watchman of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God, (Hos. ix. 8.) and, instead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, Hos. v. 1. Note, God can and will use those that have been enemies to religion, and the true worship of God, to do good to his people, and to bless them, and leaders in them. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the
Messiah, when the gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation here- by given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

5. That God shall have the glory, and the church both the honour and comfort, of this blessed change; (v. 7.) Sing ye gladness for Jacob, let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, Deut. xxxii. 43. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people, Rom. xvi. 10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Ja- cob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect, and put a reputation upon him. Even the enemies of nations, that must take occasion, shall think it remarkable to hear them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. Publish ye, praise ye, in publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must do it with praise, and therefore it is often spoken of in the Psalms, as mingled with praises, Ps. lxvii. 2, 3. What we either bring to others, or take to ourselves the comfort of, we must be sure to give God the praise of. Praise ye, and say, O Lord, save thy people; perfect their salvation, go on to save the remnant of Israel, that are yet in bondage; as Ps. cxxvi. 3, 4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done, we must call upon him for the future for blessings, that it may be in need and expectation of; and in praying to him we really praise him, and give him glory; he takes it so.

6. That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity, and a very comfortable pas- sage homeward, (v. 8, 9,) and this beginning of mercy shall be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised. (4.) Though they are scattered to places for remote, yet they shall be brought together from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth; wherever they are, God will find them out. (2.) Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hinderance to them; the blind and the lame shall come; such a good-will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not need not be blind and lame, or any excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be eyes to the blind, and legs to the lame, as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels homeward, Job xxxix. 15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead that he is blind, who has God for his Guide; or lame, who has God for his Strength. The women with child are heavy, one is fit that they should undertake such a journey, much less those that trav- eal with child; and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls, we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us. (3.) Though they seem to be diminished, and to become few in numbers, yet, when they are all together, they shall be a great assembly; and so will God's spiritual Israel be, when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock. (4.) Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery; (v. 9.) They shall come with weep- ing, and with supplications, weeping for joy, and weeping for joy, and with such supplications as God shall lead them to repentance; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. Weep- ing and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of them, and prayers help to wipe away tears. With favours will I lead them; (so the margin reads it;) in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour. (3.) Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? I will cause them to walk in a straight way, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? Yet they shall not stumble. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call, he will either find them, or make them, a ready way; and while we are following Providence, we may be sure that Providence will not be wanting to us. And, lastly, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people; for I am a Father to Israel, a father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him; (Ps. ciii. 13.) and Ephraim is my first-born, even Ephraim, who, having gone astray from God, was no more worthy to be called a son, shall yet be owned as a first-born, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt, is given for their release out of Babylon; they are free-born, and therefore must not be enslaved; and is given to God, and therefore must not be the servants of men; (Exod. iv. 22, 23.) Israel is my son, my first-born; let my son go, that he may serve me. If we take God for our Father, and join ourselves to the church of the first-born, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

10. Hear the word of the Lord, O ye na- nouns, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. 11. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. 12. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the good- ness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd: and their souls shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sor- row any more at all. 13. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. 14. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the Lord. 15. Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. 16. Thus saith the Lord, Re- fiany thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. 17. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that
thy children shall come again to their own land. This paragraph is much to the same purport with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a word of the Lord, which the nations must hear, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord, which the nations cannot but take notice of. Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better understand and improve the performance; and let them hear it themselves declare it to others, declare it in the ides after. It will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over. It will look very great in history; let us see how it looks in prophecy. It is foretold,

1. That those who are dispersed, shall be brought together again from their dispersions; He that scattered Israel will gather him; for he knows whither he scattered them, and therefore where to find them. v. 10. Una cademque manus virum apogenque tulit—The hand that inflicted the wound shall heal it. And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will keep him, as a shepherd does his flock, from being scattered again.

2. That those who are sold and alienated, shall be redeemed and brought back, v. 11. Though the enemy has possessed of himself they shall sing to the praise of glory of God. We read that they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; they sang together, praiseing, and giving thanks to the Lord. Ezra iii. 11. They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord; they shall flow in great numbers and with great readiness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, to the goodness of the Lord, to the temple where he causes his goodness, his mercy, to flow before his people. They shall come together in solemn assemblies, to praise him for his goodness, and to pray for the fruits of it, and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd, which, now that they have obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of; and which therefore, they honour God with the first-fruits of, and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. Having plenty, (plenty out of want and scarcity,) they shall greatly rejoice, their soul shall be as a watered garden, flourishing and growing in all the beauty and happiness of it, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise which follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that they shall not sorrow any more at all; for it is only in that place that they are here described as saying it, and it is there that the psalmist speaks of it. Rev. xxii. 4. However, so far it was fulfilled to the returned captives, that they had not any more those causes for sorrow, that they had had; and therefore (v. 13.) young men and old shall rejoice together; so great shall the young men be in their joys, as to keep company with the old men, and so transported shall the old men be, as to associate with the young. Sabba in, sabba ex.—The state is prosperous, and the aged dance. God will turn their mourning into joy, their fasts into solemn feasts, Zech. viii. 19. It is in their return out of Babylon that they who sorrow in tears, were not to be pitied, and to joy they were not at ease. v. 6. These are comforted indeed, whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles, when he makes them to rejoice from their sorrow; not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it; their joy shall be poured lustre from their sorrow, which shall serve as a fail to it; and the more they think of their troubles, the more they rejoice in their deliverance. That the psalms together to, shall have abundant satisfaction in what God gives them; (v. 14.) I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness; there shall be such plenty of sacrifices brought to the altar, that they who live upon the altar, shall live very comfortably, they and their families shall be satiated with fatness, they shall have enough, and that of the best, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, and shall think there is enough in that to make them happy; and so there is. God's people have an abundant satisfaction in God's goodness, though they have but little of this world. Let them be satisfied of God's loving-kindness, and they will be satisfied with it, and desire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the spiritual blessings which the reformed church of Christ now enjoys, when things are more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the satisfaction of soul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

5. That those, particularly, who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children who were carried into captivity, should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, v. 15.—17. Here we have, (1.) The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children; (v. 15.) In Ramah was there a voice heard, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but lamentation, and bitter weeping, more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears, ch. xl. 1. where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. Rachel is here said to weep for her children. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethel, near Benjamin, one of the two tribes, and Ephraim, head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of which was one for whom his father grieved, and refused to be comforted, (Gen. xxxvii. 5.) the other she herself called Benoni—the son of my sorrow. Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner grieve for their sons and their daughters that were carried away, (as I Sam. xxx. 6,) and such a voice of lamentation was there, as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies; they were never likely to see them more. This is applied by the evangelists to the most tender and most sincere griefs of the children of Bethlem for the murder of the infants there by Herod; (Matth. ii. 17,) and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They wept for them, and would not be comforted, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, because they were not. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think they are not. (2.) Seasonable comfort administered to them in reference hereunto, v. 16. 17. They are advised to moderate that sorrow, and to set bounds to it; Reitain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears. We are not forbidden to mourn in such a case, allowances are made for natural affliction; but we must not suffer our sorrow to run into an extreme, to hinder our joy in God, or take us off from our
And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. 25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul. 26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

We have here,

1. Ephraim's repentance, and return to God. Not only Judah, but Ephraim, the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it, Hos. xiv. 8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? Ephraim, the people, is here spoken of as a single person, and cannot by any means shall be as one in their repentance, and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. It is likewise thus expressed, that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is intended. Ephraim is here brought in, weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that race were descended, who was the first to commit the solemn sin in the spirit, mourned for his children many days: (1 Chron. vii. 21, 22.) and sorrow for sin is compared to that for an only son. This penitent is here brought in, (1.) Bemoaning himself, and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves. (2.) Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He charges himself, as he should, in the first place, with sin and has conscience told him that he was more especially guilty of at this time; and that was, impatience under correction; "Thou hast chastised me; I have been under the rod, and I needed it; I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock, who had never felt the goad if he had not first rebelled against the yoke." True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements; "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised; it was well that I was chastised, otherwise I had been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it." Or, it may speak his want of feeling under the affliction; "Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, that was all, I was not awakened by it, and quickened by it; I brought no further than the chastisement, as I have been under the chastisement as a bullock unacquainted to the yoke, unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net." Isa. li. 20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but (v. 19.) he reflects upon his former sins, and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers in the first place, the sin of his youth. Ephraim, as a people, reflects upon the misconduct of their ancestors, when they were first formed into a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we ought often to remember it against ourselves, and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame. (3.) He is here brought in, angry at himself, having a bodily indignation at himself; Ephraim, folly; he smote upon his thigh, as the publican upon his breast; he was even amazed at himself, and at his own stupidity and frowardness; he was ashamed, yea, even confounded, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself. (4.) He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bound to God, with the power of his own keep himself close with God, much less, when he is revoluted, bring himself back to God, and therefore he prays,
Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; which implies that unless God do turn him by his grace, he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly; that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See ch. xvii. 14. Heal me, and I shall be healed; that is, if he were to undertake the conversion of a soul, it will be converted. (5.) He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had of the blessed effect of divine grace; Surely after that I was turned, I repented. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself, is, by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon; After that I was instructed, I yielded, I smote upon my thigh. When sinners come to a right knowledge, this is a way with them; it is their way of instruction, it is their way of conversion, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no further; I was chastised, and that was all. But when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he smote upon his thigh, was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

1. God's compassion on Ephraim, and the kind reception he finds with God, v. 20. (1.) He owns him for a child, though he has been an unfaithful child and a prodigal; Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself, God bemoans him, as one whom his mother comforts, though she had chidden him. Isa. lxvi. 13. Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child? Is it he that is thus said in spirit, and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul, (1 Sam. xxvi. 17.) Is this thy voice, my son David? Or, as it is sometimes supplied, Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child? Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been unthankful, backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been misconducted in the way of their return, shall be accepted of God as dear and pleasant children. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him: and absolves himself, but God thus honors him; as the returning prodigal, who thought himself no more worthy to be called a son, yet, by his father, had the best robe put upon him, and a ring on his hand. (2.) He relents toward him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tenderness and affection; Since I spake against him, by the threatenings of the word and the rebukes of providence, I do earnestly remember him still, my thoughts toward him are thoughts of peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he does not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he does not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God's Spirit, as the greatest of all his gifts, is active for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that the Lord thinks upon us, though we have forgotten him. I remember him still, and therefore my bowels are troubled for him, as Joseph's yearned toward his brethren, even then when he shake roughly to them. When Israel's afflictions exerted a penitent confession and submission, it is said, that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel; (Judg. x. 16.) for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment; My heart is turned within me; (Hos. xi. 8, 9.) and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded, (v. 18.) Thou art the Lord my God, therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shows it was a valid plea, and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God, and not man, and that he is his God. (3.) He resolves to do him good; I will surely have mercy upon him, and to the Lord will I look; not to the things that were, but to the things that were, or are about to be, in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him, and submit to him; and the more we are afflicted for sin, the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

2. Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon, to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble, and lose their spirits; let them not trust, and lose their time; but with a firm resolution some close application address themselves to their journey, v. 21, 22. (1.) They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven; Turn again, O virgin of Israel, a virgin to be again espoused to thy God, turn again to these thy cities; though they are spoiled waste and in ruins, they are thy cities, which the God of Israel will make them, and make thee glad among them. They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion. (2.) They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows which attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, and make them the more thankful for their deliverance. These that have departed from God into the bondage of sin, must return by the way in which they went astray, to the duties they neglected, must do their first works. (3.) They must engage themselves and all that is within them in this affair; Set thy heart toward the highway, bring thy mind to it; consider thy duty, thou interest, and go about it with a good will. Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a highway; it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well tracked; (Isa. xxxv. 8.) yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they set their hearts towards it. (4.) They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for their journey; Set thee up way-marks, which may give warning, and make the bigger heaps, which may have such set up in all places where there is any danger of missing the road. Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow. (5.) They must compose themselves for their journey. How long wilt thou go about, O backsliding daughter? Let not their minds first be, or be uncertain about, or resolve upon it; let them not distract themselves with care and fear; let them not seek about to creatures for assistance, nor hurry hither and thither in courting them, which had often been an instance of their backsliding from God; but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed. (6.) They are encouraged to do this by an assurance given them, that he would create a new thing, strange and surprising in the earth, in that land's woman shall compass a man. The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments, and of a timorous spirit, shall surround, besiege, and prevail against a mighty man, Isa. liv. 6. The church is compared to a woman, Rev. xii. 1. And whereas we find armed and compassed for battle, Isa. liv. 3, Rev. xii. 9.) now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this new thing created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God had an eye to in bringing them back to
man, and with the seed of beast. 29. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the Lord. 29. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge. 30. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. 31. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; 32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them;) saith the Lord: 33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

The prophet, having found his sleep sweet, made so by the revelations of divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of further discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here further promised.

1. That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous. Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown with the seed of both, v. 27. They shall increase and multiply like a field down with corn; and this is the product of God’s blessing, (v. 25,) for whom God blessed, to them he said, Be fruitful. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel-church. God will build them, and plant them, v. 28. He will watch over them, to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost, that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences have been so conspire against them, that it seemed as if for whom God blessed, to them he said, Be fruitful. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel-church. God will build them, and plant them, v. 28. He will watch over them, to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost, that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences have been so conspire against them, that it seemed as if for whom God blessed, to them he said, Be fruitful. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel-church. God will build them, and plant them, v. 28. He will watch over them, to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost, that may further their prosperity.
and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days, that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, Matt. xxiii. 35, 36. But it is here promised that this severe dispensation with them should now be brought to an end: that God would proceed no further in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers, and do them good according to that covenant:— They shall have no more complaint, as they have done, that the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge; (which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings;) but every one shall die for his own iniquity still, though God will cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with particular persons that provoke him. Note, Public sufferings will give no impunity, no security to private sinners: still every man that eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge. Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how temptingly soever it looks, will find it a sour grape, and it will set their teeth on edge, sooner or later they will feel from it, and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct an import in this short prophecy, as there is in sour grapes to set the teeth on edge.

III. That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have, not by providence only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured. But this covenant refers to gospel-times, the latter days that shall come; for of gospel-grace the Jews and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united, after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them: so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel-church and covenant.

2. What is the nature of this covenant in general; it is a new covenant, and not according to the covenant made with them, when they came out of Egypt; not as if that made with them at mount Sinai were a covenant of the law, and the gospel is a covenant of grace, with Adam in the day he was created; no; that was, for substance, a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant, in comparison with this in gospel-times. Sinners were saved by that covenant, upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood, confirming that covenant, was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, Exod. xxiv. 7, 8. Yet this may upon many accounts be called new, in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he took them by the hand, as if they had been blind or lame, or weak, to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake. Observe, It was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that brake it; for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin are of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it, that God was a Husband to them, that he had espoused them to himself, it was a marriage-covenant that was between him and them, which they brake by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of that covenant that Adam and Eve, that he has been a Husband to us, a loving, tender, careful Husband, faithful to us, and yet wefalse to him.

3. What are the particular articles of this covenant; they all contain spiritual blessings: nor, "I will give them the land of Canaan and a numerous issue," but, "I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace, good heads and good hearts." He promises,

(1.) That he will incline them to their duty; I will put my law in their inward heart, and write it in their heart; not, I will give them a new law, (as Mr. Gataker well observes,) for Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit, as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is written in the heart, Prov. iii. 3. He makes them in care to observe it, and that with a perfect alacrity about it, as he speaks of the wicked abominable, as is to lie near our hearts. He works in them a new heart, we are taught by the Scriptures, as he speaks of obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

(2.) That he will take them into relation to himself; I will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them; and they shall be my people, a loyal, obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the sum of all happiness, heaven itself is no more, Heb. xi. 16. Rev. xxi. 3. Our being to him a people may be taken either as the condition on our part, (those and those only shall have God to be to them a God, that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to that people,) or as a further branch of the promise, that God, who is the Father of the willing people, in the day of his power; and, whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

(3.) That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good; for they that rightly know God's name, will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him. More shall we know him; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God, and shall have the means of that knowledge; his way shall be known upon earth; whereas, for many ages, in Judah only was God known. Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, through him the Gentiles are brought into favour, Eph. ii. 13. The things of God shall in gospel-times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest, than they had been, while Moses had a veil upon his face. There shall be such a general knowledge of God, that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as a hyperbolic expression, (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them,) designed only to show that the knowledge of God, in gospel-times should be vastly exceed that knowledge of him, which they had under the law. Or, perhaps, it intimates that in gospel-times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, steadily and constantly, by men authorised and appointed to preach the word in season and out of season, much beyond what was under the law; that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached not then and now, and in the temple, to a few in comparison; but now all shall or may know God by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be spread. Some give this sense of it, (Mr. Gataker mentions it,) that many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God, that they may seem neither to have been taught by some immediate irradiation than by any means of instruction in short, the
things of God shall by the gospel of Christ be brought to a clearer light than ever, (2 Tim. i. 10.) and the people of God shall by the grace of Christ be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, Eph. i. 17, 18.

(4.) That, in order to all these blessings, sin shall be pardoned; this is made the reason of all the rest; For I will forgive their iniquity, will not increase, that they, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, will forgive and forget; I will remember their sin no more. It is that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

35. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: 36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. 37. Thus saith the Lord, If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel, for all that they have done, saith the Lord. 38. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord, from the tower of Hananeal unto the gate of the corner. 39. And the measuring-line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. 40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields, unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever.

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel-church, which that epocha of the Jewish church, that was to commence at the return from captivity, would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishments in. But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us, is, that while the world stands, God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, shall yet be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Now here are two things offered for the confirmation of our faith in this promise; the continuance of the world, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

1. The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, are evidences of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. He that built all things at first is God, (Heb. iii. 4.) and the same is he that makes all things new. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace, for this is as the waters of Noah, Isa. lv. 9. Let us observe here,

1. The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer hence how happy they are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice, (1.) Of the steady and regular motion of the heavens, and the power of the Creator; of that which is the Director of; He gives the sun for a light by day; (v. 35.) not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so, for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night; their motions are called ordinances, both because they are regular and by rule, and because they are determined at first by the power of the Creator. (2.) Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows; The Lord of hosts divides the sea, or, as some read it, sets the sea, when the waves thereof roar; (Divide, et impera—Divide, and rule;) when it is most tossed, God keeps it within compass, (Jer. v. 22.) and soon quiet it and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas. (3.) Take notice of the vastness of the heavens and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God, who manages such a great world as this is; the heavens above cannot be measured, (v. 37.) and yet God fills them. (4.) Take notice of the mysteries of the earth, that even in our own time we are not able to search out all the parts on which we cast our lot, and which we are most conversant with. The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath, for the Creator hangs the earth upon nothing, (Job. xxxvi. 7.) and we know not how the foundations thereof are fastened, Job. xxxviii. 6. (5.) Take notice of the immovable steadfastness of all these; (v. 36.) These ordinances cannot depart from before me, even of all the hosts of heaven, earth continually under his eye, and all the motions of both; he has established them, and they abide, abide according to his ordinance, for all are his servants, Ps. cxix. 90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake and the sea be tossed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed. Herein we must acknowledge the power, goodness and faithfulness of the Creator of the universe.

2. The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred from hence; we may be confident of this very thing, that the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation, for the spiritual Israel, the gospel-church, shall be a holy nation, a peculiar people; 1 Pet. ii. 9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation, the children of the promise are counted for the seed, (Heb. xi. 8.) and God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, no, not for all that they have done, though they have done very wickedly, v. 37. He justly might cast them off; but he will not. Though he cast them out from their land, and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, but not all to this the apostle seems to refer, (Rom. xi. 1.) Hath God cast away his people? (nay,) For, (v. 3.) at this time there is a remnant, enough to save the credit of the promise, that God will not cast off all the seed of Israel, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this, by considering, (1.) That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church, he is God of almighty power, who upholds all things, and is the Almighty by his almighty name. Our help stands in his name, who made heaven and earth, and therefore can do any thing. (2.) That God would not take all this care of the world, but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it; and how shall
ne have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that shall be to him for a name and a praise? (3.) That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm, because it was well fixed at first, and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue immutable, as it was at first well settled. (4.) That he who has promised to preserve a church for himself, has approved himself faithful to the word which he has spoken, concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for an everlasting covenant, (Gen. xiv. 16.) will not cease, we may be sure, with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an everlasting covenant. Even that which they have done amiss, though they have done much, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See Ps. lxxxix. 30, &c.

II. The rebuilding of Jerusalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and establishment of that shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel-church, the heavenly Jerusalem, v. 36.-40. The days will come, though they may be long in coming, 1. When Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was; the dimensions are here exactly described, by the places through which the circumference passed, and, no doubt, the wall which Nechoh built, and which Jehoiakim added to; and by the place where they began, ( Neh. iii. 1.) enclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called the gate of the corner, the hill Garoth. &c. 2. When, being built, it shall be consecrated to God and to his service. It shall be built to the Lord, (v. 38.) and even the suburbs and fields adjacent shall be for the Lord for ever. It shall not be polluted with idols as formerly, but God shall be praised and honoured there; the whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jerusalem is, which therefore has no temple, because it is all temple. 3. Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, and then devoted to the praise of God, it shall not be plucked up, or thrown down, any more forever, it shall stand to all time; the time of the new city from the return to its last destruction being full as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men shall not shake it up, or throw it down. It may be waste for a time, as Jerusalem did, but shall recover itself, shall weather the storm, and gain its point, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

CHAP. XXXII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Jeremiah imprisoned for foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of king Zedekiah, v. 1.-5. II. We have him buying land, by divine appointment, as an assurance that in due time a happy end should be put to the present troubles, v. 6.-13. III. We have his prayer, which he offered up to God upon that occasion, v. 16.-25. IV. We have a message which God thereupon intrusted him to deliver to the people. 1. He must foretell the utter destruction of Judah, and the captivity of all their sons, v. 26-36. 2. At the same time he must assure them, that though the destruction was total, it should not be final, but that at length their posterity should recover the peaceable possession of all their land, v. 37-40. 3. The threats and promises of this chapter, both threatenings and promises, are much the same with what we have already met with again and again, but here are some circumstances that are very particular and remarkable.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. 2. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem; and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house. 3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; 4. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; 5. And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the Lord; though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper. 6. And Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 7. Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum, thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is thine to buy it. 8. So Hanameel, mine uncle's son, came to me in the court of the prison, according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord. 9. And I bought the field of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver. 10. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. 11. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open. 12. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. 13. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, (both which is sealed,) and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: 14. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, (both which is sealed,) and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days: 15. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Houses, and fields, and vineyards, shall be possessed again in this land.
now coming very nigh to that fatal year which completed the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. God's judgments came gradually upon them, but they not meeting him by repentance in the way of his judgments, he proceeded in his controversy till all was laid waste, which was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah; now what a picture does this make of the case of an individual!

The king of Babylon's army had now invested Jerusalem, and was carrying on the siege with vigour, not doubting but in a little time to make themselves masters of it, while the besieged had taken up a desperate resolution not to surrender, but to hold it out to the last extremity. Now,

1. Jeremiah prophesies that both the city and the country shall fall into the hands of the king of Babylon. He tells them expressly, that the besiegers shall take the city as a prize, for God, whose city it was in a peculiar manner, will give it into their hands, and put it out of its protection; (v. 3.) that though Zedekiah attempt to make his escape, he shall be overthrown, and shall be delivered a prisoner into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, shall be brought into his presence, and be his great confusion to tell him his sins; and he, in his rage, shall break his faith with him; he shall hear the king of Babylon pronounce his doom, and see with what fury and indignation he will look upon him; his eyes shall behold his eyes, v. 4. That Zedekiah shall be carried to Babylon, and continue a miserable captive there, until God visit him, till God put an end to his life by a natural death, as Nebuchadnezzar had long before promised to do to him; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 19. He shall be shut up in a house, what is here rendered a prison, and Zedekiah shut him up in it for prophesying as he did, v. 2. 3. So far was he from humbling himself before Jeremiah, as he ought to have done, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.) that he hardened himself against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet, as to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, (ch. xxix. 2.) yet now he chides him for prophesying, (v. 5.) and shuts him up in prison, perhaps him, and design to punish him any further, but only to restrain him from prophesying any further, which was crime enough. Silencing God's prophets, though it is not so bad as mocking and killing them, is yet a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Persecution was one of the sins of Israel, which blazed up in the tenth, perhaps him, and yet Zedekiah persists in it even now that he was in the depth of distress. No providences, no afflictions, will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

II. For prophesying thus, he is imprisoned, not in the common gaol, but in the more creditable prison that was within the verge of the palace, in the king of Judah's house, and there not closely confined, but in custodia libera, in the court of the prison, where he might have good company, good air, and good intelligence brought him, and would be sheltered from the abuses of the times. What is here rendered his prison, is his chamber, where he was a prisoner, and Zedekiah shut him up in it for prophesying as he did, v. 2. 3. So far was he from humbling himself before Jeremiah, as he ought to have done, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 12.) that he hardened himself against him. Though he had formerly so far owned him to be a prophet, as to desire him to inquire of the Lord for them, (ch. xxix. 2.) yet now he chides him for prophesying, (v. 5.) and shuts him up in prison, perhaps him, and design to punish him any further, but only to restrain him from prophesying any further, which was crime enough. Silencing God's prophets, though it is not so bad as mocking and killing them, is yet a great affront to the God of heaven. See how wretchedly the hearts of sinners are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Persecution was one of the sins of Israel, which blazed up in the tenth, perhaps him, and yet Zedekiah persists in it even now that he was in the depth of distress. No providences, no afflictions, will of themselves part between men and their sins, unless the grace of God work with them. Nay, some are made worse by those very judgments that should make them better.

III. Being in prison, he purchases a piece of ground out of a near relation of his, that lay in Anathoth, v. 6, 7, &c. One would not have expected,
1. That a prophet should concern himself so far in the business of this world, but why not? Though ministers must not entangle themselves, yet they may concern themselves, in the affairs of this life. 
2. That one who had neither wife nor children should buy land; we find, (ch. xvi. 2.) that he had no family of his own, yet he may purchase for his own use while he lives, and leave it to the children of his body by this relation when he dies. One would little have thought that a prophet should deal in money, and how should he get money beforehand to buy land with? It is probable that he lived frugally, and saved something out of what belonged to him as a priest, which is no blemish at all to his character; but we have no reason to think that the people were kind, or that his being beforehand was owing to their generosity. Nay, 4. It was most strange of all that he should be willing to sell at all, and himself knew that the whole land was now to be laid waste, and fall into the hands of the Chaldeans; and then what good would this do him? But it was the will of God that he should buy it, and he submitted, though the money seemed to be thrown away. His kinsman came to offer it him; it was not of his own seeking; he coveted not to lay house and field to field, but Providence brought it to him, and it was, probably, a good bargain; besides, the right of redemption belonged to him, (v. 8.) and if he refused, he did not do the kinsman's part. It is true, he might lawfully refuse; but, being a prophet, in a thing of this nature, he must do that which would be for the honour of his profession; it became him to fulfill all righteousness. It was a land that lay within the suburbs of a priest's city, and if he should refuse it there was danger lest in these times of disorder, it might be sold to one of another tribe, which was contrary to the law, to prevent which it was convenient for him to buy it. It would likewise be a kindness to his kinsman, who, probably, was at this time in great want of money. Jeremiah had but a little, but what he had was willing to lay it out in such a manner as might tend most to the honour of God and the good of his friends and country, which he preferred before his own private interests. Observe,
(1.) How fairly the bargain was made. When Jeremiah knew by Hanameel's coming to him, as God had foretold he would, that it was the word of the Lord, that it was his mind that he should make this purchase, he made no more difficulty of it, but immediately purchased the land according to the money and exact in paying the money. He weighed him the money, did not press him to take it upon his report, though he was his near kinsman, but weighed it to him, current money. It was seventeen shekels of silver, amounting to about forty shillings of our money. It was, probably, but a little field, and of small yearly value, when the purchase was so low. 
(2.) The right of inheritance was in Jeremiah, so that he was only to buy out his kinsman's life, the reversion was his already. Some think this was only the earnest of a greater sum; but we shall not wonder at the smallness of the price, if we consider what scarcity there was of money at this time, and how little lands were counted upon. [2.] He was very prompt and discreet in preserving the writings. They were戒指 sealed before they were burned, by which was sealed up, the other was open. One was the original, the other the counterfeit; or perhaps that which was sealed up was for his own private use, the other that was open was to be laid up in the public register of conveyances, for any person concerned to consult. Due care and caution, in things of this nature, might prevent a great deal of injustice and error. The conveyance was made in the hands of Baruch, before witnesses, and he was ordered to lay them up in an earthen vessel, (an emblem of the nature of all the securities this world can pretend to give us, brittle things, and
soon broken,) that they might continue many days, for the use of Jeremiah's heirs, after the return out of captivity; for they might then have the benefit of this purchase. Purchasing reversions may be a kindness to those that come after us, and a good man thus lays up an inheritance for his children's children.

(2.) What was the design of having this bargain made? It was to signify that though Jerusalem was now besieged, and the whole country was likely to be laid waste, yet the time should come, when houses and fields and vineyards should be again possessed in this land, v. 15. As God appointed Joshua to confirm his predictions of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, by his own practice in living unmarried, so he now appointed him to confirm his predictions of the future restoration of Jerusalem, by his own practice in purchasing this field. Note, It concerns ministers to make it to appear in their whole conversation, that they do themselves believe that which they preach to others; and that they may do so, and impress it the deeper upon their hearers, they must many a time deny themselves, as Jeremiah did in both these instances.

God having promised that this land should again come into the possession of his people, Jeremiah will, in behalf of his heirs, put in a shew. Note, It is good to manage even our worldly affairs in faith, and to do common business with an eye to the providence and promise of God. Lucius Florus relates it as a great instance of the bravery of the Roman citizens, that in the time of the second Punic war, when Hannibal besieged Rome, and was very near making himself master of it, a field on which part of his army lay, being offered to sale at that time, was immediately purchased, in a firm belief that the Roman valour would raise the siege, lib. 2. ch. 3. page 256. And concerning this venture out we all upon the word of God, and to embark in Zion's interests, which will undoubtedly be the prevailing interests at last! Non si male nunc et olim sic erit—Though now we suffer, we shall not suffer always.

16. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the Lord, saying, 17. Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: 18. Thou shew-est loving-kindness unto thousands; and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name. 19. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: (for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men; to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings;) 20. Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; 21. And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt, with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with great terror; 22. And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; 23. And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law: they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do; therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them. 24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. 25. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

We have here Jeremiah's prayer to God, upon occasion of the discoveries God had made to him of his purposes concerning this nation, to pull it down, and in process of time to build it up again, and which purposed the prophet himself, who, though he delivered his messages faithfully and just in reflecting upon them, was at a loss within himself how to reconcile them; in that perplexity he poured out his soul before God in prayer, and so gave himself ease. That which disturbed him was, not the bad bargain he seemed to have made for himself in purchasing a field that he was likely to have no good of but the mind of his people, for whom he was still a kind and faithful intercessor; and he was willing to hope that if God had so much mercy in store for them hereafter as he had promised, he would not proceed with so much severity against them now as he had threatened. Before Jeremiah went to prayer, he delivered the deeds that concerned his new purchase to Baruch; which may intimate to us, that when we are going to worship God, we should get our minds as clear as may be from the cares and encumbrances of this world. Jeremiah was in prison, in distress, in the dark about the meaning of God's providences, and then he prays. Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore. Whatever is a burden to us, we may by prayer cast it upon the Lord, and then be easy.

In this prayer of meditation.

1. Jeremiah adores God and his infinite perfections, and gives him the glory due to his name as the Creator, Upholder, and Benefactor, of the whole creation; thereby owning his irresistible power, that he can do what he will, and his incontestable sovereignty, that he may do what he will, v. 17.—19. Note, When at any time we are perplexed about the particular methods and dispensations of Divine wisdom, it is good for us to have recourse to our first principles, and to satisfy ourselves with the general doctrines of God's wisdom, power, and goodness. Let us consider, as Jeremiah does here, (1.) That God is the Fountain of all being, power, life, motion, and perfection; He made the heaven and the earth with an outstretched arm; and therefore who can control him? Who can contend with him? (2.) That with him nothing is impossible, no difficulty insuperable; Nothing is too hard for thee. When human skill and power is quite overthrown, with God are strength and wisdom sufficient to master all the opposition. (3.) That he is a God of boundless, bottomless mercy; that is his darling attribute; and his goodness that is his glory; Though not only art kind, but thou showest loving-kindness, art to a few, to here and there one, but to thousands, thousands of persons, thousands of generations.” (4.)
That he is a God of impartial and inflexible justice. His reproaches are not pardons, but in mercy he spares the parents, that they may lead to repentance, yet such a hatred has he to sin, and such displeasure against sinners, that he recompenes their iniquity into the bosom of their children, and yet does them no wrong; so hateful is the unrighteousness of man, and so jealous of its own honour is the righteousness of God. (5.) That he is a God of universal dominion and command; he is the great God, for he is the mighty God; and might among men, and may not be moved. (6.) He is the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, that is his name, and he answers to his name, for all the hosts of heaven and earth, of men and angels, are at his beck. (6.) That he contrives everything for the best, and effects everything as he contrived it; he is great in counsel; so vast are the reaches, and so deep are the designs, of his wisdom; and he is mighty in doing, according to the counsel of his will. Now such a God this is not to be quarreled to, and his service is to be constantly adhered to, and all his dispositions cheerfully acquiesced in.

2. He acknowledges the universal cognizance God takes of all the actions of the children of men, and the unerring judgment he passes upon them; (v. 19.) Thine eyes are open upon all the sons of men, wherever they are, beholding the evil and the good, and upon all their ways. They are purchased with signs and wonders, which remain, in not in the marks of them, yet in the memorials of them, even unto this day; for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were reminded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but among other men; all the neighbouring nations speak of it, as that which recondiected exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name as the day of days. (7.) That God brought them forth, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, with signs and wonders, (witness the ten plagues,) with a strong hand, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a stretched-out arm, that reached Pharaoh, proud as he was, and with great terror to them and all about them. This seems to refer to Deut. iv. 34. (2.) He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land flowing with milk and honey; he swore to their fathers to give it them, and because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, (v. 22.) and they came in, and possessed it. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience, and also as a plen of God with work delivery for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for our fathers, especially in the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

4. He bewails the rebellions they had been guilty of against God, and the judgments God had brought upon them for these rebellions. It is a sad account he here gives of the ungrateful conduct of that people toward God. He had done every thing that he proposed to do, (witness the ten plagues,) and yet they had done nothing of all that he commanded them to do; (v. 23.) they made no conscience of any of his laws, they walked not in them, paid no respect to any of his calls by his prophets, for they obeyed not his voice. And therefore he owns that God was righteous in causing all this evil to come upon them. The city is besieged, is attacked by the sword without, is weakened and wasted by famine and pestilence within, so that it is ready to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, that fight against it; (v. 24.) it is given into their hands. Now, (1.) He compares the present state of Jerusalem with the divine predictions, and finds that what God has spoken, is come to pass. God had given them fair warning of it before; if they had regarded this, the ruin had been prevented; but if they will not do what God has commanded, they can expect no other than that he should do what he has threatened. (5.) He commits the present state of Jerusalem to the divine consideration and compassion; (v. 24.) Behold the mountains, or ramparts, or the engines, which they make use of to batter the city, and beat down the wall of it. And again, "Behold, thou sest it, and takest cognizance of it. Is this the city that thou hast chosen to put the name there? And shall it be thus abandoned?" He neither complains of God for what he had done, nor prescribes to God what he should do, but desires he would behold their case, and is pleased to think that he does behold it. Whatever trouble we are in, upon a personal or public account, we may comfort ourselves with this, that God sees it, and sees how to remedy it.

3. He recounts the great things God had done for his people Israel formerly. (1.) He brought them out of Egypt, that house of bondage, with signs and wonders, which remain, in not in the marks of them, yet in the memorials of them, even unto this day; for it would never be forgotten, not only in Israel, who were reminded of it every year by the ordinance of the passover, but among other men; all the neighbouring nations speak of it, as that which recondiected exceedingly to the glory of the God of Israel, and made him a name as the day of days. (7.) That God brought them forth, not only with comforts and joys to them, but with glory to himself, with signs and wonders, (witness the ten plagues,) with a strong hand, too strong for the Egyptians themselves, and with a stretched-out arm, that reached Pharaoh, proud as he was, and with great terror to them and all about them. This seems to refer to Deut. iv. 34. (2.) He brought them into Canaan, that good land, that land flowing with milk and honey; he swore to their fathers to give it them, and because he would perform his oath, he did give it to the children, (v. 22.) and they came in, and possessed it. Jeremiah mentions this both as an aggravation of their sin and disobedience, and also as a plen of God with work delivery for them. Note, It is good for us often to reflect upon the great things that God did for our fathers, especially in the first erecting of it, that work of wonder.

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5. He seems desirous to let further into the meaning of the order that God had now given him, to purchase his field; (v. 25.) "Though the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans, no man is likely to enjoy what he has, yet that hast said unto me, Buy thee the field." As soon as he understood that it was the mind of God, he did it, and made no objections, was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but when he had done it, he desired better to understand why God had ordered him to do it, because the thing looked strange and unaccountable. Note, Though we are bound to follow God with an implicit obedience, yet we should endeavour that it may be more and more intelligent obedience. We must never dispute God's statutes and judgments, but we may and must inquire, What mean these statutes and judgments? Deut. vi. 20. 26. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, 27. Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me? 28. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. 29. And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it, with the houses upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink-offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. 30. For the children of Israel, and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the Lord. 31. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury, from the day that they built it, even unto this day, that I should remove it from before my face: 32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah, which they have done to
JEREMIAH, XXXII.

483

prove me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. 33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction. 34. But they set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to defile it. 35. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. 36. And now therefore thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; 37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: 38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: 39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. 41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. 42. For thus saith the Lord, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them. 43. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. 44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord.

When we know not how to reconcile one word of God with another, we may yet be sure that both are true, but that the one pertains to the present age, and the other to the future, and not one iota or little of either shall fall to the ground. When Jeremiah was ordered to buy the field in Anathoth, he was willing to hope that God was about to revoke the sentence of his wrath, and to order the Chaldeans to raise the siege. "No," says God, "the execution of the sentence shall go on, Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins." Note, As grievances of present age must not be interpreted as securities from present troubles. But, lest Jeremiah should think that his being ordered to buy this field intimated that all the mercy God had in store for his people, after their return, was only that they should have the possession of their own land again; he further acquaints him that that was but a type and figure of these spiritual blessings which should then be abundantly bestowed upon them, unspeakably more valuable than fields and vineyards. So that in this word of the Lord, which came here to Jeremiah, first as dreadful threatenings, and then as precious promises as perhaps any we have in the Old Testament; life and death, good and evil, are here set before us; let us consider and choose wisely.

1. The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here pronounced: the decree is gone forth, and shall not be recalled.

1. God here asserts his own sovereignty and power; (v. 27.) Behold, I am Jehovah, a self-existent, self-sufficient Being; I am that I am; I am the God of all flesh, of all mankind; here called flesh, because weak, and unable to contend with God, (Ps. 89.) and because wicked and corrupt, and unapt to comply with God. God is the Creator of all, and makes what use he pleases of all. He that is the God of Israel is the God of all flesh, and of the spirits of all flesh; and, if Israel were cast off, could raise up a people to his name out of some other nation. If he be the God of all flesh, he may well ask, Is anything too hard for me? What can he do, from whom all the powers of men are derived, on whom they depend, and by whom all their actions are directed and governed? Whatever he designs to do, whether in wrath or in mercy, nothing can hinder him, or defeat his designs.

2. He abides by what he had often said of the destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon; (v. 28.) I will give this city into his hand, now that it is grasping at it, and not taking it, and make a prey of it, v. 29. The Chaldeans shall set fire to it, shall burn it and all the houses in it, God's house not excepted, nor the king's neither.

3. He assigns the reason for these severe proceedings against the city that had been so much in his favour. It is sin, it is that, and nothing else, that ruins it. (1.) They were impatient and daring in sin. They have reigned iniquitous kings, as men ashamed or afraid of being discovered, but upon the tops of their houses, (v. 29.) in defiance of God's justice. (2.) They designed an affront to God herein. They did it to provoke me to anger, v. 29. They have only provoked me to anger with the works of their hands, v. 30. They could not promise themselves any pleasure, profit, or honour in it, but designed an awful punishment for God again, (v. 32.) All the evil which they have done was to provoke me to anger. They knew he was a jealous God in the matters of his worship, and there they resolved to try his jealousy and dare him to his face. Jerusalem has been to me a provocation of my anger and fury, v. 31. Their conduct was very that was provoking. (3.) They began betimes, and had continued all along provoking to God. They have done evil before me from their youth, ever since they were first formed into a pec-
Jeremiah, XXIII.

1. The fear at all times, have a good hope to support themselves in the worst of times.

2. The hope that God gives them of mercy which he had in store for them hereafter. Though their captivity must fall in captivity, yet, after their children after them should again see this good land, and the goodness of God in it.

(1.) They shall be brought up from their captivity, and shall come, and settle again in this land, v. 57. They had been under God's anger and fury, and great wrath; but now they shall partake of his grace, and love, and great favor. He had taken care of them by his power, even when they were dispersed among the nations, and formed foreign nations; these that fled dispersed themselves; those that fell into the enemy's hands were dispersed by them, in policy, to prevent combinations among them. God's hand was in both: but now God will find them out, and gather them out of all the countries which they were driven, as he promised in the law, (Deut. XXX. 4.) and the saints had prayed, Ps. civ. 47. Neh. i. 9. He had banished them, but he will bring them again to this place, which they could not but have an affection for. For many years past, while they were in their own land, they were continually exposed, and terrified with the alarms of war; but now I will cause them to dwell safely. Being reformed, and returned to God, neither their own consciences within, nor their enemies without, shall be able to handicaps them. And, if they should return, I will plant them in this land assuredly; not only I will certainly do it, but they shall here enjoy a holy security and repose, and they shall take root here, shall be planted in stability, and not again be unfixed and unshaken.

(2.) God will renew his covenant with them, a covenant of grace, the blessings of which are spiritual, and such as will work good things in them, and qualify them for the great things God intended to do for them. It is called an everlasting covenant, (v. 40.) not only because God will be ever faithful to it, but because the consequences of it will be for everlast. For, doubtless, here the promises look further than to Israel according to the flesh, and are sure to all believers, to every Israelite indeed. Good Christians may apply them to themselves, and feel the benefits of them, and take the comfort of them. [1.] God will own them for his, and make over himself to them, (v. 43.) They shall be his people. He will make them his, by working in them all the characters and dispositions of his people, and then he will protect and guide and govern them as his people. And, to make them truly, completely, and eternally happy, I will be their God. They shall serve and worship God as theirs, and cleave to him only, and he will approve himself theirs. All he is, all he has, shall be engaged and employed for their good.

[2.] God will give them a heart to fear him, (v. 39.) That which he requires of those whom he takes into covenant with him as his people, is, that they should fear him, and reverence God's name, and be afraid of his anger, and dread his wrath, stand in awe of his authority, pay homage to him, and give him the glory due unto his name. Now what God requires of them he here promises to work in them, pursuant to his choice of them as his people. Note, As it is God's prerogative to fashion men's hearts, so it is his promise to his people to fashion their aights. God gives a heart to his people, and by his grace makes it a good heart, stedfast and well-fashioned. It is repeated again, (v. 40.) I will put my fear in their hearts, work in them gracious principles and dispositions, that shall influence and govern their whole conversation. Teachers may put good things into our heads, but it is God only that can put them into our hearts, that can work in us both to will and to do.
[3.] He will give them one heart and one way. In order to their walking in one way, he will give them one heart; as the heart is, so will the way be, and one heart will rule over them, and they shall each of them one with themselves; one heart is the same with a new heart, Ezek. xi. 19. The heart is then one, when it is fully determined for God, and entirely devoted to God; when the eye is single, and God’s glory alone aimed at; when our hearts are fixed, trusting in God, and we are uniform and universal in our obedience to him; then the heart is one, as one way; and unless the heart shall be steady, the goings will not be steadfast. From this promise we may take direction and encouragement to pray, with David, (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.) Unite my heart to fear thy name; for God says, I will give them one heart, that they may fear me. Secondly, They shall be all of them one with each other. All good Christians shall be incorporated into one body, and shall be united as one soul. All that profess the gospel shall be one body, with one spirit and one consent. They that have the same root and stock, have a disposition to love one another; the gospel they profess, having it in the strongest inducements to mutual love, and the Spirit that dwells in them, being the Spirit of love. Though they may have different apprehensions about lesser things, they shall be all one in the great things of God, being renewed after the same image; though they may have many particular differences, yet they shall be all united in God.

[4.] He will effectually provide for their perseverance in grace, and the perpetuating of the covenant between him and them. They would have been happy when they were first planted in Canaan, like Adam in paradise, if they had not departed from God. And therefore now that they are restored to their happiness, they shall be confirmed in it, by the operation of the grace and promises from God, and this will complete their bliss. First, God will never leave nor forsake them; I will not turn away from them to do good. Earthly princes are fickle, and their greatest favourites have fallen under their frowns; but God’s mercy endures for ever; whom he loves, he loves to the end. God may seem to turn from his people, (Isa. liv. 8.) but even then he does not turn from doing and designing them good. Secondly, They shall never leave nor forsake him; that is the thing we are in danger of; we have no reason to distrust God’s fidelity and constancy, but our own. And therefore it is here promised, that God will give them a heart to fear him for ever, all days, to be in his fear every day, and all the day long, (Prov. xxiii. 17.) and to continue so; for so long as the grace of God is in them a principle into their hearts, that they shall not depart from him. Even those who have given up their names to God, if they be left to themselves, will depart from him; but the fear of God, ruling in the heart, will prevent their departure. That, and nothing else, will do it. If we continue close and faithful to God, it is owing purely to his almighty grace, and not to any strength or resolution of our own.

[5.] He will entail a blessing upon their seed, will give them grace to fear him, for the good of them, and of their children after them. As their departures from God had been to the prejudice of their children, so their adherence to God should be to the advantage of their children. We cannot better commend the goodness of the blessing of the law, than by keeping up, a keeping up, the fear and worship of God in our families.

[6.] He will take a pleasure in their prosperity, and will do every thing to advance it; (v. 41.) I will rejoice over them to do them good. God will therefore do them good, because he rejoices over them; they are dear to him, he makes his boast of them, and therefore will not only do them good, but will delight in doing them good. When he punishes them, it is with reluctance; How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? But when he restores them it is with delight; he rejoices in them, as the Messiah does in his people. We ought therefore to use him with pleasure, and to rejoice in all opportunities of serving him. He is himself a cheerful Giver, and therefore loves, a cheerful servant. I will plant them (says God) with my whole heart, and with my whole soul. He will be intent upon it, and take delight in it: he will make it the business of his providence to settle them again in Canaan, and the various dispensation of providence shall tend to that. All these shall appear at last so to have been working for the good of the church, that it will be said, The Governor of the world is entirely taken up with the care of his church.

[7.] These promises shall as surely be performed as the foregoing threatenings were, and the accomplishment of those, notwithstanding the security of the people, might confirm their expectation of the performance of these, notwithstanding their present despair; (v. 42.) As I have brought all this great evil upon them, pursuant to the threatenings, and for the glory of divine justice, so I will bring upon them all this good, pursuant to the promise, and for the glory of divine mercy. He that is faithful to his threatenings will much more be so to his promises; and the same good that God has given for the vanquishing of the enemy, shall be used to the advantage of the church.

[8.] As an earnest of all this, houses and lands shall again take a good price in Judah and Jerusalem, and though now they are a drug, there shall again be a sufficient number of purchasers; (v. 43, 44.) Fields shall be bought in this land, and people will cover the cities of Judah, and of Jerusalem, whether they lie on mountains, or in valleys, or in the south, in all parts of the country, men shall buy fields, and subscribe evidences. Trade shall revive, for they shall have money enough to buy land with; husbandry shall revive, for those that have money shall be able to lay it out upon lands; laws shall again have their due course, for they shall subscribe evidences, and seal them. This is mentioned to reconcile Jeremiah to his new purchase; though he had bought a piece of ground and could not go to see it, yet he must believe that this was the pledge of many a purchase, and these but faint resemblances of the pur chased possessions in the heavenly Canaan, reserved for all those who have God’s fear in their hearts, and do not depart from him.

CHAP. XXXIII.

The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the foregoing—viz. to continue the doctrine of the re-storation of the Jews, notwithstanding the present dislocations of their country, and dispetions of their people. And these promises have, both in type and tendency, a reference as far as possible to the state of Israel as the church of the New Testament. And this second edition of the Jewish church was at length to resign its dignities and privileges. It is here promised, 1. That the city shall be rebuilt and re-established in statute quo—in its former state, v. 1—6. II. That the captives, having their sins pardoned, shall be restored, v. 7, 8. III. That this shall redound very much to the glory of God, v. 9. IV. That the country shall have both joy and felicity, v. 10—14. V. That the church shall be made ready for the coming of the Messiah, v. 15, 16. VI. That the house of David, the house of Levi, and the house of Israel, shall flourish again, and be established, and all the tribes of the kingdom of Christ: a gospel-ministry and the gospel-church shall continue while the world stands, v. 17—26.

1. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the second
time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, the maker thereof, the Lord that formed it, to establish it; the Lord is his name; 3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. 4. For thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mount, and by the sword; 5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger, and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city. 6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. 7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them as at the first. 8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. 9. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto it.

Observe here,

1. The date of this comfortable prophecy which God intrusted Jeremiah with. It is not exact in the time, only that it was after the first long chapter, when things were still growing worse and worse; it was the second time; God spaketh once, yea, twice, for the encouragement of his people. We are not only so disobedient, that we have need of precept upon precept to bring us to our duty, but so distrustful, that we have need of promise upon promise to bring us to our comfort. This word, as the former, came to Jeremiah when he was in prison.

Note. No confinement can deprive God's people of his presence; no locks or bars can shut out his gracious visits; nay, oftentimes as their afflictions abound, their consolations much more abound, and they have the most reviving communications of his favour then, when the world frowns upon them. Paul's sweetest epistles were those that bare date out of a prison.

11. No prophecy itself. A great deal of comfort is wrapt up in it for the relief of the captives, to keep them from sinking into despair. Observe,

1. Who is it that secures this comfort to them, v. 2. It is the Lord, the Maker thereof, the Lord that framed it. He is the Maker and Former of heaven and earth, and therefore has all power in his hands; so it refers to Jeremiah's prayer, ch. xxxiii. 2. He is the Maker and Former of Jerusalem. Ezek. 4, built them at first, and therefore can rebuild them, built them for his own praise, and therefore will. He formed it, to establish it, and therefore it shall be established till these things be introduced, which cannot be shaken, but shall remain for ever. He is the Maker and Former of this promise; he has laid the scheme for Jerusalem's restoration, and he that has formed it will establish it, he that has made the promise will make it good; for Jehovah is his name; a God giving being to his promises by the performance of them, as he has been; a name, that name, (Exod. vi. 3,) a perfecting God; when the heavens and the earth were finished, then, and not till then, the Creator is called Jehovah, Gen. ii. 1.

2. How this comfort must be obtained and fetched in by prayer; (v. 5.) Call upon me, and I will answer thee. The prophet, having received some intimations of this kind, must be humbly explicit with God for further discoveries of his kind intentions. He had prayed, (ch. xxxii. 16,) but he must pray again. Note, Those that expect to receive comforts from God must continue instant in prayer; we must call upon him, and then he will answer us; Christ himself must ask, and it shall be given him, Ps. ii. 8. I will show thee great and mighty things, give thee a clear and full prospect of them; hidden things, which, though in part discovered already, yet thou knowest not, thou canst not understand, or give credit to. Or, this may refer not only to the prediction of these things, which Jeremiah, if he desire it, shall be favoured with, but to the performance of the things themselves, which the people of God, encouraged by this prediction, must pray for. Note, Promises are given, not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage, prayer. See Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

3. How deplorable the condition of Jerusalem was, which made it necessary that such comforts as these should be provided for it; and notwithstanding which, its restoration should be brought about in due time; (v. 4, 5.) The houses of this city, not excepting those of the kings of Judah, are thrown down by the mountains, or engines of batterie, and by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence, which is the sense used, Ezek. xxxvi. 9. With his axes he shall break down thy towers. The strongest, stoutest houses, and those that were best furnished, were levelled with the ground. The fifth verse comes in a parenthesis, giving a further instance of the present calamitous state of Jerusalem. They that came to fight with the Chaldeans, to beat them off from their city, and to make a stand, were the more to be feared. Their enemy to be more fierce and furious in their assaults, so that the houses in Jerusalem were filled with the dead bodies of men, who died of the wounds they received in sallying out upon the besiegers. God says, that they were such as he had slain in his anger, for the enemies' sword was his sword, and their anger his anger. But it seems, the men that were slain were generally such as had distinguished themselves by their wickedness, for they were the very men for whose wickedness God did now hide himself from this city; so that he was just in all he brought upon them.

4. What the blessings are which God has in store for Judah and Jerusalem, such as will redress all their grievances.

5. Is this state diseased? Is it wounded? God will provide effectually for the healing of it, though the disease was thought mortal and incurable, ch. viii. 22. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint; but, (v. 6.) I will bring it health and cure, I will prevent the death, remove the sickness, and set all to rights again," ch. xxx. 17. Note, Be the case ever so desperate, if God undertake the cure, he will effect it. The sin of Jerusalem was the sickness of it; (Isa. i. 6.) its reformation therefore will be its recovery. And the following words tell us how that is wrought; "I will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth; I will give it them in due time, and give them an encouraging prospect of it in the mean time." Peace stands here
for all good; peace and truth are peace according to the promise, and in pursuance of that; or, peace and truth are peace and the true religion; peace and the true worship of God, in opposition to the many idolatries and deceits by which they had been led away from God. We may apply it more generally, and observe, [1.] That peace and truth are the great subject-matter of divine revelation. These promises here lead us to the gospel of Christ, and in that He has revealed to us peace and truth, the method of true peace; truth to direct us, peace to make us easy. Grace and truth, and abundance of both, come by Jesus Christ. Peace and truth are the life of the soul and Christ came, that we might have that life, and might have it more abundantly.

Christ rules by the power of truth, (John xviii. 17.) and by it He gives abundance of peace, Ps. lxxiii. 7—lxxxv. 10. [2.] That the divine revelation of peace and truth brings health and cure to all those that by faith receive it: it heals the soul of the diseases it has contracted, as it is a means of sanctification, John xvii. 17. He sent his word, and healed them. And it puts the soul into good order, and keeps it in frame, and fit for the employments and enjoyments of the spiritual and divine life.

(2.) Are they scattered and enslaved, and is their nation laid in ruins? “I will cause their captivity to return,” (v. 7.) both that of Israel and that of Judah; (for though those who returned under Zerubbabel were but a small company, and they were Levites, yet afterward many of the other tribes returned;) “and I will rebuild them, as I built them at first.” When they be repentance do their first works. God will by their restoration do his first works.

(3.) Is sin the procuring cause of all their troubles? That shall be pardoned and subsisted, and so they shall not be polluted, v. 8. By sin they are become filthy, and odious to God’s holiness, but God will cleanse them, and purify them from their iniquity; as those that were ceremonially unclean, and were therefore shut out from the tabernacle, when they were sprinkled with the water of purification, had liberty of access to it again, so had they to their own land and the privileges of it, when God had cleansed them from their iniquities. In allusion to that sprinkling, David prays, Purge me with hyssop. [2.] By sin they are become guilty, and obnoxious to his justice; but he will pardon all their iniquities, will remove the punishment to which for sin they were bound over. All who by sanctifying grace are cleansed from the filth of sin, by pardoning mercy are freed from the guilt of it.

(4.) Have both their sins and their sufferings turned to the dishonour of God? Their reformation and restoration shall redound as much to his praise, v. 9. Jerusalem, thus rebuilt, Judah, thus repopulated, shall be to me a name of joy, as pleasing to God as ever they have been provoking, and a praise and an honour before all the nations. They, being thus again returned, shall glorify God by their services, and he shall glorify himself by their favours. This renewed nation shall be as much a reputation to religion as formerly it has been a reproach to it. The nation shall bear all of the good that God has wrought in them by his grace, and of all the good he has wrought for them by his providence. The wonders of their return out of Babylon shall make as great a noise in the world as ever they did, and the power and converse out of Egypt did. And they shall fear and tremble for all this goodness. [1.] The people of God themselves shall fear and tremble; they shall be much surprised at it, shall be afraid of offending so good a God, and of forfeiting his favour, Hos. iii. 5. They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. [2.] The adjoining nations shall fear because of the prosperity of Jerusalem; shall look upon the growing greatness of the Jewish nation as really formidable, and shall be afraid of making them their enemies. When the church is fair as the moon, and down as the sun, she is terrible as an army with banners.

10. Thus saith the Lord, Again there shall be heard in this place (which ye shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,) 11. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever; and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the Lord. 12. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be a habitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down. 13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord. 14. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel, and to the house of Judah. 15. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. 16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness.

Here is a further prediction of the happy state of Judah and Jerusalem after their glorious return from captivity, issuing gloriously at length in the kingdom of the Messiah.
for their harps were hung on the willow trees. (2.)

There shall be religious joy there; temple-songs shall be revived, the Lord's songs, which they could not sing in a strange land. There shall be heard, in their private houses, and in the cities of Judah, as well as in the temple, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts. Note, Nothing is now to be seen or heard of those praises and public services which God had praised and honoured among them. This shall complete the mercy of their return and restoration, that with it they shall have hearts to be thankful for it, and give God the glory of it, the glory both of the power and of the goodness by which it is effectual; they shall praise him both as the Lord of hosts, and as the God who is good, and whose word shall tend to bring the people as Naas. This, though a song of old, yet, being sung upon this auspicious occasion, will be a new song. We find this literally fulfilled at their return out of Babylon, Ezra iii. 11. They sang together in praising the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endures for ever. The public worship of God shall be diligently and commonly attended upon; They shall bring the sacrifice of praise to the house of the Lord. All the sacrifices were inward, and inwardly; but this outward sacrifice of the spirit, which meant the spiritual sacrifice of humble adorations and joyful thanksgivings, the calves of our lips, (Hos. xiv. 2.) which shall please the Lord better than an ox or a bullock. The Jews say, that in the days of the Messiah all sacrifices shall cease, but the sacrifices of praise, and to those days this promise has a further reference. (1.) The peace of the country, which had lain long depopulated, should be replenished and stocked again. It was now desolate, without man, and without beast; but, after their return, the pastures shall again be clothed with flocks, Ps. lxx. 15. In all the cities of Judah and Benjamin there shall be a habitation of shepherds, v. 12. 13. This speaks, (1.) The wealth of the country, after their return. It shall not be a habitation of beggars, that have nothing, but of shepherds and husbandmen, men of substance, with good stocks upon the ground they are returned to. (2.) The peace of the country. It shall not be a habitation of soldiers, nor shall there be tents and barracks set up to lodge them, but there shall be shepherd's tents; for they shall hear no more the alarms of war, nor shall there be any to make even the sheepfolds afraid. See Ps. cxix. 13. 14. (3.) The people shall carry on their original plainness and simplicity, from which, in the corrupt ages, they had sadly degenerated. The seed of Jacob, in their beginning, glorified in this, that they were shepherds, (Gen. xlvii. 3.) and so they shall now be again, giving themselves wholly to that innocent employment, causing their flocks to lie down, (v. 12.) and to pass under the hands of him that telleth them; (v. 13.) for though their flocks be numerous, they are not numberless, nor shall they omit to number them, that they may know if any be missing, and may seek after it. Note, It is the prudence of those who have ever so much of the world, to keep an account of what they have. Some think that they pass under the hand of him that telleth them, that they may be tidied, Lev. xxviii. 32. These two promises make the comforts of God, which we have, when God has had his due out of it. Now because it seemed incredible that a people, reduced as now they were, should ever recover such a degree of peace and plenty as this, here is subjoined a general ratification of these promises; (v. 14.) I will perform that good thing which I have promised. Though the promise is sometimes made in such a manner, as if it were like a leaff that would never be tasted, yet it works actually. The days will come, though they are long in coming.

3. To crown all these blessings which God has in store for them, here is a promise of the Messiah, and of that everlasting righteousness which he should bring in, (v. 15, 16.) and, probably, this is that good things, that great good things, which, in the latter days, days that were yet to come, God would perform, as he had promised to Judah and Israel, and which their return out of captivity, and their settlement again in their own land, respected. For the Branch of righteousness, not a Ussurifier, for he grows up unto David, descends from his loins, with whom the covenant of royalty was made, and is that Seed with whom that covenant should be established, so that his title is unexceptionable. (2.) As a righteous King, righteous in enacting laws, waging wars, and giving judgment; righteous in vindicating those that suffer wrong, and punishing them that do wrong; for he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. This may point at Zerubbabel in the type, who governed with equity, not as Jehoiakim had done; (ch. xxii. 17.) but it has a further reference to him to whom all judgment is committed, and who shall judge the world in righteousness. (3.) As a King that shall protect his subjects from all injury. By him Judah shall be saved from their enemies, that they may be called being so called Jerusalem shall dwell safely, quiet from the fear of evil, and enjoying a holy security and serenity of mind, in a dependence upon the conduct of this Prince of peace, this Prince of their peace. (4.) As a King that shall be praised by his subjects; This is the name whereby they shall call him; (so the Chaldee reads it, the Syrian, and vulgar Latin) this name of his they shall celebrate in triumph, and in by this name they shall call upon him: It may be read, more agreeably to the original, This is he who shall call her, The Lord our Righteousness, as Moses's altar is called Jehovah-nissi, (Exod. xviii. 13.) and Jerusalem, Jehovah-shammah, (Ezek. xviii. 33.) intimating that they glory in Jehovah as present with them, and their Banner; so here the city is called, The Lord our Righteousness, because they glory in Jehovah as their Righteousness. This name, which was before said to be the name of Christ, (says Mr. Gataker,) is here made the name of Jerusalem, the city of the Messiah, the church of Christ. He is it that imparts righteousness to her, for he is made of God to us righteousness, and she, by bearing that name, professes to have her whole righteousness, not from herself, but from him. In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, (Isa. xlix. 24.) and we are made the righteousness of God in him. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall have this name of the Messiah so much in their mouths, that they shall themselves be called by it.

17. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; 18. Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me, to offer burnt-offerings, and to kindle meat-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. 19. And the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, saying, 29. Thus saith the Lord, If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and
night in their season; 21. Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. 22. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured; so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me. 23. Moreover, the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, saying, 24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. 25. Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; 26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

Three of God's covenants, that of royalty with David and his seed, that of the priesthood with Aaron on the Jews; and that of peculiar favor with Abraham and his seed, seemed to have been all broken and lost while the captivity lasted; but it is here promised, that notwithstanding that interruption and discontinuance for a time, they shall all three take place again, and the true intents and meaning of them all shall be abundantly answered in the New Testament blessings typified by those contained on the Jews after their return out of captivity.

I. The covenant of royalty shall be secured, and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment, in the kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, v. 17. The throne of Israel was overturned in the captivity, the crown was fallen from their head, there was not a man to sit on the throne of Israel, Jeconiah was written childless. After their return, the order of things was to make a figure again, but there was the Messiah that this promise is performed, that David shall never want a man to sit on the throne of Israel; and that David shall have always a Son to reign upon his throne. For as long as the Man Christ Jesus sits on the right hand of the throne of God, rules the world, and rules it for the good of the church, to which he is a quickening Head, and glorified Head over all things, as long as he is King upon the holy hill of Zion, David does not want a successor, nor is the covenant with him broken. When the First-begetten was brought into the world, it was declared concerning him, that the Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Luke i. 33.

As a confirmation of this, it is promised, (1.) That the covenant with David shall be as firm as the ordinances of heaven; to the stability of which that of God's promise is compared, ch. xxxi. 35. 36. There is a covenant of nature, by which the common course of providence is settled, and on which it is founded, here called, a covenant of the day and the night, (v. 20, 25.) because that is one of the articles of it, that there shall be day and night in their season, according to the distinction put between them in the creation, when God divided between the light and the darkness, and estab-

lished their mutual succession, and a government to each, that the sun should rule by day, and the moon and stars by night, (Gen. i. 4, 5, 16.) which establishment was renewed after the flood, (Gen. viii. 22.) and has continued ever since, Ps. xix. 2. The morning and the evening have both of them their regular outgoings; (Ps. lxxv. 8.) the day-spring knows its place, knows its time, and keeps it, so in the shadow of the evening; and while the world stands, this course shall not be broken. That ordinariness shall not be broken. The ordinances of heaven and earth, (of this communication between heaven and earth, the dominion of these ordinances of heaven upon the earth,) which God has appointed, (v. 25. compare Job xxxvii. 33.) shall never be disappointed. Thus firm shall the covenant of redemption stand firm between the Redeemer and God's Servant, but David our King, v. 21. This intimates, that Christ shall have a church on earth to the world's end, he shall see a seed in which he shall prolong his days till time and days shall be no more. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and when the end cometh, and not till then, it shall be delivered up to God, even the Father. But it intimates that the condition of it in this world shall be intermixed and counteracted, powerful and beneficial, as well as hindered and confounded one another, as light and darkness, day and night. But this is plainly taught us, that, as sure as we may be, that though the sun will set to-night, it will rise again to-morrow morning, whether we live to see it or no, so sure we may be, that though the kingdom of the Redeemer in the world may for a time be clouded and eclipsed by corruptions and persecutions, and confusion will shine with it again, and receive its lustre, in the time appointed. (2.) That the seed of David shall be as numerous as the host of heaven, the spiritual seed of the Messiah, that shall be born to him by the efficacy of his gospel, and his Spirit working with it; from the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of their youth, to be his willing sacrifices, Ps. cx. 3. Christ's seed are not, as David's were, his successors, but his subjects; yet the day is coming when they also shall reign with him, (v. 22.) As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, so will I multiply the seed of David, so that there shall be no danger of the kingdom's being extinct, or extinct up for want of heirs. The children are numerous; and if children, then heirs.

2. The covenant of priesthood shall be secured, and the promises of it shall have their full accomplishment. This seemed likewise to be forgotten during the captivity, when there was no altar, no temple-service, for the priests to attend upon; but this also shall revive. It did so; immediately upon their coming back to Jerusalem, there were priests and Levites ready to offer burnt-offerings, and to do sacrifice continually, (Ezra ii. 2, 3.) as he here promises, v. 18. But the priesthood soon grew corrupt, the covenant of Levi was fenced, (as appears Mal. ii. 8.) and in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans it came to a final period. We must therefore look elsewhere for the performance of this work, that the covenant with the Levites, the priests, God's ministers, shall be as firm, and last as long, as the covenant with the land and the promise of it were long accomplished, Heb. viii. 2. He is a Priest for ever. The covenant of the priesthood is called a covenant of peace, (Numb. xxv. 12.) of life and peace, Mal. iii. 5. Now we
are sure that this covenant is not broken, or in the least weakened, while Jesus Christ is himself our Life and our Peace. This covenant of priesthood is here again and again joined with that of royalty, for Christ is a Priest upon his throne, as Melchizedek. (2.) In a settled gospel-ministry. While there are faithful ministers to preside in religious assemblies: all the sixth, and the seventh, eighth, of prayer and praise, the priests, the Levites do not want successors, and such as have obtained a more excellent ministry. The apostle makes those that preach the gospel, to come in the room of those that served at the altar, 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14. (3.) In all true believers, who are a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood, (1 Pet. ii. 5, 9,) who are made to God an offering, of spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, and themselves, in the first place, living sacrifices. Of these Levites, this promise here must be understood, (v. 22.) that they shall be as numerous as the sand of the sea, the same that is promised concerning Israel in general; (Gen. xxviii. 17.) for all God's spiritual Israel are spiritual priests, Rev. v. 9, 10—vii. 9.

3. The covenant of peculiarity likewise shall be secured, and the promises of that covenant shall have their full accomplishment in the gospel-Israel. Observe, (1.) How this covenant was looked upon as broken during the captivity, v. 24. God asks the prophet, "Hast thou not heard, and dost thou not consider, what this people have spoken?" Either the enemies of Israel, who triumphed in the extinction of a people, and had made a noise in the world, or the unbelieving Israelites themselves, this people, among whom thou dwellest, they have broken covenant with God, and then quarrel with him, as if he had not dealt faithfully with them. The two families which the Lord hath chosen, Israel and Judah, whereas they were but one when he chose them, he hath even cast them off: "This hath the Lord done to me, and to thee, and to Israel, in this manner, to make thee a reproach among all the nations, as thou art despised of them, see Jer. xi. 18.

3. This prophecy concerning Zedekiah was delivered to Jeremiah, and by him to the parties concerned, before he was shut up in the prison. For we find this prediction here made the ground of his commitment, as appears by the recital of some passages out of it, ch. xxxiv. 4.

Observe, 1. The time when this message was sent to Zedekiah; it was when the king of Babylon, with all his forces, some out of all the kingdoms of the earth that were within his jurisdiction, fought against Jerusalem, and the cities thereof, (v. 1.) desiring to destroy them, having often plundered them. The cities that now remain, and yet hold out, are named, (v. 7.) Lachish and Azekah. This intimates that things were now brought to the last extremity, and yet Zedekiah obstinately stood it out, his heart being hardened to his destruction.

2. The message itself that was sent him.

(1.) Here is a threatening message, to show him that if he had been often told before, that the city shall be taken by the Chaldeans, and burnt with fire, (v. 2.) that he shall himself fall into the enemy's hands, shall be made a prisoner, shall be brought before that furious prince Nebuchadnezzar, and be carried away captive into Babylon; (v. 3.) yet Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon; nor did he, for his eyes were put out, Ezek. xii. 13. This Zedekiah brought upon himself from God, and from Nebuchadnezzar by his breaking of his faith with him.
(2.) Here is a mixture of mercy. He shall die a captive, but he shall not die by the sword, he shall die a natural death; (v. 4.) he shall end his days with some comfort, shall die in peace, v. 5. He never had been one of the worst of the kings, but we are willing to hope that what evil he had done in the sight of the Lord, he repented of it in his captivity, as Manasseh had done, and it was forgiven to him; and, God being reconciled to him, he might truly be said to die in peace. Note, A man may die in the Lord, and yet die in peace; and perhaps his days with some reputation, more than one would expect, all things considered. He shall be buried with the burnings of his fathers, with the respect usually shown to their kings, especially those that had done good in Israel. It seems, in his captivity he had conducted himself so well toward his own people, that they were willing to do him this honour; and toward Nebuchadnezzar, that he suffered it to be done. If Zedekiah had continued in his prosperity, perhaps he would have grown worse, and would have departed at last without being desired; but his afflictions wrought such a change in him, that his death was looked upon as a great loss. It is better to live and die penitent in a prison, than live and die impenetrant in a palace. They will lament them, the kings, and the princes, and the priests, and the prophets, and the profane men, v. 6. The other Jehoiakim had not, ch. xxii. 18. The Jews say that they lamented thus over him, Alas! Zedekiah is dead, who drank the dregs of all the ages that went before him, who suffered for the sins of his ancestors, the measure of iniquity being filled up in his days. They shall thus lament him, saith the Lord, for I have pronounced the word; and what God hath spoken shall without fail be made good.

3. Jeremiah's faithfulness in delivering this message; though he knew it would be ungrateful to the king, and might prove, as indeed it did, dangerous to himself, (for he was clapped up for it,) yet he spake all these words to Zedekiah, v. 6. It is a mercy to great men to have those about them that will deal faithfully with them, and tell them the evil consequences of their evil courses, that they may reform, and live.

8. This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them; 2. That every man should let his man-servant, and every man his maid-servant, being a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother. 10. Now, when all the princes, and all the people which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his man-servant, and every one his maid-servant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more; then they obeyed, and let them go. 11. But afterwards they turned, and caused the servants, and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids. 12. Therefore the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 13. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying, 14. At the end of seven years, let ye go every man his brother a Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and, when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear. 15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name: 16. But ye turned, and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids. 17. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour; behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the Lord, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. 18. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, 19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf; 20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. 21. And Zedekiah king of Judah, and his princes, will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. 22. Behold, I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

We have here another prophecy upon a particular occasion, the history of which we must take notice of, as necessary to give light to the prophecy.

1. When Jerusalem was closely besieged by the Chaldean army, the princes and people agreed upon a reformation in one instance, and that was concerning their servants.

1. The law of God was very express, that those of their own nation should not be held in servitude above seven years, but after they had served one
apprenticeship, they should be discharged, and have their liberty; yet, though they had sold themselves into servitude for the payment of their debts, or though they were sold by the judges for the punishment of their crimes. This difference was put between their brethren and strangers, that those of other nations, taken in war, or bought with money, might be held in perpetual slavery, they and theirs; but servants were to be restored to their brethren. It was a covenant, two, the longest. This God calls the covenant that he had made with them, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt, v. 13, 14. This was the first of the judicial laws which God gave them, (Exod. xxi. 2.) and there was good reason for that law.

1. God had put honour upon that nation, and he would have them thus to preserve the honour of it themselves, and to partake of it with other nations. (2.) God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt, and he would have them thus to express their grateful sense of that favour, by letting those go, to whom their houses were houses of bondage, as Egypt had been to their forefathers. That deliverance is therefore mentioned here, (v. 13.) as the ground of that law. Note, God's compassion towards such as should engage themselves and their families towards our benefactors, even to the release we are released, forgive as we are forgiven, and relieve as we are relieved. And this is called a covenant: for our performance of the duty required is the condition of the continuance of the favours God has bestowed.

2. This law they and their fathers had broken; their worldly profit swayed more with them than God's command or covenant. When these servants had lived seven years with them, they understood their business, and how to apply themselves to it, better than they did when they first came to them, and therefore they would then by no means part with them, though God himself by his law had made them free; Your fathers hearkened not to me in this matter, (v. 14.) so that from the days of their fathers they had been in this trespass; and they thought they might do it, because their fathers did it, and their servants had by discourse lost the benefit of the provision God made for them; whereas against an express law, especially against an express law of God, no custom, usage, or prescription, is to be admitted in plea. For this sin of theirs, and their fathers, God now brought them into servitude, and judged them accordingly.

3. When they were besieged, and closely shut in, by the army of the Chaldeans, they, being told of their fault in this matter, immediately reformed, and let go all their servants that were entitled to their freedom by the law of God; as Pharaoh, who, when the plague was upon him, consented to let the people go, and bound themselves in a covenant to do so. (1.) The prophets faithfully admonished them to do this, and to partake of the good news. So that they should let their Hebrew servants go free, v. 10. They might have read it themselves in the book of the law, but did not, or did not heed it, therefore the prophets told them what the law was. See what need there is of the preaching of the word; people must hear the word preached, because they will not make the use they ought to make of the word, unless they hear it. It is a good work, and a most necessary work, that all men should be brought to the knowledge of the truth. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it, or break it, as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they had incurred by it. As soon as ever they let their servants go free, God let them go free. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them, (v. 11.) and again, v. 16. This was a great abuse to their servants, to whom servitude would be more irksome, after they had had some taste of the pleasures of liberty. It was a great shame to themselves, that they should keep it in a good cause. And it was an especial affront to God; in doing this, they polluted his name, v. 16. It was a contempt of the command he had given them, as if that were of no force at all, but they might either keep it, or break it, as they thought fit. It was a contempt of the covenant they had made with him, and of that wrath which they had incurred by it. As soon as ever they let their servants go free, God let them go free. When they began to think themselves safe from the besiegers, they made their servants come back into subjection to them, (v. 11.) and again, v. 16.
pries are so far from being pardons, that if they be abused thus, and sinners take encouragement from them to return to sin, they are but preparatives for heavier strokes of divine vengeance.

III. For this treacherous dealing with God, they are here severely threatened; Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Those that think to put a cheat upon God by a dissembled repentance, a fallacious covenant, and a partial temporary religion, let them prove in the end that they have put the greatest cheat upon their own souls; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. It is here threatened with an observable air of displeasure against them, 1. That since they had not given liberty to their servants to go where they pleased, God would give all his judgments liberty to take their course against them without control; (v. 17.) You have not proclaimed liberty to your servants. Though they had done it, (v. 16.) yet they might truly be said not to have done it, because they did not stand to it, but undo it again; and Pactum non dietur quod non perseverat.—That is not said to be done, which does not last. The righteousness that is forsaken and turned away from, shall be forgotten, and not mentioned, any more than theotten; Prov. 10:9. Therefore I will proclaim a liberty for you; I will discharge you from my service, and put you out of my protection, which those forfeit that withdraw from their allegiance. You shall have liberty to choose which of these judgments you will be cut off by, sword, famine, or pestilence; such a liberty as was offered to David, which put him into a great servitude, and, being strong, could not expect the privileges of free-born subjects. 3. That, since they had broken the covenant which they ratified by a solemn imprecation, God would bring on them the evil which they imprecated upon themselves, in case they should break it. Out of their own mouth will he judge them, and so shall their doom be; the penalty of their bond shall be recovered by perfect execution; for so some read v. 18. I will make the men which have transgressed my covenant, as the calf which they cut in pieces; I will divide them in sunder as they divided it in sunder. 4. That, since they would not let go their servants out of their hands, God would deliver them into the hands of these that hated them. Even the princes and nobles, both of Judah and Jerusalem, of the court, the priests, and all the people, they had all dealt treacherously with God, and therefore shall all be involved in the common ruin, without exception; (v. 19.) they shall all be given into the hand of their enemies, that seek, not their wealth only, or their service, but their life. And they shall judge and destroy all of the country and that contain them: when they have their lives, they shall leave their dead bodies unburied, a loathsome spectacle to all mankind, and an easy prey to the fowls and beasts, a lasting mark of ignominy being here fastened on them. 5. That, since they had emboldened themselves in returning to their sin, contrary to their covenant, by the retreat of the Chaldean army from them, God would act upon them, and bring it upon them again; They are now gone up from you, and your fright is ever for the present, but I will command them to face about as they were; they shall return to this city, and take it and burn it.”

Note, (1.) As confidence in God is a hopeful presage of approaching deliverance, so security in sin is a sadomen of approaching destruction. (2.) When judgments are removed from a people before they have done their work, leave them, but leave them unshamed and unreformed, (it is cum animo reverserint—with a design to return,) they do but retreat to come on again with so much the greater force. So when, and if, judges, he will over come. (3.) It is just with God to disappoint the expectations of mercy which his providence had given cause for, when we disappoint those expectations of duty which our præfessions, pretensions, and fair promises, had given cause for. If we repent of the good we had purposed, God will repent of the good he had purposed. With the forward thou wilt show thyself forward.

CHAP. XXXV.

A variety of methods is tried, and every stone turned, to awaken the Jews to a sense of their sin, and to bring them to repentance and reformation. The scope and tendency of many of the prophet’s sermons was to frighten them out of their disobedience, by setting before them what would be the end thereof, if they persisted in it. The scope of this sermon, in this chapter, is to shame them out of their disobedience, if they had any sense of honour left them, for a discourse of the nature to be gotten upon. 1. He sets before them the obedience of the family of the Rechabites to the commands which were left them by Jonadab their ancestor, and how they persevered in it; and it is evident, that this would greatly have been to their advantage, v. 1-11. With this he aggravates the disobedience of the Jews to God, and their contempt of his precepts, v. 12, 15. 3. He foretells the judgments of God upon the Jews for their impossi disobedience, v. 16, 17. 4. He assures the Rechabites of the blessing of God upon them for their pious obedience to their father, v. 18, 19.

1. THE word which came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, in the days of Je-hoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the Lord, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink. 3. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazimuth, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites; and I brought them into the house of the Lord, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdalath, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door: 5. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups; and I said unto them, Drink ye wine. 6. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever: 7. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers, 8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our
days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters; 9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed: 10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. 11. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

This chapter is of an earlier date than many of those before; for what is contained in it, was said and done in the days of Jehoiakim (v. 1) but then it must be in the latter part of his reign, for it was after the king of Babylon with his army came up into the land, (v. 11.) which seems to refer to the invasion mentioned 2 Kings xxiv. 2. which was upon occasion of Jehoiakim's rebellious against Nebuchadnezzar. After the Chaldeans had prevailed upon this rebellious people, he continued to deal with them by his prophets, to turn them from sin, that his wrath might turn away from them. He endeavours it by the example of the Rechabites, a family that kept distinct by themselves, and were no more numbered with the families of Israel than with the nations. They were originally Kenites, as appears 1 Chron. ii. 35. These are the sons of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab. The Kenites, at least those of them that gained a settlement in the land of Israel, were of the posterity of Hobab, Moses's father-in-law, Judg. i. 16. We find them separated from the Amalekites, 1 Sam. xv. 6. See Judg. iv. 17. One family of these Kenites had their denomination from Rechab; his son, or a lined descendant from him, was Jonadab, a man famous in his time for wisdom and piety. He flourish'd in the days of Jehu, king of Israel, near 300 years before this; for there we find him courted by that rising prince, when he affected to appear zealous for God, (2 Kings x. 15, 16.) which he thought nothing more likely to confirm people in the opinion of, them to have so good a man as Jonadab ride in the chariot with him. Now we are told, that he brought the rules of living hardy, which Jonadab, probably by his last will and testament, in writing, and duly executed, charged his children, and his posterity after him, throughout all generations, religiously to observe; and we have reason to think that they were such as he himself had all his days observed. 1. He forbade them to drink wine, according to the law of the Nazarites. Wine is indeed given to make glad the heart of man, and we are allowed the sober and moderate use of it; but we are so apt to abuse it, and get hurt by it, and a good man, who has his heart made continually glad with the light of God's countenance, has so little need of it for that purpose, (Ps. iv. 6, 7.) that it is a commendable piece of self-denial, either not to use it at all, or very sparingly and medially, as Timothy used it, 1 Tim. v. 23. He appointed them to dwell in tents, and not to take root, or rent, or occupy either, v. 7. This was an instance of strictness and mortification beyond what the Nazarites were obliged to. Tents were mean dwellings, so that this would teach them to be humble; they were cold dwellings, so that this would teach them to be hardy, and not to indulge the body; they were movable dwellings, so that this would teach them not to think of settling or taking root any where in this world. They must dwell in tents all their days, not for a few days, as Israel at the feast of tabernacles, not only in summer days, as soldiers and shepherds, but all their days. They must from the beginning thus accustom themselves to endure hardness, and then it would be no difficulty to them, no, not under the decays of old age.

Now why did Jonadab prescribe these rules of living to his posterity? It was not merely to show his integrity, or his wisdom, but more, by imposing upon them what he thought fit; but it was to show his wisdom, and the real concern he had for their welfare, by recommending to them what he knew would be beneficial to them; yet, not trying them by any oath or vow, or under any penalty, to observe these rules, but only advising them to conform to this discipline, as far as they found it for education, yea, and a true and necessary, as here, v. 11. He prescribed these rules to them, (1.) That they might preserve the ancient character of their family, which, however looked upon by some with contempt, he thought its real reputation. His ancestors had addicted themselves to a pastoral life, (Exod. ii. 16.) and he would have his posterity kept to it, and not degenerated from it, as Israel had done, who, might have learnt a great deal from the posterity of Hobab, Gen. xxxiv. 34. Note, We ought not to be ashamed of the honest employments of our ancestors, though they were but mean. (2.) That they might comply with their lot, and bring their mind to their condition, Moses had put them in hopes that they should be naturalized; (Num. x. 32.) but, it seems, they were not, they were still strangers in the land, (v. 7.) had no inheritance in it, and therefore had to live here, according to what was a good reason why they should accustom themselves to hard fare and hard lodging: for strangers, such as they were, must not expect to live as the landed men, so plentifully and delicately. Note, It is our wisdom and duty to accommodate ourselves to our place and rank, and not aim to live above it. What has been the lot of our fathers, why may we not be content that it should be our lot, and live according to it? Mind not high things. (3.) That they might not be envied and disturbed by their neighbours among whom they lived. If they that were strangers should live great, raise estates, and fare sumptuously, the natives would grudge them their abundance, and have a jealous eye upon them, as the Philistines had upon Isaac, (Gen. xxxvi. 14.) and would seek occasions to quarrel with them and abuse them. Jonadab thought it would be the prudence to keep low, for that would be the way to continue long; to live meanly, that they might live many days in the land where they were strangers. Note, Humility and contentment in obscurity are often the best policy, and men's surest protection. (4.) That they might be armed against temptations to luxury and sensuality, the prevailing sin of the age and place they lived in. Jonadab saw a general corruption of manners; the drunkards of Ephraim abounded, and he was afraid lest his children should be debauched and ruined by them; and therefore he obliged them to live by themselves, retired in the country; and that, they might not run into any unlawful pleasures, to deny themselves the use even of lawful delights. They must be sober, and not to erect a distinction over them, that would contribute to the health both of mind and body, and to their living many days and easy ones, and such as they might reflect upon with comfort in the land where they were strangers. Note, The consideration of this, that we are strangers and pilgrims, should oblige us to abstain from all fleshly lusts, to live above the things of sense, and look upon them with a generous regard; and yet, lest they might be prepared for times of trouble and calamity, Jonadab might, without a spirit of prophecy, foresee the destruction of a people so wretchedly de
Jeremiah, XXXV.

12. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, 13. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord. 14. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. 15. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers; but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. 16. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me: 17. Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered. 18. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you; 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

The trial of the Rechabites' constancy was intended but for a sign; now here we have the application of it.

1. The Rechabites' observance of their father's charge to them is made use of as an aggravation of the disobedience of the Jews to God. Let them see it, and be ashamed. The prophet asks them, in God's name, "Will ye not at length receive instruction?" v. 13. Will nothing affect you? Will nothing fasten upon you? Will nothing prevail to discover sin and duty to you? You see how obedient the Rechabites are to their father's commandment; (v. 14.) but you have not inclined your ear unto me. (v. 15.) though one might much more reasonably expect that the people of God should have obeyed him, than that the sons of Jonadab should have
obeyed him; and the aggravation is very high, for,

(1.) The Rechabites were obedient to one who was but a man like themselves, who had but the wisdom and power of a man, and was only the father of their flesh; but they were disobedient to an infinite and eternal God, who had an absolute authority over them, as the Father of their spirits.

(2.) Jonadab was long since dead, and was ignorant of them, and could neither take cognizance of their disobedience to his orders, nor give correction for it; but God lives for ever, to see how his laws are observed, and is in readiness to revenge all disobedience. (3.) The Rechabites were never put in mind of their obligations to their father; but God often sent his prophets to his people, to put them in mind of their duty to him, and yet they would not do it. This is insisted on here as a great aggravation of their disobedience; "I have myself spoken to you, rising early, and speaking, by the written word and the dictates and admonitions of conscience; (v. 14.) say, I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, men like yourselves, whose terrors shall not make you afraid, rising up early and sending them, (v. 15.) and yet all in vain." (4.) Jonadab never did that for his seed, that God had done for his people; he left them a charge, but left them no estate to bear the charge; but God had given his people a good land, and promised them, that, if they would be obedient, they should still dwell therein, and be bountifully provided for; but their attitude and interest to be obedient, and yet they would not hear, they would not hearken. (5.) God did not tie up his people to so much hardship, and to such instances of mortification, as Jonadab obliged his seed to; and yet Jonadab's orders were obeyed, and God's were not.

2. Judgments are threatened, as often before, against Judah and Jerusalem, for their disobedience and murmuring against them, and shall condemn them, for they very punctually performed the commandment of their father, and continued and persevered in their obedience to it; (v. 16.) but this people, this rebellious and gain-saying people, have not hearkened unto me; and therefore, (v. 17.) because they have not obeyed the precepts of the word, God will send his providence, which will bring upon them, by the Chaldean army, all the evil pronounced against them, both in the law and in the prophets, for I have spoken to them, I have called to them; spoken in a still small voice to them that were near, and called aloud to them that were at a distance; tried all ways and means to convince and reduce them; spoken by my word, called by my providence, both for the same purpose, and yet all to no purpose; they have not heard, nor answered.

3. Mercy is here promised to the family of the Rechabites, for their steady and unanimous adherence to the laws of their house; though it was only for the shaming of Israel that their constancy was tried; yet, being unshaken, it was found unto praise, and honour, and glory. And God takes occasion from it to tell them that he had favours in reserve for them, (v. 18, 19.) and that they should have the comfort of him. It is promised, (1.) That the family should continue as long as any of the families of Israel, among whom they were strangers and sojourners. It shall never want a man to inherit what they had, though they had no inheritance to leave them. Note, Sometimes those that have the smallest estates have the most narratives to record to good, but he that seeks mountains, will be sure to send down them. (2.) That religion shall continue in the family: "He shall not want a man to stand before me, to serve me." Though they are neither priests nor Levites, not appear to have had any post in the temple-service, yet, in a constant course of regular devotion, they stand before God, to minister to him. Note, (1.) The greatest blessing that can be entailed upon a family, is, to have the worship of God kept up in it from generation to generation. (2.) Temperance, self-denial, and mortification to the world, do very much befriend the exercises of piety, and help to transmit the observance of them to posterity. The more dead we are to the delights of sense, the better we are disposed for the service of God; but nothing is more fatal to the entail of religion in a family than pride and luxury.

CHAP. XXXVI.

Here is another expedient tried to work upon this heedless and uncowardly people, but it is tried in vain. A roll of a book is opened, and a command is given to write all the sermons that Jeremiah had preached to them, that they might be put in mind of what they had heard, and might the better understand it, when they read it all before them at one view. Now here we have,

1. The writing of this roll by Baruch, as Jeremiah dictated it, v. 1. and 4. II. The reading of the roll by Baruch to all the people publicly on a fast-day, (v. 5. to 10.) afterward by Baruch to the priests privately, (v. 11. to 13.) and lastly by Jeremiah to the king, v. 20. and 21. III. The burning of the roll by the king, with orders to persecute Jeremiah and Baruch, v. 22. to 28. IV. The writing of another roll, with large additions, particularly of Jehovah's doom for burning the former, v. 27. to 32.

A. And it came to pass, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 2. Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee, against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. 3. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. 4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book. 5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the Lord: 6. Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the Lord, in the ears of the people, in the Lord's house upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities. 7. It may be they will present their supplication before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the Lord hath pronounced against this people. 8. And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the Lord in the Lord's house.

In the beginning of Ezekiel's prophecy we meet with a roll written in vision, for the discovery of the things therein contained to the prophet himself, who was to receive and digest them, Ezek. ii. 10.—
1. Here in the latter end of Jeremiah's prophecy, we meet with a roll, written in fact, for the discovery of the things contained therein to the people, who were to hear and give heed to them; for the written word and other good books are of great use both to ministers and people. We have here,

1. The command which God gave to Jeremiah to write a summary of his sermons, of all the reproofs and all the warnings he had given in God's name to the people. Jeremiah was an inspired preacher, a preacher, in the 12th year of Josiah, to this day, which was in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, v. 2, 3. What had been spoken only, must now be written, that it might be reviewed, and that it might spread the further, and last the longer. What had been spoken at large, with frequent repetitions of the same things, perhaps in the same words, which has its advantage one way, must now be contracted, and put into less compass, that the several parts of it might be better compared together, which has its advantage another way. What they had heard once, must be recapitulated, and rehearsed to them again, that what was forgotten, might be called to mind again, and what made no impression upon them at the first hearing, might take hold of them when they were written. What had been not a collection perhaps already written, and published in single sermons, must be collected into one volume, that none might be lost. Note, The writing of the scripture is by divine appointment. And observe the reason here given for the writing of this roll; (v. 3.) It may be, the house of Judah will hear. Not that the divine presence was at any uncertainty concerning them, used, in the hopes that they would hear, that is, heed and regard what they heard, take notice of it, and mix faith with it: for otherwise our hearing of the word, though an angel from heaven were to read or preach it to us, would stand us in no stead. Now observe here, (1.) What is, it is hoped, they will thus hear: All that evil which I purpose to do unto them. Note, The serious consideration of the crimes of this people, recorded in the books which we have use to bring us to God. (2.) What is, it is hoped, will be produced thereby; They will hear, that they may return every man from his evil way. Note, The conversion of sinners from their evil courses, is that which ministers should aim at in preaching; and people hear the word in vain, if that point be not gained with them. To what purpose do we hear of the evil of sin, which we are put upon for sin, if we continue, notwithstanding, to do evil against him? (3.) Of what vast advantage their consideration and conversion will be to them; that I may forgive their iniquity. This plainly implies the honour of God's justice, with which it is not consistent that he should forgive the sin, unless the sinner repent of it, and turn from it; but it plainly oncises do we hear of the evil of sin, which we are put upon for sin, and only waits till the sinner be qualified to receive forgiveness, and therefore uses various means to bring us to repentance, that he may forgive.

2. The instructions which Jeremiah gave to Baruch his scribe, pursuant to the command he had received from God, and the writing of the roll accordingly, v. 4. Jeremiah wrote not, as he should seem, he had not the pen of a ready writer; he could not write fast, or fair, so as Baruch could, and therefore he made use of him as his amanuens. St. Paul wrote but few of his epistles with his own hand, Gal. vi. 11. Rom. xvi. 22. God dispenses his gifts variously; some have a good faculty of speaking, others at writing, and neither can say to the other, We have no need of you, 1 Cor. xii. 21. The Spirit of God dictated to Jeremiah, and he to Baruch, who had been employed by Jeremiah as trustee for him in his purchase of the field, (ch. xxxii. 12.) and now was advanced to be his scribe. He was an inspired minister, whom God may credit the Apocryphal book that bears his name, he was afterward himself a prophet to the captives in Babylon. Those that begin low are likely to rise high, and it is good for those that are designed for prophets to have their education under prophets, and to be serviceable to them. Baruch wrote what Jeremiah dictated in a roll of a book, on pieces of parchmen, or vellum, which were joined together, the top of one to the bottom of the other, so making one long scroll, which was rolled perhaps upon a staff.

3. The orders which Jeremiah gave to Baruch, to read what he had written to the people. Jeremiah, it seems, was shut up, and could not go to the house of the Lord himself; (v. 5.) though he might have been, for there was no occasion to send officers to seize him, (v. 26.) yet he was forbidden by the king to appear in the temple, was shut out thence, where he might be serving God, and doing good, which was as bad to him as if he had been shut up in a dungeon. Jehoiakim was ripening apace for ruin, when he thus silenced God's faithful messengers. But when Jeremiah could not go to the temple himself, he sent another, who was deputed by him, to read to the people what he would himself have said. Thus St. Paul wrote epistles to the churches which he could not visit in person. Nay, it was what he himself had often said to them. Note, The writing and repeating of the sermons that have been preached, may contribute very much toward the answering of the great ends of preaching. What we have heard and known, it is good for us to hear again, that we may know it better. To preach and write the same thing is safe and profitable, and many times very necessary, (Phil. iii. 1.) and we must be glad to hear a good word from God, though we have it, as here, at second-hand. Both ministers and people must do what they can, when they cannot do what they would. Observe, 1. The writing of the roll; Baruch, in the reading of the roll, he said, It may be, they will hear, and return from their evil ways. When Jeremiah orders it, he says, It may be, they will pray, (they will present their supplications before the Lord,) and will return from their evil ways. Note, Prayer to God for grace to turn us, is necessary in order to our turning; and those that are convinced by the word of God of the necessity of returning to him, will present their supplications to him for that grace. And the consideration of this, that great is the anger which God has pronounced against us for sin, should quicken both our prayers and our endeavours. Now according to these orders, Baruch did read out of the book the words of the Lord, whenever there was a holy convocation, v. 8.

9. And it came to pass, in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem. 10. Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the Lord, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of
Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at
the meeting of the new gate of the Lord's
house, in the ears of all the people. 11. When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the Lord, 12. Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber, and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemariah, and Elthanan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes. 13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people. 14. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thy hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. 15. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears. 16. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. 17. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? 18. Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. 19. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be.

It should seem that Baruch had been frequently reading out of the book, to all companies that would give him the hearing, before the most solemn reading of it altogether, which is here spoken of; for the directions were given about it in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, whereas this was done in the 5th year, v. 9. But some think that the writing of the book fair over, took up so much time, that it was another year ere it was perfected; and yet perhaps it might not be past a month or two, he might begin in the latter end of the 4th year, and finish it in the beginning of the 5th, for the 9th is here reckoned from the commencement of the year in general, not to the year of that reign. Now observe here,

1. The government appointed a public fast to be religiously observed, (v. 9.) on account either of the distress they were brought into by the army of the Chaldeans, or of the want of rain; (ch. xiv. 1.) They proclaimed a fast to the people; whether the king and princes and the priest, ordered this fast, is not certain; but it was plain that God by his providence called them about to it. Note, Great shows of piety and devotion may be found even among those, who, though they keep up these forms of godliness, are strangers and enemies to the power of it. But what will such hypocritical services avail? Fasting, without reforming, and turning away from sin, will never turn away the judgments of God, Jonah iii. 10. Notwithstanding this fast, God proceeded in his contrary way with his people. 2. Baruch repeated Jeremiah's sermons publicly in the house of the Lord, on the fast-day. He stood in a chamber that belonged to Gemariah, and out of a window, or balcony, read to the people that were in the court, v. 10. Note, When we are speaking to God, we must be willing to hear from him; and therefore on days of fasting and prayer, it is requisite that the word be read and preached. 

3. An account was brought of this to the princes that attended the court, and were now together in the secretary's office, here called the scribe's chamber, v. 12. It should seem, though the princes had called the people to meet in the house of God, to fast, and pray, and hear the word, they did not think fit to attend there themselves, which was a sign that it was not from a principle of true devotion, but merely for fashion-sake, that they proclaimed this fast. We are willing to hope that it was not with a bad design, to bring Jeremiah into trouble for his preaching, but with a good design, to bring the princes into trouble for their sins, that Michaiah and his fellow, having taken the precept, would read; for his father Gemariah so far constrained Baruch, as to lend him his chamber to read out of. Michaiah finds the princes sitting in the scribe's chamber, and tells them, they had better have been where he had been, hearing a good sermon in the temple, which he gives them the heads of. Note, When we have heard some good word that has affected and edified us, we should be ready to communicate it to others, that did not hear it, for their edification. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. 4. Baruch is sent for, and is ordered to sit down among them, and read it all over again to them, (v. 14, 15.) which he readily did, not complaining that he was weary with his public work, and therefore desiring to be excused, nor regarding the princes with their being absent from the temple, where they might have heard it when he read it there. Note, God's ministers must become all things to all men, if by any means they may gain some; must comply with them in circumstances, that they may secure the substance. St. Paul preached privately to them of reputation, Gal. ii. 2. 5. The princes were for the present much affected with the word that was read to them, v. 16. Observe, They heard all the words, they did not interrupt him, but very patiently attended to the reading of the whole book; for otherwise how could they make a competent judgment of it? And when they had heard all, they were afraid, were all afraid, one as well as another; like Felix, who trembled at Paul's reasonings. The reproofs were just, the threatenings frequent, and the prediction now in a fair way to be fulfilled; so that, laying all together, they were in a great consternation. We are not told what impressions this reading of the roll made upon the people, (v. 10.) but the princes were put into a fright by it, and (as some read it) looked one upon another, not knowing what to say. They were all convinced that it was worthy to be regarded, but not all convinced that they agreed to tell the king of all these words; and if he think fit to give credit to them, they will, otherwise not, no, though it were to prevent the ruin of the nation. And yet at the same time they knew the King's mind so far, that they advised Baruch and Jeremiah to hide themselves. (v. 19.) and to shift as they could for their own safety, expecting no other than that the king, instead of being
convinced, would be exasperated. Note, It is common for sinners, under convictions, to endeavour to shake them off, by shifting off the prosecution of them to other persons, as these princes here, or to another more convenient season, as Felix.

6. They asked Baruch a trifling question, How he wrote all those words? v. 17. as if they suspected there was something extraordinary in it; but Baruch gives them a plain answer, that there was nothing but what was common in the manner of the writing—Jeremiah dictated, and he wrote, v. 18. But thus it is common for those who would avoid the convictions of the word of God, to start needless questions about the way and manner of the inspiration of it.

20. And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king. 21. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. 22. Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. 23. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the pen-knife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. 24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. 25. Nevertheless, Elathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah, had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them. 26. But the king commanded Jeremiah the son of Hannelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the Lord hid them. 27. Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, (after that the king had burnt the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah.) saying, 28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt. 29. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the Lord, Thou hast burnt this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? 30. Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. 31. And I will punish him, and his seed, and his servants, for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them: but they hearkened not. 32. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein, from the mouth of Jeremiah, all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

We have traced the roll to the people, and to the princes, and here we are to follow it to the king; and we find,

1. That, upon notice given him concerning it, he sent for it, and ordered it to be read to him, v. 20. 21. He did not desire that Baruch would come and read it himself, who could read it more intelligently, and with more authority and affection, than any one else; nor did he order one of his princes to do it; (though it had been no disparagement to the greatest of them;) much less would he vouchsafe to read it himself; but Jehudi, one of his pages now in waiting, who was sent to fetch it, is bid to read it, who, perhaps, scarcely knew how to make sense of it. But those who thus despise the word of God, will not make it to appear, as this king here did, that they hate it too, and have not only low but ill thoughts of it.

2. That he had no patience to hear it read through as the princes had, but that, when he had heard three or four leaves read, in a rage, he cut it with his pen-knife, and threw it piece by piece into the fire, that he might be sure to see it all consumed, v. 20. 21. This was a piece of as daring impatience as a man could lightly be guilty of, and an most impudent affront to the God of heaven, whose message this was. (1.) Thus he showed his iniquity of reproof; being resolved to persist in sin, he would by no means bear to be told of his faults. (2.) Thus he showed his indignation at Baruch and Jeremiah; he would have cut them in pieces, and burned them, as he had cut them in his reach, when he was in this passion. (3.) Thus he showed his obstinate resolution, never to comply with the designs and intentions of the warnings given him; he will do what he will, whatever God by his prophets says to the contrary. (4.) Thus he foolishly hoped to defeat the threatenings denounced against him; as if God knew not how to execute the sentence when the roll was gone in which it was written. (5.) Thus he thought he had effectually provided that the things contained in this roll should spread no further, which was the care of the chief-priest concerning the gospel, Acts iv. 17. They had told him how this roll had been read to the people and to the princes: “But,” (says he,) “I will take a course that shall prevent its being read any more.” See what a vanity there is against God in the carnal mind, and wonder at the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities done to him!

3. That neither the king himself, nor any of his princes, were at all affected with the word; They were not afraid, (v. 24.) no, not those princes that trembled at the word, when they heard it the first time, v. 16. So soon, so easily, do good impressions wear off! They showed some concern till they saw how light the king made of it, and then they shook off all that concern. They rent not their garments, as Josiah did; this Jehoiakim's own father did, when he had the book of the law read to him, though it was not so particular as the contents of this roll.
were, nor so immediately adapted to the present posture of affairs.

4. That there were three of the princes who had so much sense and grace left as to interpose for the preventing of the burning of the roll, but in vain, v. 27. If they had from the first foreseen that their endurance, as they ought to have done, affected with the word, perhaps they might have brought the king to a better mind, and have persuaded him to bear it patiently; but frequently they that will not do the good they should, put it out of their own power to do the good they would.

5. That Jehoiakim, when he had thus in effect brought the roll of the law before the king, which was arrested, as it were in a way of revenge, now that he thought he had got the better, signed a warrant for the apprehending of Jeremiah and Baruch, God's ministers; (v. 26.) But the Lord hid them. The princes bid them absent, (v. 19.) but it was neither the princes' care for them, nor theirs for themselves, that secured them, it was under the divine protection that they were safe. Note, God will find out a shelter for his people, though their persecutors be ever so industrious to get them into their power, till their hour be come; nay, and then he will himself be their Hiding-place.

6. That Jeremiah had orders and instructions to write in another roll the same words that were written in the roll which Jehoiakim had burnt, v. 27, 28. Note, Though the attempts of hell against the word of God be many, yet not one into the midst of it shall fall to the ground, nor shall the unbelief of man make the word of God of no effect. Enemies may prevail to burn many a Bible, but they cannot abolish the word of God, can neither extinguish it, nor defeat the accomplishment of it. Though the tables of the law were broken, they were renewed again; and so out of the ashes of the roll that was burnt arose another Phoenix. The word of the Lord endures for ever.

7. That the king of Judah, though a king, was severely reckoned with by the King of kings for this indignity done to the written word. God noticed what it was in the roll that Jehoiakim took so much offence at. Jehoiakim was angry, because it was written therein, saying, Surely the king of Babylon shall come and destroy this land, v. 29. And did not he, when he came of two years before this, and go far toward the destroying of this land? He did so, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7.) in his third year, Dan. i. 1. So that God and his prophets were therefore become his enemies, because they told him the truth, told him of the desolation that was coming, but at the same time putting him on a fair way to prevent it. But if this be the thing he takes so much amiss, let him know, (4.) That the wrath of God shall come upon him and his family, in the first place, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar; he shall be cut off, and in a few weeks his son shall be dethroned, and exchanged his royal robes for prison-garments, so that he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; the glory of that illustrious house shall be eclipsed, and die, in him; his dead body shall lie unburied, on which comes all to one; he shall be buried with the burial of an ass, that is, thrown into the next ditch; it shall lie exposed to all weathers, heat and frost, which will occasion its putrifying, and becoming loathsome, the sooner. "Not that his body" (says Mr. Gataker) "could be sensible of such usage, or himself, being deceased, of ought that should befal his body; but the king's body, in such a condition should, as a hideous spectacle, fill a horrid memory, of God's heavy wrath and indignation against him, unto all that should behold it." Even his seed and his servants shall fare the worse for their relation to him, (v. 31.) for they shall be punished, not for his iniquity, but so much the sooner for their own. (2.) That all the evil pronounced against Judah and Jerusalem in that roll, shall be brought upon them. Though the copy be burnt, the original remains in the divine counsel, which shall again be copied out after another manner in bloody characters. Note, There is no escaping of God's judgments by struggling with them; who ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered?

Lastly, That, when the roll was written anew, there were added to the former many like words, (v. 32.) many more threatenings of wrath and vengeance; for since they will yet walk contrary to God, he will will the furnace seven times hotter. Note, as God is in one mind, and none can turn him, so he has still more arrows in his quiver; and those who contend with God's woe, do but prepare for themselves heavier of the same kind.

CHAP. XXXVII.

This chapter brings us very near the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for the story of it lies in the latter end of Zedekiah's reign; we have in it, 1. A general idea of the bad character of that reign, v. 1, 2. II. The message which Zedekiah, notwithstanding, sent to Jeremiah, to desire his prayers, v. 3. III. The flattering hopes which the people had received, but the Chaldeans would quit the siege of Jerusalem, v. 5. IV. The assurance God gave them by Jeremiah, (who was now at liberty, v. 4.) that the Chaldean army should renew the siege, and take the city, v. 6. V. The imprison-ment of Jeremiah, under pretence that he was a deserter, v. 11...15. VI. The kindness which Zedekiah showed him when he was a prisoner, v. 16...21.

1. A king Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, was exalted instead of Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.

3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us. 4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people; for they had not put him into prison.

5. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

6. Then came the word of the Lord unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 7. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to inquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land. 8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire. 9. Thus saith the Lord, Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not de-

10. For though ye have snitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wonded men among them, yet should they rise
up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

Here is,
1. Jeremiah's preaching slighted, v. 1, 2. Zedekiah succeeded Coniah, or Jehochanan, and though he saw in his predecessor the fatal consequences of countenancing the word of God, yet he did not take warning, nor give any more regard to it than others had done before him; neither he, nor his courtiers, nor the people of the land, hearkened unto the words of the Lord, though they already began to be fulfilled. Note, Those have hearts wretchedly hard indeed, that see God's judgments on others, and feel them on themselves, and yet will not be humbled, and brought to heed what he says. These had proof sufficient that it was the Lord who spake by Jeremiah the prophet, and yet they would not hearken to him.

2. Jeremiah's prayers desired. Zedekiah sent messengers to him, saying, Pray now unto the Lord our God for us. He did so before; (ch. xxi. 1, 2.) and one of the messengers, Zephaniah, is the same there and here. Zedekiah is to be commended for this, and it shows that he had some good in him, some sense of his need of God's favour, and of his own unworthiness to ask it for himself, and some value for good people, and good ministers, who had an interest in Heaven. Note, When we are in distress, we ought to desire the prayers of our ministers and Christian friends, for thereby we put an honour upon prayer, and an esteem upon our brethren. Kings themselves should lock upon their praying people as the strength of the nation, Ezek. xx. 25, 26. And yet this does but help to condemn Zedekiah out of his own mouth. If indeed he looked upon Jeremiah as a prophet, whose prayers might avail much both for him and his people, why did he not then believe him, and hearken to the words of the Lord, which he spake by him? He desired his good prayers, but would not take his good counsel, nor be ruled by him, though he spake in God's name, and it appears by this that Zedekiah knew he did. Note, It is common for those to desire to be prayed for, who yet will not be advised; but herein they put a cheat upon themselves; for how can we expect that God should hear others speaking to him for us, if we will not hear them speaking to us from him, and for him? Many who despise prayer, may be in great prosperity, and they go not to it when they are in adversity; Now give us of your oil. When Zedekiah sent to the prophet to pray for him, he had better have sent for the prophet to pray with him; but he thought that below him: and how can they expect the comforts of religion, who will not stoop to the services of it.

3. Jerusalem flattered by the retreat of the Chaldean army from it. Jerusalem was now at liberty, (v. 4.) he went in and out among the people, might freely speak to them, and he spoken to by them. Jerusalem also, for the present, was at liberty, v. 5. Zedekiah, though a tributary to the king of Babylon, had entered into a private league with Pharaoh king of Egypt, (Ezek. xvii. 15.) pursuant to which, when the king of Babylon came to chastise him for his league with Pharaoh, he was not in person, but the Egyptians, through he came no more in person, after that great defeat which Nebuchadnezzar gave him in the reign of Jehoiakim. (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) yet sent some forces to relieve Jerusalem when it was besieged; upon notice of the approach of which, the Chaldeans raised the siege, probably not for fear of them, but in policy, to fight them at a distance, before any of the Jewish forces could join them. From this they encouraged the people to hope that Jerusalem was delivered for good and all out of the hands of its enemies, and that the storm was quite blown over. Note, Sinners are commonly hardened in their security by the intermissions of judgments, and the slow proceedings of them; and those who will not be awakened by the word of God, may justly be lulled asleep by the providence of God.

4. Jerusalem threatened with the return of the Chaldean army, and with ruin by it. Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah to desire him to pray for them, that the Chaldean army might not return; but Jeremiah did so, and thus he desired to go to them, and not to return; and it was gone forth, and that it was but a folly for them to expect peace, for God had begun a controversy with them, which he would make an end of; Thus saith the Lord, deceive not yourselves, v. 9. Note, Satan himself, though he is the great deceiver, could not deceive us, if we did not deceive ourselves; and thus sinners are their own destroyers by being their own deceivers; of which this is an aggravation, that they are so frequently warned of it, and cautioned not to deceive themselves; and they have the word of God, the great design of which is to undo them. Jeremiah uses no dark metaphors, but tells them plainly,

(1.) That the Egyptians shall retreat, and either give back, or be forced back, into their own land, v. 1. (Ezek. xxvi. 1.) which was said of old, (Isa. xxxvii. 7.) and is here said again, v. 7. That the Egyptians shall help in vain; they shall not dare to face the Chaldean army, but shall retire with precipitation. Note, If God help us not, no creature can. As no power can prevail against God, so none can avail without God, nor countervail his departures from us.

(2.) That the Chaldeans shall return, and shall renew the storm, and prosecute it with more vigour than ever. They shall not depart for good and all. v. 9. They shall come again; (v. 8.) they shall fight against the city. Note, God has the sovereign command of all the hosts of men, even of those that know him not, that own him not, and they are all made to serve his purposes. He directs their marches, their counter-marches, their retreats, their returns, as it pleases him; and furious armies, like stormy winds, in all their motions are fulfilling his word.

(3.) That Jerusalem shall certainly be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans! They shall take it, and burn it with fire, v. 8. The sentence passed upon it shall he executed, and they shall be the executioners. "O but," (say they) "the Chaldeans have withdrawn from us, and there is an impracticable;" "And though they have," says the prophet, "may, though you had smitten their army, so that many were slain, and all the rest wounded, yet those wounded men should rise up, and burn this city," v. 10. This is designed to denote that the doom passed upon Jerusalem is irrevocable, and its destruction inevitable; it must be laid in ruins, and the Chaldeans will have their way of it, and it is now in vain to think of evading the stroke, or contending with it. Note, Whatever instruments God has determined to make use of in any service for him, whether of mercy or judgment, they shall accomplish that for which they are designed, whatever incapacity or disability they may lie under, or be reduced to. These by whom God has resolved to be served, if they have quitting the service of God, and are his destroyers they shall be, and they shall be, yea, though they were all wounded; for as when God has work to do, he will not want instruments to do it with, though they may seem far to seek; so when he has chosen his instruments, they shall do the work, though they may seem very unlikely to accomplish it.

11. And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,
Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people. 13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. 14. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him; so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes. 15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe; for they had made that the prison. 16. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; 17. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took him out; and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the Lord? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. 18. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? 19. Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? 20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. 21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

We have here a further account concerning Jeremiah, who relates more passages concerning himself than any of the other prophets: for the history of the lives and sufferings of God's ministers have been very serviceable to the church, as well as their preaching and writing.

1. We are here told that Jeremiah, when he had an opportunity for it, attempted to retire out of Jerusalem into the country; (v. 11, 12.) When the Chaldeans had broken up from Jerusalem, because of Pharaoh's army, and they marched the multitude of them to the devil, who, in that interval of the siege, went out into the country to look after their affairs there; he endeavored to steal away in the crowd, for, though he was a man of great eminence; he could well reconcile himself to obscurity; though he was one of a thousand, he was content to be lost in the multitude, and buried alive in a corner, in a cottage.

Whether he designed for Anathoth or no, does not appear; his concerns might call him thither, but his neighbours there were such as, unless they were minded, (ch. xi. 21.) might discourage him from coming among them; or he might intend to hide himself somewhere where he was not known, and fulfil his own wish, (ch. xi. 2.) Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place! Jeremiah found he could do no good in Jerusalem, he laboured in vain among them, and therefore determined to leave them. Note, There are times when it is the wisdom of good men to retire into privacy, to enter into the chamber, and shut the doors about them, Isa. xxxvi. 20.

II. That in this attempt he was seized as a deserter, and committed to prison; (v. 13.—15.) He was in the gate of Benjamin, so far he had gained a point, when a captain of the ward, who, probably, had the charge of that gate, divined his design, and took him into custody. He was the grandson of Hananiah, who, the Jews say, was Hananiah the false prophet, who contested with Jeremiah, (ch. xxxviii. 16.) and that this young captain had a spite to Jeremiah upon that account. He could not arrest him without some pretence, and that which he charges upon him is, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans: an absurd story, for the Chaldeans now gone off, Jeremiah could not reach them: or if he could, who would go over to a baffled army? Jeremiah, therefore, with good reason, and with both the confidence and the mildness of an innocent man, denies the charge, "It is false, I fall not away to the Chaldeans, I am going upon my own lawful occasions." Note, It is no new thing for the church's best friends to be represented as in the interest of her worst enemies; thus have the blackest characters been put upon the fairest, purest minds, and, in such a malicious world as this is, innocence, may, excellency itself, is no fence against the basest calumny. When at any time we are thus falsely accused, we may do as Jeremiah did, boldly deny the charge, and then commit our cause to him that judges righteously. Jeremiah's protestation of his integrity, though he be a prophet, a man of God, a man of honour and sincerity, though he is a priest, and is ready to say it in verbo sacroto—on the word of a priest, is not regarded; but he is brought before the privy-council, who, without examining him and the proofs against him, but upon the base, malicious insinuation of the captain, fell into a pass anditrust with him, they were wroth; and what justice could be expected from men of such a temper, would hear no reason? They beat him, without any regard had to his coat and character, and then put him in prison, in the worst prison they had, that in the house of Jonathan the scribe; either it had been his house, and he had quitted it for the inconveniences of it, but it was thought good enough for a prison; or it was now his house, and perhaps he was a rigid severe man, and made it a house of cruel bondage to his prisoners. Into this prison Jeremiah was thrust, into the dungeon, which was dark and cold, damp and dirty, the most uncomfortable, unhealthful place in it; in the cells or cabins, there he must lodge, among which there is no choice, for they are all alike miserable lodging places; there Jeremiah remained many days, and, for aught appears, it was not intended for life; but perhaps it was a righteous severe man, and made it a house of cruel bondage to his prisoners. See what a world this is! The wicked princes, who are in rebellion against God, lie at ease, lie in state, in their palaces, while godly Jeremiah, who is in the service of God, lies in pain, in a loathsome dungeon. It is well that there is a world to come! III. That Zedekiah at length sent for him, and showed him his way to Babylon, not till the Chaldean army was returned, and had laid their siege to the city; when their vain hopes, with which they fed themselves, (and in confidence of which
they had re-enlisted their servants, ch. xxxiv. 11.) were all vanished, then they were in a greater confusion and consternation than ever; "O then" (says Zedekiah) "send in all haste for the prophet; let me have some talk with him." When the Chaldeans were withdrawn, he only sent to the prophet to pray for him; but now that they had again invested the city, he sent for him to consult him. Then gracious will men be when pangs come upon them!

1. The king sent for him to give him private audience as an ambassador from God. He asked him secretly in his house, being ashamed to be seen in his company, "Is there any word from the Lord?" v. 14. The second comfort! Canst thou give us any hopes that the Chaldeans shall again retire?" Note, Those that will not hearken to God's admonitions when they are in prosperity, would be glad of his consolations when they are in adversity, and expect that his ministers should then speak words of peace to them; but how can they expect it? What have they to do with peace? Jeremiah's life and comfort are in Zedekiah's hand, and he has now a petition to present to him for his favour, and yet, having this opportunity, he tells him plainly, that there is a word from the Lord, but no word of comfort for him or his people; Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. If Jeremiah had consulted with flesh and blood, he would have given him a plausible answer, and though he would not have said that he knew not what he would do under his remit-ther he would tell him the worst at this time; what occasion was there for it, when he had so often told it him before? But Jeremiah was one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful; and would not, to obtain mercy of man, be unfaithful either to God or to his prince; he therefore tells him the truth, the whole truth. And, since there was no remedy, it would be the greatest kindness he could do to keep his doom, that being no surprise to him, it might be the less a terror, and he might provide to make the best of bad. Jeremiah takes this occasion to upbraid him and his people with the credit they gave to the false prophets, who told them that the king of Babylon should not come at all, or when he was withdrawn, should not come again against them, v. 15. There are many your prophets, who told you that you should have peace. Note, Those who receive themselves with groundless hopes of mercy, will justly be upbraided with it when the event has undeceived them.

2. He improved this opportunity for the present of a private petition, as a poor prisoner, v. 18, 20. Jeremiah's power was taken away, his voice silenced, sentence God had passed upon Zedekiah, but it was in Zedekiah's power to reverse the sentence which the princes had given against him; and therefore, since he thought him fit to be used as a prophet, he would not think him fit to be abused as the worst of malefactors. He humbly expostulates with the king; "What have I offended against thee, or thy ser-vants?" v. 18. He had no law but God's, and committed no sin, yet had I done to the common welfare, that ye have put me in prison?" And many a one that has been very hardly dealt with, has been able to make the same appeal, and to make it good. He likewise earnestly begs, and very pathetically, (v. 20.) Cause me not to return to your noisome galleon, to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there. This was the language of innocent nature, the voice of those who are grieved, and solicitous for its own preservation. Though he was not at all unwilling to die God's martyr, yet, having so fair an opportunity to get relief, he would not let it slip, lest he should die his own murderer. When Jeremiah delivered God's message, he spoke, as one having authority, with the greatest boldness; but when he presented his own request, he spake as one under authority, with the greatest submissiveness; Hear me, I pray thee, O my lord the king, let my supplications, I pray thee, be accepted before thee. Here is not a word of complaint of the princes that unjustly committed him, no offer to bring an act of false imprisonment against them, but all in a way of modest supplication to the king, to teach us that even when we act with the courage that becomes the faithful servants of God, yet we must conduct ourselves with the humility and modesty that become dutiful subjects to the government God hath set over us. A lion in God's cause, must be a lamb in his own. And we find that God gave Jeremiah favour in the eyes of the king. (1.) He gave him his request, took care that he should not have the sentence confirmed, but ordered that he should have the liberty of the court of the prison, where he might have a pleasant walk, and breathe a free air. (2.) He gave him more than his request, took care that he should not die for want, as many did that had their liberty, by reason of the strictness of the siege; he ordered him his daily bread out of the public stock (for the prison was within the verge of the court) till all the bread was spent. Zedekiah ought to have released him, nay, to have preferred him, to have made him a privy-counsellor, as Joseph was taken from prison to be the second man in the kingdom; but he had not courage to do that,—it was well he did as he did, and it is an instance of the care God takes of his elect, to make sure of securing them from the danger they are in, by making even their confinement turn to their advantage, and the court of their prison to become as green pastures to them, and raise up such friends to provide for them, that in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh.

CHAP. XXXVIII.

In this chapter, just as in the former, we have Jeremiah greatly dejected under the frowns of the princes, and yet greatly honoured by the favour of the king; they used him, as a criminal, he used him as a privy-counsellor. Here, 1. Jeremiah for his faithfulness is put into the dungeon by the princes, v. 1.-6. II. At the intercession of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, by special order from the king, he is taken up out of the dungeon, and continued only to the court of the prison, v. 7.-13. III. He has a private conference with the king upon the present juncture of affairs, v. 14.-23. IV. Care is taken to keep that conference private, v. 24.-26.

1. THEN Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shemariah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. 3. Thus saith the Lord, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. 4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death; for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt. 5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the
king is not he that can do any thing against you. 6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire. 7. Then when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon, (the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin,) 8. Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, 9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is; for there is no more bread in the city. 10. Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. 11. So Ebed-melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

2. And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm-holes, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. 13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Here, 1. Jeremiah persists in his plain preaching: what he had many a time said, he still says, (v. 3.) This city shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon; though it held out long, it will be taken at last; nor would he have so often repeated this unwelcome message, but that he could put them in a certain way, though not to save the city, yet to save themselves; so that every man might have his own life given him for a prey, if he would be advised. v. 2. Let him not stay in the city, in hopes to defend that, for it will be to no purpose, but let him go forth to the Chaldeans, and throw himself upon their mercy, before things come to extremity, and then he shall live; they will not put him to the sword, but give him quarter, Satis est prostrare leonem. It suffices the lion to lay his antagonist prostrate, and he shall escape the famine and pestilence, which will be the death of multitudes within the city. Note, Those do better for themselves, who patiently submit to the rebukes of Providence, than those who contend with them. And if we cannot have our liberty, we must reckon it a mercy to have our lives, and not foolishly throw them away upon a point of honour; they may be reserved for better times.

2. The princes persist in their malice against Jeremiah. He was faithful to his country, and his trust as a prophet, though he had suffered many a time for his faithfulness; and though at this time he ate the king's bread, yet that did not stop his mouth. But his persecutors were still bitter against him, and complained that he abused the liberty he had of walking in the court of the prison, for though he could not go to the temple to preach, yet he vented the same things in private conversation to those that came to visit him; and therefore (v. 4.) they represented him to the king as a dangerous man, disaffected to him, and they searched under; He seeks not the welfare of this people, but the hurt: an unjust insinuation, for no man had laid out himself more for the good of Jerusalem than he had done. They represent his preaching as having a bad tendency; the design of it was plainly to bring men to repent, and turn to God, which would have been as much as any thing a strengthening to the cords both of the solitary and of the burned city, and yet they represented it as weakening their hands, and discouraging them; if he did this, it was their own fault. Note, It is common for wicked people to look upon God's faithful ministers as their enemies, only because they show them what enemies they are to themselves while they continue impenitent.

3. Jeremiah, bereft, by the king's permission, is put into a dungeon, with a view to his destruction there. Zedekiah, though he felt a conviction that Jeremiah was a prophet, sent of God, had not courage to own it, but yielded to the violence of his persecutors, v. 5. He is in your hand; and a worse sentence he could not have passed upon him. We read in Jehoiakim's reign, that the princes were better affected to the prophet than the king was, (Isa. xxxvi. 5.) now they were worse against him, a sign that they were opening space for ruin. Had it been in a case that concerned his own honour or profit, he would have let them know that the king is he who can do what he pleases, whether they will or no; but in the cause of God and his prophet, which he was very cool in, he basely sneaks, and tralkles to them, The king is not he that can do any thing against you. Note, The prince's will will be a great deal to answer for, though they have a secret kindness for good people, dare not own it in a time of need, nor will do what they might do, to prevent mischief designed them. The princes having this general warrant from the king, immediately put poor Jeremiah into the dungeon of Malchiah, that was in the court of the prison, (v. 6.) a deep dungeon, for they had him put in his own words, against the king, and there was no water in it, but mire; and he sunk in the mire, up to the neck, says Josephus. They that put him here, doublets designed that he should die here, die for hunger, die for cold, and so die miserably, die obscurely, fearing, if they should put him to death openly, the people might be affected with what he would say, and be incensed against them. Many of God's faithful witnesses have thus been privately made away, and starved to death in prisons, whose blood will be brought to account in the day of discovery. We are not here told what Jeremiah did in this distress, but he tells us himself, (Lam. iii. 35, 37.) I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon, and thou didst hear, saying, Fear not.

Application is made to the king by an honest courteux, Ebed-melech, one of the gentlemen of the bed-chamber, in behalf of the poor sufferer. Though the princes carried on the matter as privately as they could, yet it came to the ear of this good man, who, probably, sought opportunities to do good. It may be, he came to the knowledge of it by hearing Jeremiah's moans out of the dungeon, for it lay in the king's house, v. 7. Ebed-melech was an Ethiopian, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and yet had in him more humanity, and more divinity too, than native Israelites had. Christ found more faith among Gentiles than among Jews. Ebed-melech lived in a wicked court, and a very corrupt, degenerate age, and yet had a great sense both of
equity and piety. God has his remnant in all places, among all sorts. There were saints even in Cesar's household. The king was now sitting in the gates of Benjamin, to try causes, and receive appeals and petitions, or perhaps holding a council of war there: thither Ebed-melech went immediately to him, for the case would not admit delay; though the princes had been permitted to go out of the dungeon, or point out till then he had an opportunity of speaking to the king in private. No time must be lost when life is in danger, especially so valuable a life. He boldly asserts that Jeremiah had a great deal of wrong done him, and is not afraid to tell the king so, though they were princes that did it, though they were now present in court, and though they had the king's warrant: Whither did this upbraiding innocence flee for protection but to the throne, especially when great men are its oppressors? Ebed-melech appears truly brave in this matter; he does not mince the matter; though he had a place at court, which he would be in danger of losing for his plain dealing, yet he tells the king faithfully, let him take it as he will: These men have done ill in all that they have done to Jeremiah. They dealt unjustly with him, for he had not deserved any punishment at all; and they had dealt barbarously with him, so as they used not to deal with the vilest malefactors. And they needed not to have put him to this miserable death, for if they had let him alone where he was, he was likely to die for hunger in the place where he was, in the court of the prison to which he was confined; there are more danger and death in the stores out of which he was to have his allowance, (ch. xxxvii. 21.) were in a manner spent. See how God can raise up friends for his people in distress, where they little thought of them; and spirit men for his service even beyond expectation!

5. Orders are immediately given for his release, and Ebed-melech takes care to see them executed. The king who, but now, durst do nothing against the princes, had his heart wonderfully changed on a sudden, and will now have Jeremiah released, in defiance of the princes, for therefore he orders no less than 50 men, and those of the life-guard, to be employed in fetching him out of the dungeon, lest the princes should raise a party to oppose it, v. 10. Let this encourage us to appear boldly for God—we may have our miseries, but, if we can do justice for the hearts of kings are in the hand of God. Ebed-melech gained his point, and soon brought Jeremiah the good news; and it is observable how particularly the manner of his drawing him out of the dungeon is related: (for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labour of love which is showed to his people or ministers, no, nor any circumstance of it, Heb. vi. 10.) special notice is taken of his great tenderness in providing old soft rags for Jeremiah to put under his arm-holes, to keep the cords from hurting him, wherewith he was to be drawn up, his arm-holes being, probably, galled by the cords wherewith he was let down. Nor did he throw the rags down to him, lest they should be lost in the mines, but carefully let them down, v. 11, 12. Note: Those that are in distress should not only be relieved, but relieved with compassion and marks of respect; all which shall be placed to account, and abound to a good account in the day of recompense. See what a good use even old rotten rags may be put to, which therefore should not be made waste of, any more than broken meat: even in the king's house, and under the treasury too, these were carefully preserved for the use of the poor or sick. Jeremiah is brought up out of the dungeon, and is now where he was, in the court of the prison, v. 13. Perhaps Ebed-melech could have made interest with the king to have got him his discharge from thence also, now that he had the king's ear, but he thought him safer, and better provided for there, than he would be anywhere else. God can, when he pleases, make a prison to become a refuge and hiding-place to his people in distress and danger.

14. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the Lord: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me. 15. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me. 16. So the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the Lord liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life. 17. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burnt with fire; and thou shalt live, and thy house: 18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand. 19. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me. 20. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live. 21. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the Lord hath showed me: 22. And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes: and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back. 23. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans; and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burnt with fire. 24. Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die. 25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee; 26. Then thou shalt say unto them, I pre-
sented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. 27. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him; and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him: for the matter was not perceived. 28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

In the foregoing chapter, we had the king in close conference with Jeremiah, and his reply, though (v. 4.) he had given him up into the hands of his enemies; such a struggle there was, in the breast of this unhappy prince, between his convictions and his corruptions. Observe,

1. The honour that Zedekiah did to the prophet. When he was newly fetched out of the dungeon, he sent for him to advise with him privately. He met him in the third entry, or, as the margin reads it, the third gate, (ch. xxxvi. 13.) that is to say, the gate next adjoining, the house of the Lord, v. 14. In appointing this place of interview with the prophet, perhaps he intended to show a respect and reverence for the house of God, which was proper enough now that he was desiring to hear the word of God. Zedekiah would ask Jeremiah a thing; it should rather be rendered, a word; "I am here asking thou for a word of prediction, of counsel, of comfort, a word from the Lord." ch. xxxvii. 17. Whatever word thou hast for me, hide it not from me, let me know the worst." He had been told plainly what things would come to, in the foregoing chapter, but, like Balaam, he asks again, in hopes to get a more pleasing answer, as if God, who is in one mind, were altogether such a one as himself, who was in many minds.

2. The bargain that Jeremiah made with him, before he would give him his advice, v. 15. He would indent, (1.) For his own safety; Zedekiah would have him deal faithfully with him; "And if I do," says Jeremiah, "will thou not put me to death? I am afraid thou wilt;" (so some take it;)

"what else can I expect when thou art led blindfold by the princes?" says he. "Wilt thou promise that thou wilt not." Not that Jeremiah was backward to seal the doctrine he preached, with his blood, when he was called to it; but, in doing our duty, we ought to use all lawful means for our own preservation; even the apostles of Christ did so. (2.) He would indent for the success of his advice, being no less concerned for Zedekiah's welfare than for his own. He was willing to give him wholesome advice, and not disown his advice, and his advice, but acknowledge his advice, and his advice. The princes must with meekness instruct even those that oppose themselves, and render good for evil. He is desirous that he should hear counsel, and receive instruction. "Wilt thou not hearken unto me, I am in hopes to find thee pliable at last, and now in this thy day willing to know the things that belong to thy peace." Note, Then, and then only, there is hope of sinners, when they are willing to hearken to good counsel. Some read it as spoken despairingly; "if I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hearken unto me; I have reason to fear thou wilt not, and therefore I will not give it." Note, Ministers have little heart to speak to those who have long and often turned a deaf ear to them. Now, as to this latter concern of Jeremiah's, Zedekiah makes him no answer, will not promise to hearken to his advice; though he desires to know what is the mind of God, yet he will reserve himself at liberty, when he does know it, to do as he thinks fit; as if it were the prerogative of a prince not to have his ruin prevented by good counsel. But, as to the prophet's safety, he promises him, upon the word of a king, and confirms his promise with an oath, that no advantage should be taken against him for it; I will neither put thee to death, nor deliver thee into the hands of those that will, v. 16. This, he thought, was a mighty favour, and yet Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, when Daniel read their doom, not only protected him, but preferred and rewarded him, Dan. ii. 29, 48. Zedekiah's oath on this occasion but forlorn, and ever that, altho' given in an oath, yet no advantage should be taken against him for it; and in all our dealings both with ourselves and others, we ought to consider this, that the living God made us these souls.

3. The good advice that Jeremiah gave him, with good reasons why he should take it, not from any prudence or politics of his own, but in the name of God, the Lord of hosts and God of Israel; not as a statesman, but as a prophet, he adviseth him by all means to surrender himself and the city to the king of Babylon's princes; "Go forth to them, and make the best terms thou canst with them," v. 17. This was the advice he had given to the people, (v. 2.) and before, (ch. xxi. 9.) to submit to divine judgments, and not think of contending with them. Note, In dealing with God, which is good counsel to the meanest, is so to the greatest, for there is no respect of persons with him. To persuade him to take this counsel, he sets before him good and evil, life and death. (1.) If he will tamely yield, he shall save his children from the sword, and Jerusalem from the flames. The white flag is yet hung out; if he will but acknowledge God's justice, he shall experience his mercy; The city shall not be delivered into their hand, and the sword shall not destroy their house. But, (2.) If he will obstinately stand it out, it will be the ruin both of his house and Jerusalem; (v. 18.) for when God judges he will overcome. This is the case of sinners with God; let them humbly submit to his grace and government, and they shall live; let them take hold on his strength, that they may make peace, and they shall make peace; but if they harden their hearts against his proposals, it will certainly be to their destruction; they must either bend or break.

4. The objection which Zedekiah made against the prophet's advice, v. 19. Jeremiah spake to him by prophecy, in the name of God, and therefore if he had had a due regard to the divine authority, wisdom, and goodness, as soon as he under stood what the king should say, and his advice, he immediately have acquiesced in it, and resolved to observe it without disputing; but, as if it had been the dictate only of Jeremiah's prudence, he advances it some prudential considerations of his own; but human wisdom is folly when it contradicts the divine counsels. All he suggests, is, "I am afraid not of the Chaldeans, their princes and officers, but of the very name of the Chaldeans, who have such enemies to the Chaldeans; when they see me follow them, who had so much opposed their going, they will laugh at me, and say, Art thou also become weak as water?"
507

JEREMIAH, XXXIX.

Isa. xiv. 10. Now, (1.) It was not at all likely that he should be thus exposed and ridiculed, that the Chaldeans should so far gratify the Jews, or trample upon him, as to deliver him into their hands; nor that the Jews, who were themselves captives, should be in such a gay humour, as to make a jest of the misery of their prince. Note, We often frighten ourselves from our duty by foolish, causeless, groundless fears, that are merely the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. (2.) If he should be taunted at a little by the Jews, could he not despise it all if it were done to him? Who then would do it him? Note, Those have very weak and fretful spirits indeed, that cannot bear to be laughed at for that which is both their duty and their interest. (3.) Though it had been really the greatest personal mischief that he could have imagined it to be, yet he ought to have ventured it, in obedience to God, and for the preservation of his family and city. He thought it would be looked upon as a piece of cowardice to surrender, whereas it would be really an instance of true courage cheerfully to bear a lesser evil, the mocking of the Jews, for the avoiding of a greater, the ruin of his family and kingdom.

3. The pressing importance with which Jeremiah followed the advice he had given the king. He would have him that the well of God would be the more the thing he feared should come upon him; (v. 20.) They shall not deliver thee up, but treat thee as becomes thy character. He begs of him, after all the foolish games he had played, to manage wisely the last stake, and now at length to do well for himself: Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord, because it is his voice, so it shall be well unto thee. But he tells him what would be the consequence if he would not obey. (1.) He himself would fall into the hands of the Chaldeans, as implacable enemies, whom he might now make his friends, by throwing himself into their hands. If he must fall, he should contrive how to fall easily; Thus shalt thou not escape, as thou hast hope to do, v. 23. (2.) He would himself be chargeable with the destruction of Jerusalem, which he pretended a concern for the preservation of: Thus shalt thou cause this city to be burned with fire, for by a little submission and self-denial thou mightest have prevented it. Thus subjects often suffer for the pride and wilfulness of their rulers, who should be their protectors, but prove their destroyers. (3.) Whereas he causelessly feared an unjust reproach for surrendering his city, he fell under a just reproach for standing it out, and that from worse too, v. 22. The court-ladies who were left when Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin were carried away, will now at length fall into the hands of the enemy, and they shall say, The men of thy peace, whom thou didst consult with, and confide in, and who promised thee peace if thou wouldst be ruled by them; they have set thee up, and now have encouraged thee to be less by the women, when all his wives and children shall be made a prey to the conquerors, v. 23. Note, What we seek to avoid by sin, will be justly brought upon us by the righteousness of God. And those that decline the way of duty, for fear of reproach, will certainly meet with much greater reproach in the way of obedience. The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him, Prov. x. 24.

6. The care which Zedekiah took to keep this conference private; (v. 24.) Let no man know of these words. He does not at all incline to take God's counsel, nor so much as promise to consider it, for so Jeremiah has been to the calls of God, and so wilful in the ways of sin, that though he had good counsel given him, he seems to be given up to walk in his own counsels. He has nothing to object against Jeremiah's advice, and yet he will not follow it. Many hear God's words, but will not do them. (1.) Jeremiah is charged to let no man know of what had past between the king and him. Zedekiah was concerned about his private affairs, not so much for Jeremiah's safety, (for he knew that his goodness could do him no hurt without his permission,) but for his own reputation. Note, Many have really a better affection to good men and good things than they are willing to own. God's prophets are manifest in their consciences, (2 Cor. v. 11,) but they care not for manifesting that to the world; they would rather do them a kindness than have it known that they do: such, it is to be feared, love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

(2.) He is instructed what to say to the princes, if they should examine him about it. He must tell them that he was petitioning the king not to remand him back to the house of Jonathan the scribe, (v. 25, 26,) and he did tell them so, (v. 27,) and, no doubt, in a manner well calculated to get a favourable opinion of him. It was his chance of engaging the king's favour; so, had this been no lie or equivocation, but a part of the truth, which it was lawful for him to put them off with when he was under no obligation at all to tell them the whole truth. Note, Though we must be harmless as doves, so as never to tell a wilful lie, yet we must be wise as serpents, so as not needlessly to expose ourselves to danger by telling all we know.

CHAP. XXXIX.

As the prophet Isaiah, after he had largely foretold the deliverance out of all our enemies, and the king of Assyria, gave a particular narrative of the story, that it might appear how exactly the event answered to the prediction, so the prophet Jeremiah, after he had largely foretold the delivering of Jerusalem into the hands of the king of Babylon, gives a particular account of that sad event for the same reason. That melancholy story we have in this chapter, which serves to disprove the false, flattering prophets, and to confirm the word of God's messengers. We are here told, 1. That Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege, was taken by the Chaldean army, v. 1. 3. 2. That king Zedekiah, attempting to make his escape after the setting of the Babylonians, was made a captive to the king of Babylon, v. 4. 7. 11. That Jerusalem was burnt to the ground, and the people carried captive, except the poor, v. 8. 10. 14. That the Chaldeans were very kind to Jeremiah, and took particular care of him, v. 11. 14. 15. That Ebed-melech too, for his kindness, had a protection from God himself in this day of desolation, v. 15. 18.

1. In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. 2. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up. 3. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-shar-ezer, Sanger-nebo, Sarsecthim, Rab-saris, Nergal-shar-ezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon. 4. And it came to pass that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden,
the gate betwixt the two walls; and he went out the way of the plain. 5. But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him. 6. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah. 7. Moreover, he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon. 8. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem. 9. Then Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained. 10. But Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard, left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

We were told, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that Jeremiah abode patiently in the court of the prison, until the day that Jerusalem was taken. He gave the princes no further disturbance by his prophecying, nor they him by their persecutions, for he had no more to say than what he had said, and, the siege being carried on briskly, God found them other work to do. See here what it came to.

1. The city is at length taken by storm; for how could it hold out when God himself fought against it? Nebuchadnezzar's army sat down before it in the ninth year of Zedekiah, in the tenth month, (v. 1.) in the depth of winter. Nebuchadnezzar himself soon after retired to take his pleasure, and left his generals to carry on the siege: they intermitted it awhile, but soon renewed it with redoubled force and vigour. At length, in the eleventh year, in the fourth month, about midsummer, they entered the city, the soldiers being so weakened by famine, and all their provisions being now spent, that they were not able to make any resistance, v. 2. Jerusalem was so strong a place, that nobody would have believed the enemy could ever have entered its gates, Lam. iv. 12. But sin had provoked God to withdraw his protection, and then, like Samson when his hair is cut, it is weak where it ought to be strong. 2. The princes of the king of Babylon take possession of the middle gate, v. 3. Some think that it was the same with that which is called the second gate, (Zeph. i. 10.) which is supposed to be in the middle wall that divided between one part of the city and the other; here they cautiously made a halt, and durst not go forward into so large a city, among men that perhaps would sell their lives as dear as they could, until they had given directions for the searching of all places, that they might not be surprised by any ambush. They sat in the middle gate, from thence to take a view of the city, and give orders. The princes are here named, rough and unclean names they are, to intimate what a sad change sin had made; there where Eliakim and Hilkiah, who bare the name of the God of Israel, used to sit, now sit Nergal-sharezer, and Sargar-nebo, &c. who bare the names of the heathen gods. Rib-sar'is and Rab-mag are supposed to be not the names of distinct persons, but the other and the great generals in the gate. And now we see, what Jeremiah prophesied long since, (ch. i. 15.) that the faces of the kingdoms of the north should set every one against the entering of the gates of Jerusalem; justly do the princes of the heathen set up themselves there, where the gods of the heathen had been so often set up.

3. Zedekiah having, in disguise perhaps, seen the princes of the king of Babylon take possession of one of the gates of the city, thought it high time to shift for his own safety, and, loaded with guilt and fear, he went out of the city, under no other protection but that of the night, (v. 4.) which soon failed him, for he was discovered, pursued, and overtaken; though he made the best of his way, he could make nothing of it, could not get forward, but in the plains of Jericho fell into the hands of the pursuers; (v. 5.) and thence he was brought prisoner to Riblah, where the king of Babylon passed sentence upon him as a rebel, not sentence of death, but, one may almost say, a worse thing. For, (1.) He slew his sons before his eyes, and they must all be little, some of them infants, for Zedekiah himself was now but thirty-two years of age. The deaths of these sweet babes must needs be so many deaths to himself, especially when he considered that his own obstinacy was the cause of all of them. As to what is told of this thing; (ch. xxxviii. 23.) They shall bring forth thy wives and children to the Chaldeans. (2.) He slew all the nobles of Judah, (v. 6.) probably not those princes of Jerusalem who had advised him to this desperate course, (it would be a satisfaction to him to see them cut off,) but the great men of the country, who were innocent of the matter. (3.) He ordered Zedekiah to have his eyes put out, (v. 7.) so condemning him to darkness, for life, which had shut his eyes against the clear light of God's word, and was of those princes who will not understand, but walk on in darkness, Ps. lxxxvii. 5. (4.) He bound him with two brazen chains of fetters, (so the margin reads it,) to carry him away to Babylon, there to spend the rest of his days in misery. All this sad story we had before, 2 Kings xxv. 4, &c.

4. Some time after, the city was burnt, temple and palace and all, and the wall of it broken down, v. 8. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! this comes of killing the prophets, and stoning them that were sent to thee. O Zedekiah, Zedekiah! this thou mightest have prevented, if thou wouldst but have taken God's counsel, and yielded in time." The place that was left were all enclosed again captive to Babylon, v. 9. Now we must bid a final farewell to the land of their nativity, that pleasant land, and to all their possessions and enjoyments in it; must be driven some hundreds of miles, like beasts, before their conquerors, that were now their cruel masters; must lie at their mercy in a strange land, and be servants to them who would be sure to rule them with rigour. The land is originally a Chaldean word, and is often used for Jerusalem, as the Chaldean paraphrase, as if the Chaldeans, when they were lords, tyramized more than any other: we have reason to think that the poor Jews had reason to say so. Some few were left behind, but they were the poor of the people, that had nothing to lose, and therefore never made any resistance. And they not only had their liberty, and were left to carry at
borne, but the captain of the guard gave them vineyards and fields at the same time, such as they were never masters of before, ver. 10. Observe here, (1.) The wonderful chances of Providence; some are abused, others advanced, (1 Sam. ii. 5.) the hungry are filled with good things, and the rich sent empty away. The ruin of some proves the rise of others. Let therefore rejoice as though ye were not in our abundance, and weep as though we were not, in our distresses. (2.) The just retributions of Providence; the rich had been proud oppressors, and now they were justly punished for their injustice; the poor had been patient sufferers, and now they are graciously rewarded for their patience, and amends made them for all their losses; for, verily there is a recompense to every thing in earth, even in this world, much more in the other.

11. Now Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, 12. Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee. 13. So Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, sent, and Nebushashan, Rab-saris, and Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and all the king of Babylon's princes, 14. Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people. 15. Now the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, 16. Go and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. 17. For I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord; and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid. 18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee; because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the Lord.

Here we must sing of mercy, as in the former part of the chapter we sang of judgment, and must sing unto God of both. We may observe here,

I. A gracious providence concerning Jeremiah. When Jerusalem was laid in ruins, and all men's hearts failed them for fear, then might he lift up his head with comfort, knowing that his redemption drew nigh, as Christ's followers, when the second destruction of Jerusalem was hastening on, Luke xxi. 28. Nebuchadnezzar had given particular orders that care should be taken of him, and that he should be in all respects well used, ver. 11, 12. Nebuzar-adan and the rest of the king of Babylon's princes observed these orders, and discharged him out of prison, and did every thing to make him easy; ver. 13, 14. Now let us look upon this,

1. As a very generous act of Nebuchadnezzar, who, though he was a haughty potentate, yet took cognizance of this poor prophet; doubtless he had received information concerning him from the de-

servers, that he had foretold the king of Babylon's successes against Judah and other countries, till he had pressed his prince and people to submit to him, and that he had suffered very hard things for so doing; and in consideration of all this, (though perhaps he might have heard also that he had foretold the destruction of Babylon at length,) he gave him the extraordinary marks of his favour. Note, It is the character of God's people to grudge to God for the services and sufferings of the nearest. It was honourably done of the king, to give this charge, even before the city was taken, and of the captains to observe it, even in the heat of action, and it is recorded for imitation.

2. As a reproach to Zedekiah and the princes of Israel; they put him in at prison, and the king of Babylon and his princes put him into God's people and ministers have often found fairer and kinder usage among strangers and infidels, than among those that call themselves of the holy city. St. Paul found more favour and justice with king Agrippa than with Ananias the high-priest.

3. As the performance of God's promise to Jeremiah, in recompense for his services, (ch. xv. 11.) I will cause him to suffer for the iniquity of Babylon. Jeremiah had been faithful to his trust as a prophet, and now God approves himself faithful to him, and the promise he had made him. Now he is comforted, according to the time wherein he had been afflicted, and sees thousands fall on each hand, and himself safe. The false prophets fell by these judgments which they said should never come, (ch. xlv. 19.) he must needs be afraid of evil, Jeremiah thought never the worse of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the misery the more terrible to them. The true prophet escaped those judgments which he said would come, and that made his escape the more comfortable to him. The same that were the instruments of punishing the persecutors, were the instruments of relieving the persecuted; and Jeremiah thought never the worse of his deliverance for its coming by the hand of the king of Babylon, but saw the misery the more of the hand of God in it. A fuller account of this matter we shall meet with in the next chapter.

II. A gracious message to Ebed-melech, to assure him of a recompense for his kindness to Jeremiah. This message was sent him by Jeremiah himself, who, when he returned him thanks for his kindness to him, thus turned him over to God to be his servant. He had delivered a prophet in the name of a prophet, and therefore he had a prophet's reward. This message was delivered to him immediately after he had done that kindness to Jeremiah, but it is mentioned here after the taking of the city, to show that as God was kind to Jeremiah at that time, so he was to Ebed-melech for his sake; and it was a token of special favour to both, and they ought so to account of it that they were not involved in any of the common calamities. Jeremiah is bid to tell him,

1. That God would certainly bring upon Jerusalem the ruin that had been long and often threatened; and, for his further satisfaction, in having been kind to Jeremiah, he should see him abundantly proved a true prophet, ver. 16. 2. That God took notice of the fear he had of the judgments coming. Though he was but a man, both in the service of God, yet he was afraid of the raw of God. The enemies were men of whom he was afraid. Note, God knows how to adapt and accommodate his comforts to the fears and griefs of his people, for he knows their souls in adversity. 3. That he shall be delivered from having a share in the common calamity; I will deliver thee, I will surely deliver thee. He had been instrumental to deliver God's prophet out of the danger of and near God, and must be permitted to deliver him for he will be behind-hand with none for any service they do, directly or indirectly, for his name: 4. Thou hast saved Jeremiah's life, that was pre-
JEREMIAH, XL.

We have attended Jerusalem's funeral pile, and have taken our leave of the captives that were carried to Babylon, not expecting to hear any more of them in this book, perhaps we may in Ezekiel, and must in this and the four following chapters observe the story of those few Jews that were to remain in the land, after their brethren were carried away, and it is a very melancholy story; for, though at first there were some hopeful prospects of their well-doing, they soon appeared as obstinate in sin and unrepentant as all the rest of the judgments, threatened in Deut. xxxiii. being brought upon them, that which in the last verse of that dreadful chapter completes the threatenings, was accomplished, The Lord shall bring them into Egypt again. In this chapter we have, I. A more particular account of Jeremiah's discharge, and his settlement with Gedaliah, v. 1-6. II. The great resort of the Jews that remained scattered in the neighbouring countries to Gedaliah, who was made their governor under the king of Babylon; and the good posture they were in, for awhile under him, v. 7-12. III. A treacherous design formed against Gedaliah, by Ishmael, which we shall find executed in the next chapter, v. 13-16.

1. The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him, being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon. 2. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. 3. Now the Lord hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. 4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thy hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee; but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go. 5. Now, while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over all the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people; or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go. 6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

The title of this part of the book, which begins the chapter, seems unsuited, (The word which came to Jeremiah;) for here is nothing of prophecy, in the sense of that title, but is found in ch. xxxiii. 7, where we have a message that God sent by Jeremiah to the captains and the people that remained, and the story betwixt, and that is only to introduce that prophecy, and show the occasion of it, that it may be the better understood; and Jeremiah, being himself concerned in the story, was the better able to give an account of it. In these verses, we have Jeremiah's adhering, by the advice of Nebuzar-adan, to Gedaliah. It should seem that Jeremiah was very honourably fetched out of the court of the prison by the king of Babylon's princes, (ch. xxxix. 14.) but afterward, being found among the people in the city, when orders were given to the inferior officers to bind all they found that were of any fashion, in order to their being carried captives to Babylon, he, through ignorance and mistake, was bound among the rest, and hurried away. Poor man! he seems to have been born to hardship and abuse; a man of sorrows indeed! But when the captives were brought managed to Ramah, not far off, where a council of war, or court martial, was held, for giving orders concerning them, Jeremiah was seen distinguished from the rest, and, by special order of the court, was discharged.

1. The captain of the guard solemnly owns him to be a true prophet; (v. 2, 3.) "The Lord thy God, whose messenger thou hast been, and in whose name thou hast spoken, hath by thee pronounced this evil upon this place; they had fair warning given them of it, but they would not take the warning, and now the Lord hath brought it, and as thy worthy mouth said it, so by my hand, he added." He seems thus to justify what he had done, and to glory in it, that he had been God's instrument to fulfill that which Jeremiah had been his messenger to foretell; and upon that account it was indeed the most glorious action he had ever done. He tells all the people that were now in chains before him, "It is because ye have sinned against the Lord, that this thing is come upon you. The princes of Israel would never have brought to acknowledge this, though it was as evident as if it had been written with a sunbeam; but this heathen prince plainly sees it, that a people that had been so favoured as they had been by the divine goodness, would never have been abandoned thus, had they not been very provoking. The people of Israel had been often told from the prophets, and by his own mouth, he said it so by his hand, for he had heard the word of the Lord." Note, Sooner or later, men shall be made sensible that their sins is the cause of all their miseries.

2. He gives him free leave to dispose of himself as he thought fit. He loosed him, or in his chains a little time; and (4.) invited him to come along with him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a friend, as a companion; and I will set my eye upon thee, so the word is: "Not only I will look well to thee, but I will show thee respect, will countenance thee, and will see that thou be safe and well provided for."
If he was not disposed to go to Babylon, he might dwell where he pleased in his own country, for it was all now at the disposal of the conquerors. He may go to Anathoth if he please, and enjoy the field he had purchased there. A great change with this good man! He that but lately was tossed from one prison to another, may now walk at liberty from one possession to another.

3. He advises him to go to Gedaliah, and settle with him. This Gedaliah was made governor of the land under the king of Babylon, an honest Jew, who (it is probable) betimes went over with his friends to the Chaldeans, and approved himself so well, that he had this great trust put into his hands; v. 2. While Jeremiah was not yet gone back, but stood considering what he should do, Nebuzar-adan, perceiving him neither inclined to go to Babylon, nor determined whether to go, turned the scale for him, and bid him by all means go to Gedaliah. Suddenly thoughts sometimes prove wise ones. But when he gave this counsel, he did not design to oblige him by it, nor will he take it ill if he do not follow it. Go wheresoe'er it seems most convenient unto thee. It is friendly in such cases to give advice, but unwise to prescribe, and to be angry if our advice be not taken. Let Jeremiah steer what course he pleases, Nebuzar-adan will agree to it, and believe he does for the best. Nor does he only give him his liberty, and an approbation of the measures he shall take, but provides for his support; he gave him the remainder of the money, either in clothes of money, and so let him go. See how considerate the captain of the guard was in his kindness to Jeremiah. He set him at liberty, but it was in a country that was laid waste, and in which, as the posture of it now was, he might have perished, though it was his own country, if he had not thus kindly furnished him with necessaries. Jeremiah not only accepted his kindness, but took his advice, and went to Gedaliah, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him, v. 6. Whether we may herein commend his prudence, I know not; the event does not commend it, for it did not prove at all to his comfort. However, we may commend his pious affection to the land of Israel, that, unless he were forced out of it, as Ezekiel and Daniel and other good men were, he would not forsake it, but chose rather to dwell with the poor in the holy land, than with princes in an unholy one.

7. Now when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon; 8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Sedai the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, swore unto them, and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken. 11. Likewise, when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan: 12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits very much. 13. Moreover, Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, 14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalsi the king of the Chaldeans hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. 15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will shay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? 16. But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing; for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

We have, in these verses,

I. A bright sky opening upon the remnant of the Jews that were left in their own land, and a comfortable prospect given them of some peace and quietness, yet many years of trouble and terror which they had been afflicted. Jeremiah the prophet had never in his prophecies spoken of any such good days reserved for the Jews immediately after the captivity; but Providence seemed to raise and encourage such an expectation, and it would be to that miserable people as life from the dead. Observe the particulars.

1. Gedaliah, one of themselves, is made governor in the land, by the king of Babylon, v. 7. To show that he designed to make and keep them easy, he did not give this commission to one of the princes of Babylon, but to one of their brethren, who, they might be sure, would seek their peace. He was the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, one of the princes. We read of his father, (ch. xxvi. 24.) that he took Jeremiah's part against the people. He seems to be a man of great wisdom and a mild temper, and under whose government the few that were left might be very happy. The king of Babylon had a good opinion of him, and reposed a confidence in him, for to him he committed all that were left behind.

There is great resort to him from all parts, and all those that were now the Jews of the dispersion came and put themselves under his government and protection. (1.) The great men that had escaped the Chaldeans by force, came and quietly submitted to Gedaliah for their own safety and common preservation. Divers are here named; (v. 8.) they came
with their men, their servants, their soldiers, and so strengthened one another; and the king of Babylon had such a good opinion of Gedaliah his delegate, that he was not at all jealous of the increase of their numbers, but rather pleased with it. (2.) The poor men that had escaped by flight into the neighbouring countries of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, were induced by the love they bare to their own land, to return to it again, as soon as they heard that Gedaliah was in authority. 11, 12. The Chaldeans, to would be an unsafe, unpleasant country, if there were no government or governors there, and those that loved it dearly would not come back to it till they heard there were. It would be a great reviving to them that were dispersed, to come together again; that were dispersed into foreign countries, to come together in their own country; that were under strange kings, to be under a governor of their own nation. See here, how God remembered mercy, and yet admitted some of them upon a further trial of their obedience.

3. The model of this new government is drawn up and settled by an original contract, which Gedaliah confirmed with an oath, a solemn oath; (v. 9.) He swore to them, and to their men, it is probable, according to the warrant and instructions he had received from his masters in Babylon, and he determined not to give them these assurances. (1.) They must own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans; “Come,” says Gedaliah, “fear not to serve the Chaldeans. Fear not the sin of it.” Though the divine law had forbidden them to make leagues with the heathen, yet the divine sentence had obliged them to yield to the king of Babylon. “Fear not the reproach of it, and the disapprobation it will be to your nation; it is what God has brought you to, to have bound you to, and it is no disgrace to any to comply with him. Fear not the consequences of it, as if it would certainly make you and yours miserable; no, you will find the king of Babylon not so hard a landlord as you apprehended him to be; if you will but live peaceably, peaceably you shall live; disturb not the government, and it will not disturb you. Serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.” If they should make any difficulty of doing personal homage, or should be apprehensive of danger, when the Chaldeans should come among them, Gedaliah, probably by instruction from the king of Babylon, undertakes upon all occasions to act for them, and make their applications acceptable to the king; (v. 20.) “As for me, behold, I will dwell at Anathoth: I will dwell among them in the name of the whole body, if there be occasion, to receive orders, and to pay them their tribute when they come to us.” All that passes between them and the Chaldeans shall pass through his hand; and if the Chaldeans put such a confidence in him, surely his own countrymen may venture to do it. Gedaliah is willing thus to give them the assurance they want, without stinting them, and trusting them, but being apt to err (as many good men are) on the charitable side, it did not require an oath from them, that they would be faithful to him, else the following mischief might have been prevented. However, protection draws allegiance, though it be not sworn; and, by joining in with Gedaliah, they did, in effect, consent to the terms of government he offered, without taking the oath of allegiance to Babylon. But, (2.) Though they own the property of their lands to be in the Chaldeans, yet, upon that condition, they shall have the free enjoyment of them, and all the profits of them; (v. 10.) “Gather ye wine and summer-fruits, and take them for your own use; put them in your vessels, to be laid up for winter-store, as those do that live in a land of peace, and hope not the labour of your hand; yea, the labour of other people’s hands, for you reap what they sowed.” Or perhaps they were the spontaneous products of that fertile soil, for which none had laboured. And accordingly we find, (v. 11.) that they gathered wine and summer-fruits very much, such as were at present upon the ground, for their corn-harvest was over some time before Jerusalem was taken. While Gedaliah was in care for the public safety, he left them to enjoy the advantages of the public plenty, and, for ought appears, demanded no tribute from them; for he sought not his own private profit.

II. Here is a dark cloud gathering over this infant state, and threatening a dreadful storm. How soon is this hopeful prospect blasted! For when God begins in judgment he will make an end. It is here intimated to us,

1. That Bani the king of the Ammonites had a particular spite at Gedaliah, and was contriving to take him off; either out of malice to the nation of the Jews, whose welfare he hated the thought of, or a personal pique against Gedaliah, v. 14. Some make Bani to signify the queen-mother of the king of the Ammonites, or queen-dowager, as if she were the first mover of this bloody and treacherous design. One would have thought this little remnant might have been safe, when the great king of Babylon protected them; but it was not so, for he afraid or this petty prince or princess. Happy they that have the king of kings on their side, who can take the wise in their own craftiness; for the greatest earthly king cannot with all his power secure us against fraud and treachery.

2. That he employed Ishmael, the son of Netaniah, as the instrument of his malice, instigated him to murder Gedaliah; and that he might have a fair opportunity Go do it, he employed himself among his subjects, and promised him fealty. Nothing could be more barbarous than the design itself, nor more base than the method of compassing it. How wretchedly is human nature corrupted and degenerated, (even in those that pretend to the best blood,) when it is capable of admitting the thought of such abominable wickedness! Ishmael was of the seed royal, and would therefore be easily tempted to envy and hate one that set up for a governor in Judah, who was not, as he was, of David’s line, though he had ever so much of David’s spirit.

3. That Johanan, a brisk and active man, having got scent of this plot, informed Gedaliah of it, yet taking it for granted he could not but know of it before, the proofs of the matter being so very plain; and that he became furious, surely, at that time. He gave him private intelligence of it, (v. 15.) hoping he would then take the more notice of it. He prevailed his service to prevent it, by taking off Ishmael, whose very name was ominous to all the seed of Isaac; I will slay him. Wherefore should he slay thee? Herein he showed more courage and zeal than sense of justice; for, if it be lawful to kill for prevention, others can be safe, since malice always suspects the worst.

4. That Gedaliah, being a man of sincerity himself, would by no means give credit to the information given him of Ishmael’s treachery. He said, Thou speakest falsely of Ishmael. Herein he discovered more good humour than discretion, more of the innocency of the dove than the wisdom of the serpent. People may misunderstand and abuse one another, when they are jealous. Queen Elizabeth said, that she would believe no more evil of her people, than a mother would believe of her own children; yet many have been ruined by being over-confident of the fidelity of those about them.

CHAP. XLI.

It is a very tragical story that is related in this chapter, and shows that evil presages sinners. The black cloud that was gathering in the foregoing chapter, here bursts in a
dreadful storm. Those few Jews that escaped their cap-
tivity were proud to think that they were still in their
own land, when their brethren were gone they knew not
whither; were fond of the wine and summer-fruits they
had filled, and were very secure under Gedaliah's
protectorship, when, on a sudden, even these remains
prove ruins too. 1. Gedaliah is barbarously slain by
Ismael, v. 3. II. All the Jews that were with him
were slain likewise, (v. 3.) and a pit filled with their
dead bodies, v. 9. III. Some devout men, to the number of
twelve, that were going toward Jerusalem, were drawn in
by Ismael, and murdered likewise, v. 7. Only ten of
them escaped, v. 8. IV. Those that escaped the
sword were taken prisoners by Ismael, and carried off
toward the country of the Ammonites, v. 10. V. By the
conduct and courage of some of them, the
slaughter of the Jews is not revenged, yet the prisoners are recovered,
and he now becomes their commander in chief, v. 11. 16.
VI. His project is to carry them into the land of Egypt,
(v. 17, 18.) which we shall hear more of in the next
chapter.

1. NOW it came to pass in the seventh
month, that Ismael the son of
Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed
royal, and the princess of the king, even ten
men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son
of Ahikam, to Mizpah; and there they did
cast bread together in Mizpah. 2. Then
arose Ismael the son of Nethaniah, and the
ten men that were with him, and smote
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of
Shaphan, with the sword, and slew him,
whom the king of Babylon had made gover-
nor over the land. 3. Ismael also slew all
the Jews that were with him, even with
Gedaliah at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans
that were found there, and the men of war. 4.
And it came to pass, the second day after
he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,
5. That there came certain from Shechem,
from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even four-
score men, having their beards shaven, and
their clothes rent, and having cut themselves,
with offerings and incense in their hand, to
bring them to the house of the Lord. 6. And
Ismael the son of Nethaniah went forth
from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all
along as he went; and it came to pass, as he
met them, he said unto them, Come to
Gedaliah the son of Ahikam. 7. And it
was so, when they came into the midst of
the city, that Ismael the son of Nethaniah
slew them, and cast them into the midst of
the pit, he, and the men that were with him.
8. But ten men were found among them
that said unto Ismael, Slay us not: for we
have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of
barley; and of oil, and of honey. So he for-
bare, and slew them not among their bre-
thren. 9. Now the pit wherein Ismael
had cast all the dead bodies of the men,
whom he had slain because of Gedaliah,
was it which Asa the king had made for fear
of Baasha king of Israel; and Ismael the
son of Nethaniah filled it with them that
were slain. 10. Then Ismael carried away
captive all the residue of the people that
were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters,
and all the people that remained in Mizpah,
whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard
had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahi-
kan; and Ismael the son of Nethaniah
carried them away captive, and departed to
go over to the Ammonites.

It is hard to say which is more astonishing, God's
permitting, or men's perpetrating, such villainies as
here we have committed. Such base, barbarous,
bloody work is here done by men, who by their birth
and education would have been the best and mightiest
men in the world, by the religion of just men,
and this done upon those of their own na-
ture, their own nation, their own religion, and now
their brethren in affliction, when they were all
brought under the power of the victorious Chal-
deans, and smarting under the judgments of God,
upon no provocation, nor with any prospect of ad-
antage; all done, not only in cold blood, but with
art and management. We have scarcely such an
instance of perfidious cruelty in all the scripture;
so that with John, when he saw the woman drunk with
the blood of the saints, we may well wonder with
great admiration. But God permitted it for the
completing of the ruin of an unhumbled people, and
the filling up of the measure of their judgments, who
had filled up the measure of their iniquities. Let it
possess us with an indignation at the wickedness of
men, and an awe of God's righteousness.

1. Ismael and his party treacherously killed
Gedaliah himself in the first place. Though the
king of Babylon had made him a great man, had
given him a commission to be governor of the land
which he had conquered; though God had made
him a good man, and a great blessing to his country,
and his agency for its welfare was as life from the
dead; yet neither could secure him. Ismael was one of the seed royal, (v. 1.) and therefore jealous of
Gedaliah's growing greatness, and enraged that he
should merit and accept a commission under the
king of Babylon. He had ten men with him, that
were princes of the king too, guided by the same
peevish resentment that he was; these had been
with Gedaliah here, to put themselves under his protection, (ch. xi. 8.) and now came again to make
him a visit; and they did eat bread together in
Mizpah. He entertained them generously, and
entertained no jealousy of them, notwithstanding
the information given him by Johanan. They pre-
tended friendship to him, and gave him no warning
to stand on his guard; he was in sincerity friendly to
them, and did all he could to oblige them, but they
did eat bread with him lifted up the heel against
him. They did not pick a quarrel with him, but
watched an opportunity, when they had him alone,
and assassinated him, v. 2.

2. They likewise put all to the sword that they
found in arms there, both Jews and Chaldeans, all
that were employed under Gedaliah, or were in any
capacity to revenge his death, v. 3. As if enough
of the blood of Israelites had not been shed by the
Chaldeans, their own princes here mingled it with
the blood of the Chaldeans. The vine-dressers and
the husbandmen were busy in the fields, and knew
nothing of this bloody massacre; so artfully was it
carried on and concealed!

3. Some good, honest men, that were going all in
tears to lament the desolations of Jerusalem, were
drawn in by Ismael, and murdered with the rest.
Observe, (1.) From whence they came; (v. 3.)
from Shechem, Samaria, and Shiloh, places that
had been famous, but were now reduced; they be-
longed to the ten tribes, but there were some in

Vol. iv.—3 T
those countries that retained an affection for the worship of the God of Israel. (2.) Whither they were going; to the house of the Lord, the temple at Jerusalem, which, no doubt, they had heard of the destruction of, and were going to pay their respects to its ashes, to see its ruins, that their eye might affect their heart with sorrow for them. They favoured the dust thereof, Ps. cii. 14. They took offerings and incense in their hand, that if they should find any altar there, though it were but an altar of earth, and any priest ready to officiate, they might not be without something to offer; if not, yet they showed their good-will, as Abrahim, when he could not find an altar in Canaan, that he made for the Lord to be worshipped at, Genesis xii. 7. When the march was gone. The people of God used to go rejoicing to the house of the Lord, but these went in the habit of mourners, with their clothes rent, and their heads shaven; for the providence of God loudly called to weeping and mourning, because it was not with the faithful worshippers of God as in months past. (3.) How they were decoyed into a fatal snare by Ishmael's Malice. Hearing of their approach, he resolved to be the death of them too; so blood thirstily was he! He seemed as if he hated every one that had the name of an Israelite, or the face of an honest man; these pilgrims toward Jerusalem he had a spite to, for the sake of their errand. Ishmael went out to meet them with crocodile's tears, pretending to bewail the desolations of Jerusalem as much as they, and, to try how the stoop of God's people to the Lord's destruction, he courted them into the town, and found them to have a respect for him, which confirmed him in his resolution to murder them. He said, Come to Gedaliah, pretending he would have them come, and live with him, when really he intended that they should come, and die with him, v. 6. They had heard such a character of Gedaliah, that they were willing enough to be acquainted with him; but when he had them in the midst of the town, fell upon them, and slew them, (v. 7.) and, no doubt, took the offerings they had, and converted them to his own use; for he that would not stick at such a murder, would not stick at sacrilege. Notice is taken of his disposing of the dead bodies of these, and the rest that he had slain; he tumbled them all into a great pit, (v. 7.) the same pit that Asa king of Judah had dugged in the midst of the city, or adjoining to it, when he built or fortified Mizpah, (1 Kings xv. 22.) to be a frontier garrison against Baasha king of Israel, and for fear of him, v. 9. Note, Those that dig pits with a good intention know not what bad use they may be put to, one time or other. He slew so many, that he could not afford them each a grave, or would not do them so much honour, but threw them all promiscuously into one pit.

Among these last that were doomed to the slaughter, there were ten that obtained a pardon, by working, not on the compassion, but the covetousness, of those that had them at their mercy, v. 8. They said to Ishmael, when he was about to sack their blood, like an insatiable horse-leech, after that of their companions, Slay us not, for we have treasures in the field, will find death inexorable, and themselves wretchedly deceived. He carried off the people prisoners; the king's daughters, whom the Chaldeans cared not for troubling themselves with, when they had the king's sons; and the poor of the land, the vine-dressers and husbandmen, that were committed to Gedaliah's charge, were all led away prisoners toward the country of the Ammonites; (v. 10.) Ishmael probably intending to make a present of them, as the trophies of his barbarous victory, to the king of that country that set him on. This melancholy story is a warning to us, never to be secure in this world. Worse may be yet to come, when we think the worst is over; and that end of one trouble, which we fancy to be the end of all trouble, may prove to be the beginning of another, of a greater. These here thought, Surely the bitterness of death and of captivity is past; yet some died by the sword, and others went into captivity. When we think ourselves safe, and begin to be easy, destruction may come that way that we little expected it. There is many a ship wrecked in the harbour. We can never be sure of peace on this side heaven.

11. But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael had done, 12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibon. 13. Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad. 14. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about, and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah. 15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites. 16. Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, (after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam,) even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibon: 17. And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Beth-lehem, to go to enter into Egypt. 18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

It had been well if Johanan, when he gave information to Gedaliah of Ishmael's treacherous design, though he could not obtain leave to kill Ishmael, and to prevent it that way, yet had stayed with Gedaliah; for he, and his captains, and their forces, might have been a life-guard to Gedaliah, and
terror to Ishmael, and so have prevented the mischief, without the effusion of blood: but it seems, they were out upon some expedition, perhaps no good one, and so were out of the way when they should have been upon the best service. Those that affect to ramble are many times out of their place when they are most needed. However, at length they heard of all the evil that Ishmael had done, (ver. 11,) and are resolved to try an after-game, with their forces, against those murderers.

1. We heartily wish Johanan could have taken revenge upon the murderers, but he prevailed only to rescue the captives. They that had shed so much blood, it was pity but their blood should have been shed; and it is strange that vengeance suffered them to live; yet it did. Johanan gathered what forces he could, and went to fight with Ishmael; (ver. 13,) to help the captives (for though he concealed it for a time, ver. 4,) yet murder will out,) and which way he was gone, he pursued him, and overtook him by the great pool of Gibeon, which we read of, 2 Sam. ii. 13. And upon his appearing with such a force, Ishmael's heart failed him, his guilty conscience flew in his face, and he durst not stand his ground against an enemy like this, who was so much his superior. The most cruel are often the most cowardly. The poor captives were glad when they saw Johanan, and the captains that were with him, looking upon them as their deliverers, (ver. 13,) and they immediately found a way to wheel about, and come over to them, (ver. 14,) Ishmael not offering to detain them when he saw Johanan. Note, Those that would be helped must help themselves. These captives stayed not till their conquerors were beaten, but took the first opportunity to make their escape, as soon as they saw their friends appear, and their enemies thereby disheartened. Ishmael quitted his prey, to save his life, and escaped with eight men, ver. 15. It seems, two of his ten men, that were his militia or assistants, spoken of, ver. 1, either deserted him, or were killed in the engagement; but he made the best of his way to the Ammonites, as a perfect renegade, that had quite abandoned all relation to the commonwealth of Israel, though he was of the seed royal, and we hear no more of him.

2. We heartily wish that Johanan, when he had rescued the captives, would have sat down quietly with them, and governed them peaceably, as Gedaliah did; but, instead of that, he is for leading them away; he did them as Ishmael had done, led them into the land of the Ammonites; so that though he got the command over them in a better way than Ishmael did, and honestly enough, yet he did not use it much better. Gedaliah, who was of a meek and quiet spirit, was a great blessing to them; but Johanan, who was of a fierce and restless spirit, was set over them for their hurt, and to complete their ruin, even after they were, as they thought, redeemed. Thus did God still walk contrary to them. (1.) The resolution of Johanan and the captains was very rash; nothing would serve them but they would go to enter into Egypt, (ver. 17,) and in order to that, they encamped for a time in the habitation of Chimham, by Bethlehem, David's city. Probably it was some land which David gave to Chimham, 1 Chron. xxvi. 26. Thereupon he returned to David's family, at the year of Jubilee, yet still bore the name of Chimham. Here Johanan made his head-quarters, steering his course towards Egypt, either from a personal affection to that country, or an ancient national confidence in the Egyptians for help in distress. Some of the mighty men of war, it seems, had escaped; these he took with him, and the women and children, whom he had recovered from Ishmael, who were thus emptied from vessel to vessel, because they were yet unchanged. (2.) The reason for this resolution was very frivolous. They pretended that they were afraid of the Chaldeans, that they would come and do I know not what with them, because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, ver. 18. I cannot think they really had any apprehensions of danger upon this account; for though it is true that the Chaldeans had cause enough to resent the murder of their vicerey, yet they were not so unreasonable, or unjust, as to revenge upon those who appeared vigorously against the murderers. But they only made use of this as a sham to cover that corrupt inclination of their unbelieving ancestors, which was so strong in them, to return into Egypt. Those will justly lose their comfort in real fears, that excuse themselves in sin with pretended fears.

CHAP. XLII.

Johanan and the captains being strongly bent upon going into Egypt, either their affections or politics advising them to take that course, they had a great desire that God should direct them to do so too; like Balaam, who, when he was determined to go curse Israel, asked God leave. Here is, I. The fair bargain that was made between Jeremiah and them about consulting God in this matter, ver. 1. 6. II. The message at large which God sent them, in answer to their inquiry; in which, 1. They are commanded and encouraged to return to the land of Judah, and assured that if they did so, it should be well with them, ver. 7. 12. 2. They are forbidden to go to Egypt, and are plainly told that if they did, it would be their destruction, ver. 13. 15. 3. They are told that the simulation in their asking what God's will was in this matter, and disobedience when they were told what it was, and sentence is passed upon them for it, ver. 19. 22.

1. THEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jeznahm the son of Hoshiaiah, and all the people, from the least even to the greatest, came near, 2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us;) 3. That the Lord thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. 4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto me, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your words, and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you. 5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. 6. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.

We have reason to wonder how Jeremiah the prophet escaped the sword of Ishmael; it seems he did escape, and it was not the first time that the Lord hid him. It is strange also that in these violent turns he was not consulted before now, and his advice asked and taken. But it should seem as if they knew not that a prophet was among them; though
this people were as brands plucked out of the fire, yet have they not returned to the Lord. This people has a revolving and a rebellious heart; and contempt of God and his providence, God and his prophets, is still the sin that most easily besets them. But now at length, to serve a turn, Jeremiah is sought out, and all the captains, Johanan himself not excepted, with all the people from the least to the greatest, make a vow to visit; they came near, (v. 1.) which intimates that hitherto they had kept at a distance from the prophet, and had been shy of him. Now here, 1. They desire him by prayer to ask direction from God what they should do in the present critical juncture, v. 2, 3. They express themselves wonderfully well. (1.) With great respect to the prophet. Though he was poor and low, and under their command, yet they apply themselves to him with humility and submissiveness, as petitioners for his assistance, which yet they intimate their own unworthiness of; Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee. They compliment him thus, in hopes to persuade him to say as they would have him say. (2.) With a great opinion of his interest in heaven; Pray for us, who know not how to pray for ourselves. Pray to the Lord thy God, for we are unworthy to call him ours, nor have we reason to expect any favour from him, (3.) With a great sense of the need of divine direction. They speak of themselves as objects of compassion; We are but a remnant, but a few of many; how easily will such a remnant be swallowed up, and yet it is pity that it should. Thine eyes see what distress we are in, what a plunge we are at; if thou cast not any thing, help us, (4.) With desire of divine direction; Let the Lord thy God take this ruin into his thoughts, and under his hand, and show us the way wherein we may walk, and may expect to have his presence with us, and the thing that we may do, the course we may take for our own safety. Note, In every difficult, doubtful case, our eye must be up to God for direction. They then might expect to be directed by a spirit of prophecy, which is now ceased; but we may still in faith pray to be guided by a spirit of wisdom in our hearts, and the hints of Providence. 2. Jeremiah faithfully promises them to pray for direction for them, and, whatever message God should send to them by him, he would deliver it to them just as he received it, without adding, altering, or diminishing, v. 4. Ministers may hence learn the great value of prayer, to desire their prayers; I will pray for you, according to your words. Though they had slighted him, yet, like Samuel, when he was slighted, he will not sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for them. 1 Sam. xii. 23. (2.) Conscientiously to advise those who desire their advice, as near as they can to the mind of God, not keeping back any thing that is friendly for them. He must put on the ploughing of an ear, but to declare to them the whole counsel of God, that they may approve themselves true to their trust. 3. They fairly promise that they will be governed by the will of God, as soon as they know what it is, (v. 5, 6.) and they had the impudence to appeal to God concerning their sincerity herein, though at the same time they dissemble; The Lord be a true and faithful Witness between us; do thou in the fear of God tell us truly what his mind is, and then we will in the fear of God comply with it; and for this, the Lord the Judge be judge between us. Note, Those that expect to have the benefit of good ministers' prayers, must conscientiously hearken to their preaching, and be governed by it, as far as it agrees with the mind of God. Nothing could be better said than this here, Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, that it may be well with us. (1.) They now call God their God, for Jeremiah had encouraged them to call him so; (v. 4.) I will pray to the Lord your God. He is ours, and therefore we will obey his voice. Our relation to God strongly obliges us to obedience. (2.) They promise to obey his voice, because they sent the prophet to him to consult him. Note, We do not truly desire to know the mind of God if we do not fully resolve to comply with it when we do know it. (3.) It is an implicit, universal obedience that they here promise. They will do what God appoints them to do, whether it be good, or whether it be evil; Though it may seem evil to us, yet we will believe that if God commands it, it is certainly good, and we must not dispute it, but do it. Whatever God commands, whether it be easy or difficult, agreeable to our inclinations or contrary to them, whether it be cheap or costly, fashionable or unfashionable, whether we get or lose by it in our worldly interests, if it be our duty, we will do it. (4.) It is upon a very good consideration that they promise this, a reasonable and powerful one, that it may be well with us; which intimates a conviction that they could not expect it should be well with them upon any other terms. 7. And it came to pass, after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah. 3. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people, from the least even to the greatest, 9. And said unto them, Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him; 10. If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down; and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you. 11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid, be not afraid of him, saith the Lord: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand. 12. And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land. 13. But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the Lord your God, 14. Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of a trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell: 15. And now, therefore, hear the word of the Lord; ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there; 16. Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you in Egypt; and there ye shall die. 17. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt, to sojourn there; they shall die by
the sword, by the famine, and by the pesti-

cence: and none of them shall remain or

escape from the evil that I will bring upon

them. 18. For thus saith the Lord of

hosts, the God of Israel, As mine anger and

my fury hath been poured forth upon the

inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury

be poured forth upon you, when ye shall

enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an exe-

cration, and an astonishment, and a curse,

and a reproach; and ye shall see this place

no more. 19. The Lord hath said con-

cerning you, O ye remnant of Judah, Go

ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I

have abominatid you this day. 20. For

ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent

me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray

for us unto the Lord our God; and accord-

ingly unto all that the Lord our God shall

say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

21. And now I have this day declared it to

you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of

the Lord your God, nor any thing for the

which he hath sent me unto you. 22. Now,

therefore, know certainly that ye shall die

by the sword, by the famine, and by the

pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to

go, and to sojourn.

We have here the answer which Jeremiah

was sent to deliver to those who employed him to ask

counsel of God.

1. It did not come immediately, not till ten days

after, v. 7. They were thus long held in suspense,

perhaps to punish them for their hypocrisy, or to

show that Jeremiah did not speak of himself, nor

what he would; for he could not speak when he

would, but must wait for instructions. However, it

teaches us to continue waiting upon God for direc-

tion in our way. The vision is for an appointed

time, and at the end it shall speak.

2. When it did come, he delivered it publicly,

both to those to whom he had sent, and to all

people, from the meanest to those in the highest

station; he delivered it fully and faithfully as he received it, as he had

promised that he would keep nothing back from them.

If Jeremiah had been to direct them by his

own prudence, perhaps he could not have told what to

advise them to, the case was so difficult; but

what he has to advise, is what the Lord the God of

Israel will do. 36. They have been going out in their own

men, that they may stay in it, and a duty to stay in it.

Let those whose lot is in Canaan, never quit it while they can keep it. It had been enough to

oblige them, if God had only said, "I charge you

upon your allegiance, to abide still in the land;" but he rather persuades them to it as a Friend than

commands it as a Prince.

(1.) He expresses a very tender concern for them in their present calamitous condition; It repented

me of the evil that I have done unto you. Though

they had shown small sign of their repenting of their sins, yet God, as one grieved for the misery of

Israel, (Judg. x. 16.) begins to repent of the judg-

ments he had brought upon them for their sins.

Not that he changed his mind, but he was very

ready to change his way, and to return in mercy to

them. God’s time to repent himself concerning his

servants is when he sees that, as here, their strength is

gone, and there is none shut up or left, Deut.

xxxii. 36.

(2.) He answers the argument they had against

abiding in this land; they feared the king of Baby-

lon, (ch. xii. 18.) lest he should come, and avenge

the death of Gedaliah upon them, though they

were no way accessible to it, nay, had witnessed

against it. The surmise was foreign and unreason-

able; but if there had been any ground for it, it

engaged God to say to you, Ye shall be afraid of the king of Babylon, though he is a man of
great might and little mercy, and a very arbitrary prince, whose will is a law, and therefore you

are afraid he will, upon this pretence, though with-

out colour of reason, take advantage against you; be

not afraid of him, for that fear will bring a snare:

fear not him, for I am with you; and if God be for

you, who can be against you?" Then God provided an obviatation to silence the

even the causeless fears of his people, which
discourage them in the way of their duty; there

is enough in the promises to do it.

(3.) He assured them that if they will still abide

in this land, they shall not only be safe from the

king of Babylon, but be made happy by the King of

kings: "I will build you and plant you; you

shall take me again, and become the new founda-
ty of another state; a phcenix-kingdom, rising out of

the ashes of the last." It is added, (v. 12.) I will

show mercies unto you. Note, In all our comforts

we may read God’s mercies. God will show them

mercy in this, that not only the king of Babylon

shall not destroy them, but he shall have mercy

upon them, and help to settle them. Note, What-

ever kindness men do us, we must attribute it to

God’s kindness. He makes these whom he pities to

be pitied even by those that carried them cap-

tives, Ps. cvi. 46. "The king of Babylon, having

now the disposal of the country, shall cause you to

return to your own land, shall settle you again

in your own habitations, and put you in possession of

the lands that formerly belonged to you. Note,

What God has begun we may know it will be

which is really our privilege, and our obedience will be its own

recompense. "Abide in this land, and it shall be your

own land again, and you shall continue in it. Do

not quit it, now that you stand so fair for the enjoy-

ment of it again. Be not so unwise as to forsake

your own mercies for lying vanities."

2. That as they tender the favour of God and their

own happiness, they by no means think of

going into Egypt; not thither, of all places, that

land out of which God had delivered their fathers,

and which he had so often warned them not to make

alliance with, nor to put confidence in. Observe here,

(1.) The sin they are supposed to be guilty of;

and (to him that knew their hearts it was more

than a supposition;) You begin to say, We will

not have to do with the king of Babylon, (v. 13.)

and therefore we need not think that we can be safe in it, no, not though God him-

self undertake our protection; we will not continue

in it, no, not in obedience to the voice of the Lord

our God; he may say what he pleases, but we will

do what we please; we will go into the land of

Egypt, and there will we dwell, whether God give

us leave, and go along with us, or no, v. 14.

Is supposed that their hearts were upon it; If we

shall set your faces to enter into Egypt, are ob-

stantly resolved that ye will go, and sojourn there,
though God oppose you in it, both by his word and by his providence, then take what follows." Now the reason they go upon in this resolution, is, that in Egypt we shall see no war, nor have hunger of bread, as we have had for a long time in this land, v. 14. Note, It is folly to quit our place, especially to quit the holy land, because we meet with trouble in it; but greater folly to think by changing our place to escape the judgments of God, and that evil which pursues sinners in every way of disobedience, and which there is no escaping but by returning to our allegiance.

(2.) The sentence passed upon them for this sin, if they will persist in it. It is pronounced in God's name; (v. 15.) "Hear the word of the Lord, ye remnant of Judah, who think that because you are a remnant, you must be spared of course, (v. 2.) and indulged in your own humour. [1.] Did the sword and famine frighten them? Those very men and women shall pursue them into Egypt, shall overtake them, and overcome them, there; (v. 16, 17.) "You think, because war and famine have long raging in this land, that they are entailed upon it; whereas, if you trust in God, he can make even this land a land of peace to you; you think they are confined to it, and if you can get clear of this land, you shall get out of God's judg- ments, but God will send them after you wherever you go." Note, The evils we think to escape by sin, we certainly and inevitably run ourselves upon. The men that go to Egypt, in contradiction to God's will, to escape the sword and famine, shall die in Egypt by sword and famine. We may apply it to the common calamities of human life; those that are impatient of them, and think to avoid them by changing their place, will find it, if they are determined good and determined, that they do not at all mend themselves; the grievances common to men will meet them wherever they go; all our remorses in this world are but from one wilderness to another; still we are where we were. [2.] Did the desolations of Jerusalem frighten them? Were they willing to get as far as they could from them? They shall meet with the second part of them too in Egypt; (v. 18.) "He thy anger and fury have been poured out upon you in Jerusalem, so they shall be poured out upon you in Egypt. Note, Those that have by sin made God their Enemy, will find him a consuming Fire, wherever they go. And ye shall be an execution and an astonishment. The Hebrews were of old an abomination to the Egyptians; (Gen xliii. 29.) and now the Lord is here described. When God's professing people mingle themselves with infidels, and make their court to them, they lose their dignity, and make themselves a reproach.

3. That God knew their hypocrisy in their inquiries of him, and that when they asked what he would have them to do, they were resolved to take their own way; and therefore the sentence which was before pronounced conditionally is made absolute, but conditional it shall be in or out of the land, in the blessing and the curse, in the close he makes application of what he had said. And here, (1.) He solemnly protests that he had faithfully delivered his message, v. 19. The conclusion of the whole matter is, "Go not down into Egypt, you disobey the command of God if you do, and what I have said I will witness against you; for if you shall not be certain, that whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I have plainly admonished you, you cannot now plead ignorance of the mind of God." (2.) He charges them with base dissimulation in the application they made to him for divine direction; (v. 20.) "You dissembled in your hearts, you professor one thing and intended another, you promised that you never meant to perform." You have used deceit against your souls; so the margin reads it: for those that think to put a cheat upon God, will prove in the end to have put a damning cheat upon themselves. (3.) He is already aware that they are determined to go contrary to the com- mand of God; probably, they discovered it in their countenance and secret mutterings already, before he had finished his discourse. However, he spake from him who knew their hearts; "Ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, ye have not professed to do as he said, and if you are very near of the close of your farewell sermons, had told them, (D.uct. xxxi. 27, 29.) I know thy rebellion and thy stiff-neck— and that ye will corrupt yourselves. Admire the patience of God, that he is pleased to speak to those who, he knows, will not regard him, and deal with those who, he knows, will deal treacherously, Is. xlvi. 8. (4.) He therefore reads them their doom, satisfying what he had told before, (Know certainly that ye shall die by the sword,) v. 22. God's threatenings may be vilified, but cannot be nullified, by the unbelief of man. Famine and pestilence shall pursue these sinners; for there is no place privileged from divine arrests, nor can any modifying factors go out of God's jurisdiction. Ye shall die in the place whither ye desire to go. Note, We know not what is good for ourselves; and that often proves afflictive, and sometimes fatal, which we are most fond of, and have our hearts most set upon.

CHAP. XLIII.
Jeremiah had faithfully delivered his message from God, in the foregoing chapter, and the case was made so very plain by it, that one would have thought there needed no more words about it; but we find it quite otherwise. Here is, 1. The people's contempt of this message; they denied it to be the word of God, (v. 1., 3.) and then made no difficulty of going directly contrary to it. Into Egypt they went, and took Jeremiah himself along with them, v. 4. 2. The God's pursuit of them will have a message, foretelling the king of Babylon's pursuit of them into Egypt, v. 8-13.

1. And it came to pass, that when Jere- miah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the Lord their God, for which the Lord their God had sent him to them, even all these words, 2. Then spake Azariah the son of Hosheaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: 3. But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. 4. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the Lord, to dwell in the land of Judah; 5. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; 6. Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah
the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. 7. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord. Thus came they even to Tahpanhes.

What God said to the builders of Babel, may so truly said of this people that Jeremiah is now dealing with; New nothing will be restrained from the today, they have imagined from the the. They have a fancy for Egypt, and to Egypt they will go, whatever God himself saith to the contrary. Jeremiah made them hear all he had to say, though he saw them uneasy at it; it was what the Lord their God had sent him to speak to them, and they shall have it all. And now let us see what they have truly to say.

1. They deny it to be a message from God; Johanan, and all the proud men, said to Jeremiah, Thou sekest falsehood, v. 2. See here, (1.) What was the cause of their disobedience, it was pride; only by that comes contention both with God and man: they were proud men that gave the lie to the prophet. They could not bear the contradiction of their sentiments, and the control of the divine designs, not without some hatred to the divine will itself. Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey him? Exod. v. 2. The proud, unhumbled heart of man is one of the most daring enemies God has on this side hell. (2.) What was the colour for their disobedience. They would not acknowledge it to be the word of God; The Lord hath not sent thee to comfort yourselves to scripture-roles, and so an obstinate inidelity is made the sorry subterfuge of a willful disobedience. If God had spoken to them by an angel, or as he did from Sion, they would have said that it was a delusion. Had they not consulted Jeremiah as a prophet? Had not he waited to receive instructions from God what to say to them? Had not what he said all the usual marks of prophecy upon it? Was not the prophet himself embarked in the same bottom with them? What interests could he have separate from theirs? Had he not always approved himself an Israelite indeed? And had not God proved him a prophet indeed? Had any of his words ever fallen to the ground? Why truly they had some good thoughts of Jeremiah, but they suggest, (v. 3.) Baruch setteth thee on against us. A likely thing, that Baruch should be in a plot to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans; and what would he get by that? If Jeremiah and he had been so well affected to the Chaldeans as they would represent them, they would have gone away at first with Nebuzar-adan, when he courted them, to Babylon, and not have staid to take their lot with this despised, ungrateful, rejected nation. But the tenacity of the Chaldeans was no fence against malice and slander. Or, if Baruch had been so ill disposed, could they think Jeremiah would be so influenced by him as to make God's name an authority to patronize so villainous a purpose? Note, Those that are resolved to contradict the great ends of the ministry, are industrious to bring a bad name upon it. Whether men will persist in sin, they represent those that would turn them from it as designing men for themselves, nay, as ill-designing men against their neighbours. It is well for persons who are thus misrepresented, that their witness is in heaven, and their record on high.

2. They determine to go to Egypt however. They resolve not to dwell in the land of Judah, as God had ordered them, (v. 4.) but to go themselves with one consent, and to take all that they had under their power along with them to Egypt. Those that came from all the nations whether they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah, out of a sincere affection to that land, they would not leave to their liberty, but forced them to go with them into Egypt, (v. 5.) men, women, and children, (v. 6.) along journey into a strange country, an idolatrous country, a country that had never been kind or faithful to Israel; yet thither they would go, though they deserted their own land and threw themselves out of God's protection. It is the folly of men, that they know not when they are well off, and often ruin themselves by endeavoring to mend themselves, and it is the pride of great men to force those they have under their power to follow them, though ever so much against their duty and interest. These proud men compelled even Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch his scribe to go along with them to Egypt; they carried them away as prisoners, partly to punish them, (and a greater punishment they could not inflict upon them than to force them against their conscience), and partly to corrupt theand to men's souls, even to good men's souls, Bow down, that we may go over,) partly to put some reputation upon themselves and their own way; though the prophets were under a force, they would make the world believe that they were voluntary in going along with them. Who could have blamed them for acting contrary to the word of the Lord, if the prophets themselves had acted so? They came to Tahpanhes, a famous city of Egypt, (so called from a queen of that name, 1 Kings xi. 19.) the same with Hanes; (Isa. xxx. 4.) it was now the metropolis, for Pharaoh's house was there, (v. 9.) no place could serve these proud men to settle in but the royal city, and near the court; so little mindful were they of Joseph's words, who would have had his brethren settle in Goshen. If they had had the spirit of Israelites, they would have chosen rather to dwell in the wilderness of Judah than in the most populous, populous cities of Egypt.

3. Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, 9. Take great stones in thy hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah; 10. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. 11. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death, to death; and such as are for captivity, to captivity; and such as are for the sword, to the sword. 12. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives; and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. 13. He shall break also the images of Bethshe-
mesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

We have here, as also in the next chapter, Jeremiah prophesying in Egypt. Jeremiah was now in Tahpanhes, for there his lords and masters were; he was there among the Egyptians and the Chaldeans, and may have received his call there; but there, 1. He received the word of the Lord; it came to him. God can find his people, with the visits of his grace, wherever they are; and when his ministers are bound, yet the word of the Lord is not bound. The spirit of prophecy was not confined to the land of Israel. When Jeremiah went into Egypt, not out of choice, but by constraint, God withdrew not his word and his spirit, that he might there deliver his people. Wherever we are, we must endeavour to do good, for that is our business in this world.

Now we find two messages which Jeremiah was appointed and intrusted to deliver, when he was in Egypt. We may suppose that he rendered what services he could to his countrymen in Egypt, at least as far as they would be acceptable, in performing the ordinary duties of a prophet, praying for them, and instructing and comforting them; but only two messages of his, which he had received immediately from God, are recorded; one in this chapter, relating to Egypt itself, and foretelling its destruction; the other in the next chapter, relating to the Jews in Egypt.

God had told them before, that if they went into Egypt, the sword they feared should follow them; here he tells them further, that the sword of Nebuchadrezzar, which they were in a particular manner afraid of, should follow them.

1. This is foretold by a sign. Jeremiah must take great stones, such as are used for foundations, and lay them in the clay of the furnace, or brick-kiln, which is in the open way, or beside the way that leads to Pharaoh's house; (v. 9.) some remarkable place in view of the royal palace. Egypt was famous for brick-kilns, witness the slavery of the Israelites there, whom they forced to make bricks, (Exod. v. 7.) which perhaps was now remembered against them. The foundation of Egypt's desolation was laid in those brick-kilns, in that clay. This he must do, not in the sight of the Egyptians, (they knew not Jeremiah's character,) but with the sight of the men, that is to say, of Pharaoh and his court. He was sent, that it might appear he could not prevent their going into Egypt, he might bring them to repent of their going.

2. It is foretold in express words, as express as can be.

1. That the king, the present king of Babylon, Nebuchadrezzar, the very same that had been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem, should come in against the land of Egypt, should make himself master even of this royal city, that he should set his throne in that very place where these stones were laid, v. 10. This minute circumstance is particularly foretold, that, when it was accomplished, they might be put in mind of the prophecy, and confirmed in their belief of the extent and certainty of the divine presence, to whom all small and mean events are evident. God calls Nebuchadrezzar his servant, because herein he executed God's will, accomplished his purposes, and was instrumental to carry on his designs. Note, The world's princes are God's servants, and he makes what use he pleases of them, and even those that know him not, nor aim at his honour, are the tools of his providence makes use of.

2. That he should destroy many of the Egyptians, and have them all at his mercy; (v. 11.) He shall smite the land of Egypt; and therein it has been always a warlike nation, yet none shall be able to make head against him, but whom he will he shall slay, and by what sort of death he will, whether pestilence, (for that is here meant by death, as ch. xv. 2.) by shutting them up in places infected, or by the sword of war or justice, in cold blood or hot. And whom he will, he shall save alive, and carry them away captive, and shall have them in sight to do himself pleasure, and bring them where he list, and shall not destroy them all, but bring them away captive; for he would not slay for his own advantage, but to show his greatness and the riches of his kingdom, and to bring them where he list, and shall not destroy them all, but bring them away captive; and so did but ill repay those that entertained them. They who promised to protect Israel from the king of Babylon exposed themselves to him.

3. That he shall destroy the idols of Egypt, both the temples, and the images, of their gods; (v. 12.) He shall burn the houses of the gods of Egypt, but it shall be with a fire of God's kindling; he will bring God's wrath upon them, and then he burns some of them, and carries others captive, Isa. xxxvi. 1. Beth-shemesh, or the house of the sun, was so called from a temple there built to the sun, where at certain times there was a general meeting of the worshippers of the sun. The statues or standing images there he shall break in pieces, (v. 13.) and every brick-kiln and the foundations of them, intimates that he should lay all waste, when even the temple and the images should not escape the fury of the victorious army. The king of Babylon was himself a great idolater, and a patron of idolatry, he had his temples and images in honour of the sun, as well as the Egyptians, and yet he is employed to destroy the idols of Egypt. Thus God sometimes makes one wicked man, or wicked nation a scourge and plague to another.

4. That he shall make himself master of the land of Egypt, and none shall he able to plead its cause, or avenge its quarrel; (v. 12.) He shall array himself with the rich spoils of the land of Egypt, both beautify and fortify himself with them; he shall array himself with them as ornaments and as armour, and this, though it shall be a rich and heavy booby; being expert in war, and expeditions, he shall slip on with as much ease, and in as little time, in comparison, as a shepherd slips on his garment, when he goes to turn out his sheep in a morning. And, being loaded with the wealth of many other nations, the fruits of his conquests, he shall make no more of the spoils of the land of Egypt than of a shepherd's coat. And when he has taken what he pleases, (as he hadadthem must do, Isa. xlv. 6.) he shall go forth in peace, without any molestation given him, or any precipitation for fear of it, so effectually reduced shall the land of Egypt be. This destruction of Egypt by the king of Babylon is foretold, Ezek. xxxix. 19, and xxx. 10. Babylon lay by a great distance from Egypt, and yet from thence the destruction of Egypt comes; for God can make those judgments strike home which are far-reaching.

CHAP. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, 1. An awakening sermon which Jeremiah preached to the Jews in Egypt, to requite them for their idolatries, to make them witness against them and against the gods given them both by the word and the rod of God, and to threaten the judgments of God against them for it, v. 1 - 14. II. The impudent and insolent contempt which the people put upon this admonition, and their declared resolution to persist in their idolatries notwithstanding, in despite of God and Jeremiah, v. 15. - 19. III. The sentence passed upon them for their obstinacy, that they should all be cut off, and perish in Egypt, except a very small number; and, as a sign or earnest of it, the king of Egypt shall shortly fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, and be unable any longer to protect them, v. 20. - 30.

1. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and
of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there; for none shall return but such as shall escape.

The Jews in Egypt are now dispersed into divers parts of the country, into Migdol and Noph, and other places, and Jeremiah is sent on an errand from God to them, which he delivered either when he had the most of them together, in Pathros, (v. 15.) or going about from place to place preaching to this purport. He delivered this message in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, and in it,

1. God puts them in mind of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, which, though the captives by the rivers of Babylon were daily mindful of them, (Ps. cxxvii. 1.) the fugitives in the cities of Egypt seem to have forgotten, and needed to be put in mind of, though these desolations, one would have thought, had not been so long out of sight as to be like out of mind. (v. 2.) It is a most deplorable condition Judah and Jerusalem are brought into; now will you consider whence those desolations came? From the wrath of God; it was his fury and his anger that kindled the fire which made Jerusalem and the cities of Judah waste and desolate; (v. 6.) whoever were the instruments of the destruction, they were but instruments: it was a destruction from the Almighty.

2. He puts them in mind of the sins that brought those desolations upon Judah and Jerusalem; it was for their wickedness, that was it that provoked God to anger, and especially their idolatrie, their serving other gods, (v. 3.) and giving that honour to counterfeit deities, the creatures of their own fancy, and the work of their own hands, which should have been given to the true God only; they forsook the God who was known among them, and whose name was great, for gods that they knew not, upstart deities, whose original was obscure, and not worth taking notice of; "Neither they, nor you, nor your fathers, could give any rational account why the God of Israel was exchanged for such impostors." They knew not that they were gods, nay, they could not but know that they were no gods. (v. 4.)

3. He puts them in mind of the frequent fair warning he had given them by his word not to serve other gods, the contempt of which warnings was a great aggravation of their idolatrie. (v. 5.) The prophets were sent with a great deal of care to call them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate. It becomes us to speak of sin with the utmost dread and detestation as an abominable thing: it is certainly so, for it is that which God hates, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. Call it grievous, call it odious, that we may by all means possible put ourselves and others out of love with it. It becomes us to give warning of the danger of sin, and the fatal consequences of it, with all seriousness and earnestness; Oh, do not it! If you love God do not, for it is provoking to him, if you love your own souls, do not, for it is destructive to them." Let conscience do this for us in an hour of temptation, when we are ready to yield. O take heed; do not this abominable thing which the Lord hates; for if God hates it, thou shouldest hate it. But did they regard what God said to them? No! They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, (v. 5.) they still persisted in their idolatries; and you see what came of it, therefore God's anger was poured out upon them, as at this day. Now this was intended for warning to you, who have not only heard the judgments of God's mouth, as they did, but have likewise seen the judgments of his hand, by which
you should be startled and awakened, for they were inflicted in terroremen—that others might hear and fear, and do no more as they did, lest they should fare as they feared.

4. He reproves them for, and upbraideth them with, their continued idolatries, now that they were come into Egypt; (v. 8.) You burn incense to other gods in the land of Egypt; therefore God forbade them to go into Egypt, because he knew it would be a snare to them. Those whom God sent into the land of the Chaldeans, though that was an idolatrous country, were under the power of their idolatries. The Babylonians and Chaldeans were driven from idolatry; but those who went against God’s mind into the land of the Egyptians, were there by the power of their own corruption, more wedded than ever to their idolatries; for when we thrust ourselves without cause or call into places of temptation, it is just with God to leave us to ourselves. In doing this, (1.) They did a great deal of injury to themselves and their families; “You commit this great evil against your souls,” (v. 7.) you wrong them, you deceive them with that which is false, you destroy them, for it will be fatal to them.” Notice, In sinning against God, we sin against our own souls, “It is the ready way to cut yourselves off from all comfort and hope, (v. 8.) to cut off your name and honour; so that you will, both by your sin and by your miseries, become a curse and a reproach among all nations, and be more abhorred as a Jew. It is the ready way to cut off from you all your relations, all that you should have joy of, and have your families built up in, man and woman, child and suckling, so that Judah shall be a land lost for want of heirs.” (2.) They filled up the measure of the iniquity of their fathers, and, as if that had been too little for them, added to it; (v. 9.) “Have you forgotten the wickedness of those who are gone before you, that you are not humbled for it as you ought to be, and afraid of the consequences of it?” Have you forgotten the punishments of your fathers? So some read it. “Do you not know how dear their idolatry cost them? And yet dare you continue in that vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, though you received the curse with it? He reminds them of the sins and punishments of the kings of Judah, who, great as they were, escaped not the judgments of God for their idolatry; yet, and they should have taken warning by the wickedness of their wives, who had seduced them to idolatry. In the original it is, And of his wives, which, Dr. Lightfoot thinks, tacitly reflects upon Solomon’s wives, particularly his Egyptian wives, to whom the idolatry of the kings of Judah owed its original. “Have you forgotten this, and what came of it, that you dare venture upon the same wicked courses?” (See Neh. xiii. 18, 26.) “Nay, to come to your own times, Have you forgotten your own wickedness and the wickedness of your wives, when you lived in prosperity in Jerusalem, and what ruin it brought upon you? But, alas! to what purpose do I speak to them?” (says God, to the prophet, v. 17.) “The following are the blotted, unclean things, all the stumbling molestations that have been under. They have not feared nor walked in my law.” Notice, Those that walk not in the law of God, thereby show that they are destitute of the fear of God.

5. He threatens their utter ruin for their persisting in their idolatry, now that they were in Egypt. Judah had been threatened against them, as before, (ch. xlix. 22.) that they shall not make in Egypt as they did in the land of their iniquity, that their desolation shall not be called back; they set their faces to go into the land of Egypt, (v. 12.) were resolute in their purpose against God, and now God is resolute in his purpose against them; I will set my face to cut off all Judah, v. 11. They that think not only to afflict but to contront God Al-

mimgl, will find themselves outcast; for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, Ps. xxxiv. 18. It is here threatened, concerning those idolatrous Jews in Egypt, (1.) That they shall all be consumed, without exception, no degree or order among them shall escape; They shall fall, from the least to the greatest, (v. 12.) high and low, rich and poor. (2.) That they shall be consumed by the very same judgments which God made use of for the punishment of Jerusalem, the sword, famine, and pestilence, v. 13. They shall not be wasted by natural deaths, as Israel in the wilderness, but by these sore judgments, which, by flying into Egypt, they thought to get out of the reach of. (3.) That none (except a very few that will narrowly escape) shall ever return to the land of Judah again, v. 14. They thought, being nearer, that they stood fairer for a return to their own land than those that were carried to Babylon; yet those shall return, and those shall not; for the way in which God has promised us any comfort is much surer than that in which we have projected it for ourselves. Observe, Those that are fretful and discontented will be uneasy, and fond of change, wherever they are. The Israelites, when they were in the land of Judah, desired to go into Egypt; (ch. xliii. 22.) but when they were in Egypt, they desired to return to the land of Judah again; they lifted up their soul to it, (so it is in the margin,) which denotes an earnest desire. But because they would not dwell there when God commanded it, they shall not dwell there when they desire it. If we walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to us. How can those expect to be well off, who would not know when they were so, though God himself told them?

15. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, 16. As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. 17. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for they had us plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. 18. But since we left off to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. 19. And when we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drunk-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men? We have here the people’s obstinate refusal to submit to the power of the word of God in the month of Jeremiah. We have scarcely such an instance of downright, daring contradiction to God himself as this, or such an avowed rebellion of the carnal mind. Observe, I. The persons who thus set God and his judgment at defiance; it was not some one that was thus
We were guiltless of all the hosts of heaven, or of the frame of heaven, the whole machine, ch. vii. 18. These daring sinners do not now go about to make excuses for them who harden themselves; but that Jeremiah spoke for himself, and not from God, (as before, ch. xiii. 2.) but they own that he spoke to them in the name of the Lord, and yet tell him flatteringly, in so many words, "We will not hearken unto thee; we will do that which is forbidden, and run the venture of that which is threatened." Note, Those that live in disobedience to God commonly grow worse and worse, and the heart is more and more hardened by the progress of sin. Here is the unreasonable language of the rebellious heart: We will certainly do whatsoever thing goes forth out of our own mouth, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary. What they said, many think, who yet have not arrived at such a degree of impudence as to speak it out. It is that which the young man would be at in the days of his youth; he would walk in the way of his heart, and the sight of his eyes, and would have and do every thing he has a mind to, Eccl. xi. 9.

2. They give some sort of reasons for their resolution; for the most absurdly and unreasonably wicked men will have something to say for themselves, till the day comes when every mouth shall be silenced. (1.) They plead many of those things which the advocates for Rome make the marks of a true church, and not only justify but magnify themselves with; and these here have as much right to them as they have. [1.] They plead antiquity; We are resolved to burn incense to the queen of heaven, for our fathers did so; it is a practice that pleads prescription more strongly against us than against our fathers? [2.] They plead authority; they that have power practised it themselves, and prescribed it to others; Our kings and our princes did it, whom God set over us, and who were of the seed of David. [3.] They plead unity; it was not here and there one that did it, but we, all with one consent, we that are a great multitude, (v. 15.) we did it. [4.] They plead universality; it was not done here and there, but in the cities of Judah. [5.] They plead visibility; it was not done in a corner, in dark and shady groves only, but in the streets, openly and publicly. [6.] They plead that it was the practice of the ancient church, the holy see; it was not now learned first in Egypt, but it had been done in Jerusalem. [7.] They plead prosperity; then had we plenty of bread, and of all good things, we were well, and saw no evil. All the former pleas, I fear, were too true in fact; God's witnesses against their idolatry were few and hid; Eliphaz thought that he was left alone; and this last might perhaps be true as to some peculiar persons, but as to their nation, they were still under rebukes for their rebellions, and there was no peace to them that went out or came in, 2 Chron. xv. 5. But supposing all to be true, yet this does not at all excuse them from idolatry; it is the law of God that we must be ruled and judged by, not the practice of men.

(2.) They suggest that the judgments they had of late been under, were brought upon them for leaving off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, v. 18. So perversely did they misconstrue Providence, though God, by his prophets, had so often explained it to them, and the thing itself spoke the direct contrary! Since we forsook our idolatry, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed with one another, and the swine have eaten up the fruits of their wickedness, and they still retained their idols in their heart, and an affection to their old sins; but they would have it thought that it was because they had forsaken the acts of sin. Thus the afflictions which should have been for their welfare, to part between them and their sins, being misinterpreted, did but confirm them in their sins. Thus, in the first ages of Christianity, when God of the nations had been inculcating their idolatrous practices, and persecuting others for opposing the Christians, and in some cases for opposing the Christians, and persecuting them, they put a contrary sense upon the calamities, as if they were sent to punish them for conniving at the Christians, and tolerating them, and cried, Christians ad leges—Throw the Christians to the lions. Yet, if it had been true, as they said here, that since they returned to the service of the true God, the God of Israel, they were saved, and that it was that answer they should revolt from him again? That was as much as to say that they served not him, but their own bellies. Those who knew God, and put their trust in him, will serve him, though he starve them, though they slay them, though they never see a good day with him in this world, being well assured that they shall not lose him by him in the end.

(3.) They plead that though the women were most forward and active in their idolatries, yet they did it with the consent and approbation of their husbands; the women were busy to make cakes for meat-offerings to the queen of heaven, and to prepare and pour out the drink-offerings, v. 19. We found, before, that it was their work, ch. vii. 15. "But also we do ourselves the same, and eat the bread of our hurtful hands." Here is the mark of the true church, and what we ought to pretend to be wiser and more holy than our fathers? But also we do ourselves the same, and eat the bread of our hurtful hands. [1.] They mean to pretend to be wiser than our fathers. [2.] They mean to pretend to be wiser than our fathers. [3.] They suggest that the heads of the women were not in the same case with the heads of the men, and that the women were engaged in these idolatrous practices more than the men. Note, It is sad when those who are in the nearest relation to each other, who should quicken each other to love, and set the law of heaven before the lusts of the flesh, harden each other in sin, and so ripen one another for hell. Some understand this as spoken by the husbands, (v. 15.) who plead that they did not do it without their men, without their elders and rulers, their great men, and men in authority; but because the making of the cakes, and the pouring out of the drink-offerings, are expressly spoken of as the women's work, (ch. vii. 18.) it...
seems rather to be understood as their plea: but it was a frivolous plea. What would it avail them to be able to say that it was according to their husbands' mind, when they knew that it was contrary to their God's mind?

20. Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, 21. The incense that ye burnt in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it not into his mind? 22. So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of thy doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is thy land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. 23. Because you have burnt incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. 24. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt; 25. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. 26. Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the Lord, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. 27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good; and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. 28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs. 29. And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the Lord, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil: 30. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon his enemy, and that sought his life.

Daring sinners may speak many a bold word, and many a big word, but, after all, God will have the last word; for he will be justified when he speaks, and all flesh, even the proudest, shall be silent before him. Prophets may be run down, but God cannot; for the prophet would not.

1. Jeremiah has something to say to them from himself, which he could say without a spirit of prophecy, and that was to rectify their mistake, (a willful mistake it was,) concerning the calamities they had been under, and the true intent and meaning of them. They said that these miseries came upon them because they had now left off burning incense to the queen of heaven; “No,” says he, “it was because you had formerly done it, not because you had now left it off.” When they gave him that answer, he immediately replied, (v. 20.) that the incense which they and their fathers had burnt to other gods did indeed go unpunished a great while, for God was long-suffering toward them, and during the day of his patience it was, perhaps, as they said, well with them, and they saw no evil; but at last it came back upon them, so proved itself to have no longer bear, (v. 22.) but began a controversy with them, whereupon some of them did a little reform, their sins left them, for so it might be said, rather than that they left their sins. But their old guilt being still upon the score, and their corrupt inclinations still the same, God remembered against them the idolatries of their fathers, their kings, and their princes, in the streets of Jerusalem; which they, instead of being ashamed of, gloried in, as a justification of them in their idolatries; they all came into his mind, (v. 21.) all the abominations which they had committed, (v. 22.) and all their disobedience to the voice of the Lord, (v. 23.) all were brought to account; and therefore, to punish them for these, in their land a desolation and a curse, unto this day; (v. 25.) therefore, not for their late reformation, but for their old idolatries, is all this evil happened to them, as at this day, v. 23. Note, The right understanding of the cause of our troubles, one would think, should go far toward the cure of our sins. Whatever evil comes upon us, it is because we have sinned against the Lord, and should therefore stand in awe, and sin not.

2. Jeremiah has something to say to them, to the women particularly, from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; they have given their answer, now let them hear God's reply, v. 24. Judah, that dwells in the land of Egypt, has God speaking to them, even there, that is their privilege; let them observe what he says, that is their duty, v. 26. Now God, in his reply, tells them plainly,

1. That since they were fully determined to persist in their idolatry, God was fully determined to proceed in a controversy with them; if they would go on to provoke him, he would go on to punish them, and see which would get the better at last. God repeats what they had said; (v. 25.) “You and your wives are agreed in this obstinacy, you have spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hands, you have said it, and you stand to it, have said it, and go on to do it, you have vowed our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven,” as if, though it were a sin, yet their having vowed to do it, were sufficient to justify them in the doing of it; whereas no man can by his vow make that lawful to himself, much less duty, which God has already made sin. “Well,” (says God,) “you will accomplish, you
CHAP. XLV.

The prophecy we have in this chapter concerns Baruch only, yet is intended for the support and encouragement of all the Lord's people that serve him faithfully, and keep close to him in difficult, trying times. It is placed here after the death of the apostle Paul, and the dispersion of the Jews, but was delivered long before, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, as was the prophecy in the next chapter, and, probably, those that follow. Here there is a note, To those who have brought into trouble for writing and reading Jeremiah's roll, v. 1. 3. How his fears were checked with a reproof for his great expectations, and silenced with a promise of special preservation, v. 4, 5. Though Baruch was only Jeremiah's scribe, yet this notice is taken of his frights, and this provision made for his comfort; for God despises not any of his servants, but graciously concerns himself for the meanest, and weakest, for Baruch the scribe, as well as for Jeremiah the prophet.

1. The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of NeHan, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; 3. Thou didst say, Wo is me now! for the Lord hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest. 4. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The Lord saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. 5. And seest thou great things for thyself? seek them not; for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

How Baruch was employed in writing Jeremiah's prophecies, and reading them, we had an account, ch. xxxvi. and how he was threatened for it by the king, warrants being out for him, and he forced to abscond, and how narrowly he escaped under a divine protection, to which story this chapter should have been as suitable, but that having reference to a private person, it is here thrown into the latter end of the book, as St. Paul's epistle to Philemon is put after his other epistles. Observe,

1. The consternation that poor Baruch was in when he was sought for by the king's messengers, and obliged to hide his head, and the notice which God took of it. He cried out, Wos is me now! v. 3. He was a young man, and no stranger in the world, and he was well affected to the things of God, and was willing to serve God and his prophet; but when it came to suffering, he was desirous to be excused, as being an ingenuous man, and a scholar, he stood fair for preferment, and now to be driven into a corner, and in danger of a prison, or worse, was a great disappointment to him. When he read the roll publicly, he hoped to gain reputation by it, that it would have made him to be taken notice of and employed, but when he found that, instead of that, it exposed
him to contemt, and brought him into disgrace, he cried out, "I am undone, I shall fall into the pursuers' hands, and be imprisoned, and put to death, or banished; the Lord has added grief to my sorrow, has loaded me with one trouble after another; afraid of the sword and the famine and the pestilence of my country's ruin, I have the sorrow of being treated as a criminal for so doing; and though another might make nothing of this, yet, for my part, I cannot hear it, it is a burden too heavy for me; I fainted in my sighing, or I faint with my sighing, it just kills me, and I find no rest, no satisfaction in my own mind. I cannot compose myself as I should and would to bear it, nor have I any prospect of relief or comfort." Baruch was a good man, but, we must say, this was his infirmity. Note, (1.) Young beginners in religion, like fresh-water sailors, are apt to be discouraged with the little difficulties which they commonly meet with at first in the service of God. They do but run with the footmen, and it weary them; they faint upon the very dawning of the day of adversity, and it is an evidence that their strength is small, (Prov. xxii. 10,) that their faith is weak, and that they are yet but babes, who cry for every hurt and every fright. (2.) Some of the best and dearest of God's saints and servants, when they have seen storms rising, have been in frights, and apt to make the worst of things, and to disquiet themselves with melancholy apprehensions; many an interesting story, the (C) Piety, God takes notice of the frets and discontent of his people, and is displeased with them. Baruch should have rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer in such a good cause, and with such good company, but, instead of that, he is vexed at it, and blames his lot, and, reflects upon his God, as if he had dealt hardly with him; what he said was spoken in a hot and passion, but God was offended; to him he was well, and he said dear for it, when his spirit was provoked, he spake unadvisedly with his lips, Thou didst say so and so, and it was not well said; God keeps account of what we say, even when we speak in haste.

2. The reproof that God gave him for talking at this rate. Jeremiah was troubled to see him in such an agitation, and knew not well what to say to him; he was both heart and tongue moved to convince him, but he declined it; it was willing to come to him, and yet knew not which way to go about it; but God tells him what he shall say to him, v. 4. Jeremiah could not be certain what was at the bottom of these complaints and fears, but God sees it; they came from his corruptions; that the hurt therefore might not be healed slightly, he searches the wound, and shows him that he had raised his expectations too high in this world, and had promised himself too much from it, and that made the distress and trouble he was in so very grievous to him, and so hard to be borne. Note, The frowns of the world would not disquiet us as they do, if we did not foolishly flatter ourselves with the hopes of its smiles, and court and covet them too much. It is our over-fondness for the good things of this life and time that makes us so impatient under its evil things. Now God shows him that it was his fault and folly, at this time of day especially, either to desire, or to look for, an abundance of the wealth and honour of this world. For, (1.) The ship was sinking; ruin was coming upon the Jewish nation, an utter and universal ruin, "That which I have built, to be a house for myself, I am breaking down, and that which I have planted, to be a pleasant-yard for myself, I am plucking up, even this whole land, the Jewish church and state; and dost thou now seek great things for thyself? Dest thou expect to be rich and honourable, and to make a figure now? No," (2.) It is absurd for thee to be now printing thine own cabin. Canst thou expect to be high, when all are brought low, to be full when all about thee are empty? To seek ourselves more than the public welfare, especially to seek great things to ourselves, when the public is in danger, is very uncommon with Israelites. We may apply it to this world, and bring it up, "Thou livest in God's house, this is thy key, is breaking down and pulling up, every thing is uncertain and perishing, we cannot expect any continuing city here. What folly is it then to seek great things for ourselves here, where every thing is little, and nothing certain!

3. The encouragement that God gave him to hope that though he should not be great, yet he should be safe. "I will bring evil upon all flesh, all nations of men, all orders and degrees of men, but thy life will I give to thee for a prey," (thy soul, so the word is,) "in all places whith thou goest. Thou must expect to be hurried from place to place, and, wherever thou goest, to be in danger, but thou shalt escape, though often very narrowly, shal live thy life, but it shall be as a prey, which isget with much difficulty and danger, thou shalt be saved by fire." Note, The preservation and continuance of life are very great mercies, and we are bound to account them such, as they are the prolonging of our opportunity to glorify God in this world, and to get ready for a better; and at some times, especially when the arrows of death fly thick about us, they are a signal favour, and what we ought to be thankful for, and, while we are in these things, to be content, though we be disappointed of the great things we expected. Is not the life more than meat?

CHAP. XLVI.

How judgment began at the house of God. We have found in the foregoing prophecy and history; but now we shall find that it did not end there; in this and the following chapters, the judgment is extended to the rest of the neighbouring nations, and those brought upon them too mostly by the king of Babylon, till at length Babylon itself comes to be reckoned with. The prophecy against Egypt is begun first, and takes up this whole chapter, in which we have, I. A prophecy of the descent of Pharaoh-necho's army by the Chaldean forces at Carchemish, which was accomplished soon after, in the 4th year of Jehoiakim, v. 1, 12. II. A prophecy of the conquest which Nebuchadrezzar should make upon the land of Egypt, and his success in it, which was accomplished some years after the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 13. 26. III. A prophecy of the reverse of the Israel of God in the midst of these calamities, v. 27, 28.

1. The word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles; 2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh-necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah. 3. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle. 4. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furnish the spears, and put on the brigandines. 5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the Lord. 6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates. 7. Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose wag
Egypt now rises up like a flood, scouring to keep within its own banks, and threatening to overflow all the neighbouring lands; it is a very formidable army that the Egyptians bring into the field upon this occasion; the prophet summons them, (v. 9.)

Come up, ye horses; rage, ye chariots; he challenges them to bring all their confederate troops together, the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow. 10. For this is the day of the Lord Gon of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord Gon of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates. 11. Go up into Gilead and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured. 12. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.

The first verse is the title of that part of this book which relates to the neighbouring nations, and follows here. It is the word of the Lord which came to Jeremiah against the Gentiles; for God is King and Judge of nations, knows them, and will call them to an account, who know him not, nor take any notice of him. Both Isaiah and Ezekiel prophesied against these nations that Jeremiah here has a several saying to, and with reference to the same events. In the Old Testament we have the word of the Lord against the Gentiles, in the New Testament we have the word of the Lord for the Gentiles, that they who were afar off are made nigh. He begins with Egypt, because they were of old Israel's oppressors, and of late their deceived, when their own conscience and conscience proclaims the overthrow of the army of Pharaoh-necho, by Nebuchadnezzar, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, which was so complete a victory to the king of Babylon, that thereby he recovered from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt, and so weakened him that he came not again any more out of his land, (as we find, 2 Kings, xxiv. 29.) and so made him pay dear for his expedition against the king of Assyria four years before, in which he slew Josiah, 2 Kings xxvii. 29. This is the event that is here foretold in lofty expressions of triumph over Egypt thus foiled; which Jeremiah would speak of with a particular pleasure, because the death of Josiah, which he had lamented, was now avenged on Pharaoh-necho. Now here,

1. The Egyptians are upbraided with the mighty preparations they made for this expedition, in which the prophet calls to them to do their utmost, for so they would; "Come then, order the buckler, let the weapons of war be got ready," v. 3. Egypt was famous for horses, let them be harnessed, and the cavalry well mounted; Get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth, &c. v. 4. See what preparations the children of men make, with abundance of care and trouble, and at a vast expense, to kill one another, as if they did not die fast enough of themselves! He compares their marching out upon this expedition to the rising of their river Nile; (v. 7, 8.) It concerns them that go forth to war, not only to order the buckler and harness the horses, but to repent of their sins, and pray to God for his presence with them, and that they may have it to keep themselves from every wicked thing.

2. They are upbraided with the great expectations they had from this expedition, which were quite contrary to what God intended in bringing them together. They knew their own thoughts, and God knew them, and sat in heaven, and laughed at them; but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, for he gathers them as sheaves into the floor, Mic. iv. 11, 12. Egypt saith, (v. 8.) I will go up, I will cover the earth, and none shall hinder me; I will destroy the city, whatever city it is that stands in my way; like Pharaoh of old, I will pass over this land, I will overtake. The Egyptians say that they shall have a day of it, but God saith, that it shall be his day; This is the day of the Lord God of hosts, (v. 10.) the day in which he will be exalted in the overthrow of the Egyptians. They meant one thing, but God meant another; they designed it for the advancement of their dignity, and the enlargement of their dominion, but God designed it for the great abasement and weakening of their kingdom. It is a day of vengeance for Josiah's death; it is a day of sacrifice to divine justice, to which multitudes of the sinners of Egypt shall fall as victims. Note, When men think to magnify themselves by pushing on unrighteous enterprises, let them expect that God will glorify himself by blasting them, and cutting them off.

3. They are represented with a swift and glorious flight when they come to an engagement: (v. 5, 6.) Wherefore have I seen them, notwithstanding all these mighty and vast preparations, and all these expressions of bravery and resolution, when the Chaldean army faces them, dismayed, turned back, quite disheartened, and no spirit left in them. They make a shameful retreat, even their mighty ones, who, one would think, should have stood their ground, flee a flight, flee by consent, make the best of their way, flee in confusion, and with the utmost precipitation; they have neither time nor heart to look back, but fear is round about them, for they apprehend it so. And yet, (2.) They cannot make their escape; they have the shame of flying, and yet not the satisfaction of saving themselves by flight; they might as well have stood their ground, and died upon the spot; for even the swift shall not flee away. The lightness of their heels shall fail them when it comes to the trial, as well as the stoutness of their hearts; the mighty shall not escape, nay, they are beaten down, and broken to pieces. They shall strive in their flight, and fall backward the night, and their enemy's country; for such confusion were they in that they fell backward in their flight, and not forward, as they expected, that, instead of making homeward, as men usually do in that case, they made forward. Note, The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Valiant men are not always victorious.
4. They are upbraid with their utter inability ever to recover this blow, which should be fatal to their nation, vi. 11, 12. The damsel, the daughter of Egypt, that lived in great pomp and state, is sorely wounded by this defeat. Let her now seek for balm in Gilgal, and physicians there; let her use all the medicines her wise men can prescribe for the healing of this hurt, and the repairing of the loss sustained by this defeat; but all in vain, no cure shall be to them; they shall never be able to bring such a powerful army as this into the field again. "The nations that rang of thy glory and strength, have now heard of thy shame, how shamefully they were routed, and how thou art weakened by it." It needs not be spread by the triumphs of the conquerors, the shrieks and outcry of the conquered will proclaim it; thy cry hath filled the country about. For when they fled several ways, one mighty man stunned another, and dashed against another, such confusion were they in, that both together became a prey to the pursuers, an easy prey. A thousand such dreadful accidents there should be, which should fill the country with the cry of them that were overcome. Let not the mighty man therefore glory in his might, for the time may come when it will stand him in no stead.

13. The word that the Lord spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt. 14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph, and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee. 15. Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the Lord did drive them. 16. He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another; and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword. 17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed. 18. As I live, saith the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come. 19. O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant. 20. Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north. 21. Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation. 22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood. 23. They shall cut down her forest, saith the Lord, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable. 24. The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north. 25. The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, saith, Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him: 26. And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterwards it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the Lord. 27. But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. 28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord; for I am with thee: for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure: yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

In these verses, we have,
1. Confusion and terror spoken to Egypt. The accomplishment of the prediction in the former part of the chapter disabled the Egyptians to make any attempts upon other nations; for what could they do when their army was routed? But still they remained strong at home, and none of their neighbours durst make any attempts upon them. Though the kings of Egypt came no more out of their land, (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) yet they kept safe and easy in their land; and what would they desire more, than peacefully to enjoy their own? One would think all men should be content to do this, and not covet to invade their neighbours. But the measure of Egypt's iniquity is full, and now they shall not long enjoy their own; they that encroached on others shall now be themselves encroached on. The scope of the prophecy here is to show how the kingdom of Egypt should be put to a trial; and the land of Egypt, and bring the war into their own bosoms, which they had formerly carried into his borders, v. 15. This was fulfilled by the same hand with the former, even Nebuchadrezzar's, but many years after, twenty at least, and, probably, the prediction of it was long after the former prediction, and perhaps much about the same time with that other prediction of the same event which we have, ch. xlv. 1. Here is the alarm of war sounded in Egypt, to their great amazement, (v. 14.) notice given to the country that the enemy is approaching, the sword is devouring round about in the neighbouring countries, and therefore it is time for the Egyptians to put themselves in a posture of defence, to prepare for war, that they may give the enemy a warm reception. This must be proclaimed in all parts of Egypt, particularly in Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes, because in these places especially the Jewish refugees, or fugitives rather, had planted themselves, in contempt of God's command; (ch. xlv. 1.) and let them hear what a sorry shelter Egypt is likely to be to them.
2. The retreat, hereupon, of the forces of other nations which the Egyptians had in their pay, is here foretold. Some considerable number of those troops, it is probable, were posted upon the frontiers
...guard them, where they were beaten off by the invaders, and put to flight. Then were the valiant men swept away, (v. 15.) as with a sweeping rain; (it is the word that is used, Prov. xxviii. 3.) they can none of them stand their ground, because the Lord drives them from their respective posts, and the Chaldeans drive them by enabling the Chaldeans to drive them. It is not possible that those should fix whom the wrath of God chases. He it was, (v. 16.) that made many to fall, yea, when their day is come to fall, the enemy makes not throw them down, they shall fall upon one another, every man shall be a stumbling-block to his fellow, to his lover; yea, he, if he pleases, makes his chosen people sanitation, every man's sword shall be against his fellow. He hired men, the troops Egypt has in her service, are indeed in the midst of her like fattened bullocks, lusty men, able-bodied, and high-spirited, who were likely for action, and to have made their part good against the enemy; but they are turned back, their hearts failed them, and, instead of fighting, they are fled away together. How could they withstand their fate, when the day of their calamity was come, the day in which God will visit them in wrath? Some think they are compared to fattened bullocks for their luxury; they had wantoned in pleasures, so that they were very unfit for hardships, and therefore turned back, and could not stand. In this consternation, (1.) They all made homeward to town, or rather, it is probable, their detestable owning. When he posted them there upon the borders of his country, it is probable that he told them, he would within such a time come himself with a gallant army of his own subjects to support them; but he failed them, and when the enemy advanced, they found they had not come to back them, so that they were perfectly abandoned to the fury of the invaders; or, (2.) They thought that they quite passed their post, and deserted the service to go. 

Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise, (v. 17.) he can hector, and talk big of the mighty things he would do, but that is all; it brings nothing to pass, all his promises to those in alliance with him, or that are employed for him, vanish into smoke; he brings not the succours he engaged to bring, or not till it is too late; He has passed the time appointed, he did not keep his day, nor keep his day, and therefore they bid him farewell, they will never serve under him any more. Note: Those that make most noise in any business, are frequently but a noise. Great talkers are little doers.

3. The formidable power of the Chaldean army is here described as bearing down all before it. The King of kings, whose name is the Lord of hosts, and before whom the kings of the earth are made as the dust of the earth, and the powers of the heavens as the dust to the feet of the kings of the earth, (ch. xxxvii. 25, 26.) they are all now under the dominion and power of the king of Babylon, who overpowers all thebes, the utmost regions of the earth, (v. 18.) as Tabor overtops the mountains, and Caramel overlooks the sea, so shall the King of Babylon overpower all the force of Egypt; such a command shall he have, such a sway shall he bear! v. 18. He and his armies shall come against Egypt with axes, as hewers of wood, (v. 22.) and the Egyptians shall be no more able to resist them than the tree is to resist the man that comes with an axe to cut it down; so that Egypt shall be felled as a forest is by the hewers of wood, (which, if they be many of them, and those well provided with instruments for the purpose)
word it shall be inhabited, shall be peopled again, whereas by this destruction it was almost despopled. Ezekiel foretells that this should be at the end of 40 years, Ezek. xxix. 13. See what changes the nations of the earth are subject to, how they are emptied and increased again; and let not nations that prosper be secure, nor these that for the present are in thraldom despair.

11. Comfort and peace are here spoken to the Israel of God, v. 27, 28. Some understand it of those whom the king of Egypt had carried into captivity with Jehoahaz, but we read not of any that were carried away captives with him: it may therefore rather refer to the captives of Babylon, whom God had mercy in store for, or, more generally to all the people of God, designed for their encouragement in the most difficult times, when the judgments of a day are abroad among the nations. We had these words of comfort before, ch. xxx. 10, 11. 1. Let the wicked of the earth tremble, they have cause for it; but fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not disdained, O Israel; and again, Fear thou not, O Jacob. God would not have his people to be a timorous people. 2. The wicked of the earth shall be put away like dust, not to be looked after any more; but God's people, in order to their being saved, shall be hewn out and gathered, though they be no more, shall be redeemed, though they be held in captivity, and shall return. 3. The wicked is like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, they fire when none pursues; but Jacob, being at home in God, shall be at rest, and at ease, and none shall make him afraid; for what time he is afraid, he has a God to trust to. 4. The wicked is bound before God, but, wherever thou art, O Jacob, I am with thee, a very present Help. 5. A full end shall be made of the nations that oppressed God's Israel, as Egypt and Babylon; but mercy shall be kept in store for the Israel of God; they shall be corrected, but not cast off, the correction shall be in measure, in respect of degree and continuance. Nations have their periods, the Jewish nation itself is come to an end, as a nation; but the gospel-church, God's spiritual Israel, still continues, and will to the end of time; in that this promise is to have its full accomplishment, that though God correct it, he will never make a full end of it.

CHAP. XLVII.

This chapter reads the Philistines their doom, as the former read the Egyptians theirs; and by the same hand, that of Nebuchadrezzar. It is short, but terrible; and Tyre and Zidon, though they lay at some distance from them, come in sharers with them, in the destruction they are threatened. It is foretold that the forces of the northern crowned should come upon them, to their great terror, v. 1, 5. II. That the war should continue long, and their endeavours to put an end to it should be in vain, v. 6, 7.

1. The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

2. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein; then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. 3. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands; 4. Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaneth; for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphir. 5. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself? 6. O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. 7. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.

As the Egyptians had often proved false friends, so the Philistines had always been sworn enemies, to the Israel of God, and the more dangerous and vocations for their being such near neighbours to them. They were considerably humbled in David's time, but, it seems, they had got head again, and were a considerable people till Nebuchadrezzar cut them off with their neighbours, which is the event here foretold. The danger of this prophecy is observable, in the book before Pharaoh smote Gaza, when this blow was given to Gaza by the king of Egypt is not certain, whether in his expedition against Carchemish, or in his return thence, after he had slain Josiah, or when he afterward came with design to relieve Jerusalem; but this is mentioned here, to show that this word of the Lord came to Jeremiah against the Philistines, when they were in their full strength and lustre, themselves and their neighbours, to put them in a peril from any adversary or evil occurrent, when no disturbance of their repose was foreseen by any human probabilities; then Jeremiah foretold their ruin, which Pharaoh's smiting Gaza soon after would be but an earnest of, and, as it were, the beginnings of sorrow to that country. It is here foretold,

1. That a foreign enemy and a very formidable one shall be brought upon them: Waters rise out of the north, v. 2. Waters sometimes signify multitudes of people and nations, (Rev. xvii. 15.) sometimes great and threatening calamities, (Ps. lxxix. 1.) these here signify both. They rise out of the north, whence fair weather, and the wind that drives away rain, are said to come; but now a terrible storm comes out of that cold climate. The Chaldean army shall overflow the land like a huge. Probably, this happened before the destruction of Jerusalem, for it should seem that in Gedaliah's time, which was just after, the army of the Chaldeans was quite withdrawn out of those parts. The country of the Philistines was but of small extent, so that it would soon be overwhelmed by so vast an army.

2. That they shall all be in a consternation upon it: they shall have no heart to fight, but shall sit down and cry like children; all the inhabitants of the land shall howl, so that nothing but lamentation shall be heard in all places. The occasion of the fright is elegantly described, v. 3. Before it comes to killing and slaying, the very stamping of the horses and rattling of the chariots, when the enemy makes his approach upon them; it was before the, to that degree, that parents in their fright shall seem void of natural affection, for they shall not look back to their children, to provide for their safety, or so much as to see what becomes of them. Their hands shall be so feeble, that they shall despair of carrying them off with them, and therefore they shall not care for seeing them, but leave them to take their lot; or they shall be in such
a consternation, that they shall quite forget even these pieces of themselves. Let none be over-fond of their children, nor dea upon them, since such distress may come, that they may either wish they had none, or forget that they have, and have no heart to look upon them.

The 3d and 4th of the Philistines shall be spoilt and laid waste, and the other countries adjoining to them and in alliance with them. It is a day to spoil the Philistines, for the Lord will spoil them, v. 4. Note, Those whom God will spoil must needs be spoiled; yea, if God be against them, who can be for them? Tyre and Zidon were strong and wealthy cities, and they used to help the Philistines in a strait; but here, shall they not be involved in the common ruin, and God will cut off from them every helper that remains. Note, Those that trust to help from creatures, will find it cut off when they most need it, and will thereby be put into the utmost confusion. Who the remnant of the country of Caphtor were, is uncertain, but we find that the Caphtorim were near akin to the Philistines, (Gen. x. 14.) and, probably, when their own country was destroyed, such as remained came and settled with their kinsmen the Philistines, and were now spoiled with them. Some particular places are here named, Gaza and Askelon; (v. 5.) baldness is come upon them, the invaders have stripped them of all their ornaments, or, they have made themselves bald in token of extreme grief, and they natural effusion of their tears, or are aware of the pill in or valley about them. The products of their fruitful valleys shall be spoiled, and made a prey of, by the conquerors.

4. That these calamities should continue long. The prophet, in the foresight of this, with his usual tenderness, asks them, first, (v. 5.) How long will ye cut yourselves? as men in extreme sorrow and anguish do. Oh how tedious will the calamity be, not only cutting, but long cutting; but he turns from the effect to the cause: They cut themselves, for the sword of the Lord cuts them. And therefore, (1.) He bespeaks that to be still; (v. 6.) O thou sword of the Lord, how long will ye be ere thou be quiet? He looks it would put upon itself into the scabbard, we will deny no more flesh, drink no more blood. The prophet expresses the prophet's earnest desire to see an end of the war, looking with compassion, as it were, upon them, even upon the Philistines themselves, when their country was made desolate by the sword.

Note, War is the sword of the Lord, with it he punishes the crimes of his enemies, and pleads the cause of his own people. When war is once begun, it often lasts long; the sword, once drawn, does not quickly find the way into the scabbard again; may, some, when they draw the sword, will throw away the scabbard, for they delight in war. So deplorable are the desolations of war, that the blessings of peace cannot but be very desirable. O that swords might be beaten into ploughshares! (2.) Yet he gives a satisfactory account of the continuance of the war, and stops the mouth of his own complaint; (v. 7.) How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given the sword to cut off against such and such places, particularly specified in his commission? There hath he appointed it. Note, [1.] The sword of war has its charge from the Lord of hosts; every bullet has its charge; you call them blind bullets, but they are directed by an all-seeing God: the war itself has its charge; he saith to it, Go, and it goes: Come, and it comes. [2.] This, and it does it; for he is Commandant in chief. [3.] When the sword is drawn, we cannot expect it should be sheathed till it has fulfilled its charge. As the word of God, so his rod and his sword shall accomplish that for which he sends them.

CHAP. XLVIII.

Moab is next set to the bar before Jeremiah the prophet, whom God had constituted judge over nations and kingdoms, from his mouth to receive its doom. Isaiah's predictions concerning Moab had had their accomplishment, (we had the predictions, chs. xvi. xvi., and the like, Amos ii. 1.) and they were fulfilled when the Assyrians, under Salmanassar, invaded and distressed Moab. But this is a prophecy of the desolations of Moab by the Chaldean. They were accomplished under Nebuchadnezzar, about five years after the prophecy. Here is, 1. The destruction foretold, that it should be great and general, should extend itself to all parts of the country, (v. 1. — 8.) and again, v. 21. 22. 23. 34. That spoils should come into their midst; and foreign Cum join to flee, (v. 9.) should carry many into captivity; (v. 12. 46.) that enemy should come shortly, (v. 16.) come swiftly, and surprise them; (v. 40. 41.) that he should make thorough work, (v. 46.) and by that entry destroy waste, though it was very strong; (v. 14. 15.) that there should be no escape, (v. 42. 43.) that this should force them to quit their fields, (v. 13. 35.) and put an end to all their joy; (v. 38. 39.) that their neighbours shall lament them, (v. 17. 19.) and the prophet himself does, v. 31. 36. kcc. 11. The causes of this destruction assigned; it was sin that brought this ruin upon them, their pride, and security, and carnal confidence, (v. 7. 13. 14. 28.) and their contempt of, and enmity to, God and his people, v. 26. 27. 30. 11. A promise of the restoration of Moab, v. 47.

1. AGAINST Moab thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Wo unto Nebo! for it is spoiled; Kirithaim is confounded and taken; Misgab is confounded and dismayed. 2. There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation: also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee. 3. A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction. 4. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard. 5. For in the going up of Judah continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction. 6. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness. 7. For because thou hast trusted in thy works, and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken; and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity, with his priests and his princes together. 8. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape; the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the Lord hath spoken. 9. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein. 10. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood. 11. Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled upon his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. 12. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the
JEREMIAH, XLVIII.

Lord, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles. 13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Beth-el their confidence.

We may observe, in these verses,

1. The Author of Moab’s destruction; it is the Lord of hosts, that has armies, all armies, at his command, and the God of Israel, (v. 1.) who will herein plead the cause of his Israel against a people that have always been vexatious to them, and will punish them now for the injuries done to Israel of old, and that they will do with them; (Deut. ii. 9.) therefore the destruction of Moab is called the work of the Lord, (v. 10.) for it is he that pleads for Israel; and his work will exactly agree with his word, v. 8.

2. The instruments of it; Spoilers shall come, (v. 8.) shall come with a sword, a sword that shall pursue them, v. 2. I will send unto him wanderers, such as came from afar, as if they were vagrants, or had missed their way, but they shall cause him to wander; they seem as wanderers themselves, but they shall make the Moabites to be really wanderers, some to flee, and others to be carried into captivity. These destroyers stir up themselves to do execution; they have devised evil against Heshbon, one of the principal cities of Moab, and they aim at no less than the ruin of the kingdom, and let us cut it off from being a nation; (v. 2.) nothing less will serve the turn of the invaders, they come not to plunder it, but to ruin it. The prophet, in God’s name, engages them to make thorough work of it; (v. 10.) Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, this bloody work, this destroying work; though it goes against the grain with men of compassion, yet it is the work of the Lord, and must not be done by the halves. The Chaldeans have it in charge, by a secret instinct, (says Mr. Gataker,) to destroy the Moabites, and therefore they must not spare, must not, out of foolish pity, keep back their sword from blood, they would thereby bring a sword, and a curse with it, upon themselves, as Saul did by sparing the Amalekites; and Ahab by letting Benhadad go; Thu’is shall go for his life, and shall flee, (1 Kings xxii. 31.) that general curse given to all that are employed in any service for God. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully or negligently, that pretends to do it, but does it not to purpose, makes it show of serving God’s glory, but is really serving his own ends, and carries on the work of the Lord no further than will suit his own purposes; or that is slothful in business for God, and takes neither care nor pains to do it as it should be done, Mal. i. 14. Let not such deceive themselves, for God will not thus be mocked.

3. The woful instances and effects of this destruction. The cities shall be laid in ruins, they shall be spoiled, (v. 1.) and cut down, (v. 2.) they shall be desolate, (v. 9.) without any to dwell therein; the plains shall be destroyed, v. 8. or no people to dwell in them, or no safety and ease to those that would dwell in them. Every city shall be spoiled, and no city shall escape. The strongest city shall not be able to secure itself against the enemies’ power, nor shall the finest city be able to recommend itself to the enemies’ pity and favour. The country also shall be wasted, the valley shall forsake, and the plain be destroyed; v. 11. or no people to dwell in them, and the flocks, which used to cover the plains, and make the valley rejoice, shall all be destroyed, eaten up, trodden down, or carried off. The most sacred persons shall not escape, the priests and princes shall go together into captivity. Nay, Chemosh, the god they worship, who, they hope, will protect them, shall share with them in the ruin, his temples shall be laid in ashes, and his image carried away with the rest of the spoil. Now the consequence of this destruction, there shall be no houses to dwell in, and the ruins, the valley are a place which they imagine will be given up to Ireland, and confusion; Kirjathaim is confounded, and Moab is so. They shall be ashamed of the mighty boasts they have sometimes made of their cities. There shall be no more vaunting in Moab concerning Heshbon; (so it might be read, v. 2.) they shall have no more boast of the strength of that city, when the evil which is designed against it is brought upon it. The Chaldeans shall be more afraid of their gods; (v. 13.) they shall be ashamed of Chemosh, v. 10. for the prayers they made to, and all the confidence they put in, that dunghill deity: as Israel was ashamed of Beth-el, of the golden calf they had at Beth-el, which they confided in as their protector, but were deceived in, for it was not able to save them from the Assyrians; nor shall Chemosh be able to save the Moabites from the Chaldeans.

Note, These verses, v. 2. 3. 4. teach us, not to be convinced and made ashamed of the folly of their idolatry by the word of God, shall be convinced and made ashamed of it by the judgments of God, when they shall find by woful experience the utter inability of the gods they have served to do them any service. (2.) There will be great sorrow; there is a voice of crying heard, (v. 3.) and the cry is nothing but spilling of blood, and great destruction; and lastly, Moab is destroyed, v. 4. The great ones having quitted the cities to shift for their own safety, even the little ones have caused a cry to be heard, the meaner sort of people, or the little children, the innocent, harmless ones, whose cries at such a time are the most piteous. Go up to the hills, go down to the valley, and you meet with continual weeping, weeping, with weeping all are in tears, you meet none with dry eyes. Even the enemies have heard the cry, from whom it had been policy to conceal it, for they will be animated and encouraged by it; but it is so great, that it cannot be hid. (3.) There will be great hurry; they will cry to one another, Away, away, flee, save your lives, (v. 6.) shift for your own safety with all imaginable speed, though you escape as bare and naked as the beast, or grig, or dry fish, Ahab, in the prophet’s dream, thought he had only one garment; there is no reason to suppose any thing you have, for it may cost you your life to attempt it, Matth. xxiv. 16—18. Take shelter, though it be in a barren wilderness, that you may have your lives for a prey. The danger will come suddenly and swiftly; and therefore give wings unto Moab, (v. 9.) that would be the greatest kindness you could do them, that is it that they will call for, that we had wings like a dove; for unless they have wings, and can fly, there will be no escaping. 4. The sins for which God will now reckon with Moab, and which justify God in these severe proceedings against them. (1.) It is because they have been secure, and have trusted in their wealth and strength, in their works, and in their treasures, v. 7. They had taken a great deal of that which will be their ruin, they had large works about them, and to fill their exchequer and private coffers; so that they thought themselves in as good a posture for war as any people could be, and that none durst invade them, and therefore set danger at defiance; they trusted in the abundance of their riches, and strengthened themselves in their wickedness, Ps. lii. 7. Now, for this reason, that they may have a sensible conviction of the greatness and folly of their carnal confidences, God will send an enemy that shall muster their works, and raise
their treasures. Note, We forfeit the comfort of that creature, which we repose that confidence in that should be repose in God only. The reed will break that is leant upon.

(2.) It is because they have not made a right improvement of the days of their peace and prosperity, v. 11. [1.] They had been long undisturbed; Moab hath been at ease from his youth. It was an ancient kingdom before Israel was, and had enjoyed great tranquility, though a small country, and sur-

rounded with potent neighbours. God's Israel were afflicted from their youth, (Ps. cxix. 1, 2.) but Moab hath been at ease from his youth. He has not been emptied from vessel to vessel, has not known any troublesome, weakening changes, but is as wine kept on the lees, and not racked or drawn off, by which it retains its strength and body. He has been unmarred, nor any way made uneasy; he has not gone into captivity, as Israel have often done, and yet Moab is a wicked, idolatrous nation, and one of the confederates against God's hidden ones, Ps. lxxxiii. 6. Note, There are many that persist in unpunited iniquity, and yet enjoy uninterrupted prosperity. [2.] They had been as long corrupt and unformed; He has settled on his lees, he has been secure and sound in his prosperity, has rested in it, and fetched all the strength and life of the soul from it, as the wine from the lees; his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed; he is still the same, as bad as ever he was. Note, While bad people are as happy as they used to be in the world, it is no marvel if they are as bad as they used to be. They have no changes of their peace and prosperity, therefore they fear not God, their hearts and lives are unchanged, Ps. iv. 19.

14. How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war? 15. Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is The Lord of hosts. 16. The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction, hasteth fast. 17. All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod! 18. Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thisth; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong holds. 19. O inhabitant of Aroër, stand by the way, and espie; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done! 20. Moab is confounded; for it is broken down; howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled. 21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Me-phaath, 22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Beth-diblathaim, 23. And upon Kirjathaim, and upon Beth-gamul, and upon Beth-meon, 24. And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near. 25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the Lord. 26. Make ye him drunken; for he magnified himself against the Lord: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. 27. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy. 28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth. 29. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud,) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart. 30. I know his wrath, saith the Lord; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it. 31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; my heart shall mourn for the men of Kir-heres. 32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer; thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits, and upon thy vintage. 33. And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the wine-presses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting. 34. From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as a heifer of three years old; for the waters also of Ninnim shall be desolate. 35. Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the Lord, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods. 36. Therefore my heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and my heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kir-heres: because the riches that he hath gotten is perished. 37. For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth. 38. There shall be lamentation generally upon all the house-tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the Lord. 39. They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him. 40. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. 41. Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. 42. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord. 43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall
Jeremiah, XLVIII.

His chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, v. 15. They went down to the battle, promising themselves that they should return victorious; but God told them that they went down to the slaughter; so sure are they to fall against whom God fights! In a word, Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, v. 22. Those that are enemies to God shall even be the instruments of his vengeance; we will see the end of it, v. 23.

III. It is a lamentable destruction, it will be just matter of mourning, and will turn joy into heaviness.

1. The prophet that foretells it does himself lament it, and mourns at the very foresight of it, from a principle of compassion to his fellow-creatures, and concern for human nature. The prophet will himself hear the voice of his bowels, and is sensible that it is for him; (v. 31.) he will weep for the vine of Sibmah, (v. 32.) his heart shall sound like fishes for Moab, v. 36. Though the destruction of Moab would prove him a true prophet, yet he could not think of it without trouble. The ruin of sinners is no pleasure to God, and therefore should be a pair to us; even those that give warning of it should be a terror to our hearts. Many passages in this chapter, are much the same with what Isaiah had used in his prophecies against Moab; (Isa. xv.) for though there was a long distance of time between that prophecy and this, yet they were both dictated by one and the same Spirit; and it becomes God's prophets to speak the language of these that went before them. It is no plagiarism sometimes to make use of old expressions, provided it be with new affectations and applications.

2. The Moabites themselves shall lament; it will be the greatest mortification and grief imaginable to them. Those that sat in glory, in the midst of wealth and mirth, and all manner of pleasure, shall sit in thirst, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water, no comfort is, v. 18. It is time for them to sit in thirst, and hurse themselves to hardship, when the spoiler is come, who will strip them of all, and empty them. The Moabites in the remote corners of the country, that are furthest from the danger, will be inquisitive how the matter goes, what news from the army, will ask every one that escapes, What is done? v. 19. And when they are told that all is gone, that the invader is the conqueror, they will howl and cry, in bitterness and anguish of spirit, (v. 20.) they will howl and cry over the desolation of their country, they will leave the cities that used to be full of mirth, and dwell in the rock, where they may have their fill of melancholy: they shall no more he singing birds, but mourning birds, like the dove, (v. 28.) the doves of the valleys, Ezek. vii. 16. Let those that give themselves up to mirth know that God can soon change their note. Their sorrow shall be so very extreme, that they shall make themselves bald, and cut themselves, (v. 37.) which were expressions of a desperate grief, such as tempted men to be even their own destroyers. Job, indeed, rent his mantle, and shaved his head, but he did not cut himself. When the flood of passion rises ever so high, wisdom and grace must set bounds to it, set banks to it, to restrain it from such barbarities. (Ps. li. 8.) These shall be a general lamentation upon all the house-tops of Moab, where they worshipped their idols, to whom they shall in vain bewain themselves, and in all the streets, where they conversed with one another, for they shall be free in communicating their griefs and tears, and in propagating them; for they see all lost; I have broken Moab like a vessel that is broken. They shall not have one of them to regard for honour, we will see them no more. They shall be regarded, and cannot be pieced again. That which Moab used to rejoice in, was, their pleasant fruits, and the abundance of their rich wines. The delights of sense were all
the matter of their joy. Take away these, destroy their gardens and vineyards, and you make all their

ninth to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. There is great weeping
when their plants are transplanted, are gone over the sea, (v. 32.) are carried into other countries, to be planted there. The spoiler is fallen upon Egypt to her hurt, and upon Egypt, and that it is that makes the ery of Heshbon to reach even to Elealeh, v. 34. Take joy and gladness from the plentiful field, and you take it from the land of Moab, v. 33. If the wine fall from the wine-presses, that used to be trodden with acclamations of joy, all their gladness is cut off. Take away that shouting, and there shall be no shouting. Note, They who make the delights of God's people the chief of the good things of this world, and think these are things they may be easily deprived of in a little time, subject themselves to the tyranny of the greatest grief; whereas they who rejoice in God may do that even when the fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine. These Moabites lost not only their wine, but their water too, even the waters of Nisrin shall be dried up, (v. 34.) and therefore their grief grew external, and the grief of the Moabites were heard in all places like the howling of a heifer of three years old. The expressions here are borrowed from Is. xvi. 5, 6.

3. All their neighbours are called to mourn with them, and to condole with them on their ruin; (v. 17.) All ye that are about him, bemoan him. Let lix in the land of Moab be brought up with or without formal spices by the adjoining countries. Nay, let those at a distance, who do but know his name, and have heard of his reputation, take notice of his fall, and say, How is the strong staff broken, whose strength was the terror of its enemies, and the beautiful rod, whose beauty was the pride of its friends! Let the nations take notice of this, and receive instruction. Let none be lifted up with or without form or substance, in their strength or beauty, for neither will be a security against the judgments of God.

IV. It is a shameful destruction, and such as shall expose them to contempt; Moab is made drunk, (v. 26.) and he that is made drunk, is made vile, he shall wallow in his vomit, and become an odious spectacle, and shall justly be in derision. Let the Moabites be taken up with or without form or substance, with their voices ended, and made themselves ridiculous by the wildness not only of their passions but of their counsels. And again, (v. 39.) Moab shall be a derision and a damming to all about him; they shall laugh at the fall of the pomp and power he was so proud of. Note, They that are haughty are preparing reproach and ignominy for themselves.

V. It is the destruction of that which is dear to them; not only of their summer-fruits, and their vintage, but of their wealth; (v. 36.) The riches that he has gotten are perished; though he thought he had laid them up very safe, and promised himself a long enjoyment of them, yet they are gone. Note, The money that is hoarded in the chest, is as liable to perishing as the summer-fruits that lie exposed in the open fields. Riches are shedding things and, like dust as they are, slip through our fingers then when we are in most care to hold them fast, and grip them hard. Yet this is not the worst; even those whose religion was false and foolish were fond of it above anything, and, such as it was, would not part with it; and therefore, though it was really a promise, yet to them it was a threatening, (v. 53.) that God would cause to cease him that offers in the high places, for the high places shall be destroyed, and the fields of offerings shall be laid waste, and the priests themselves, who burnt incense to their gods, shall be slain, or carried into captivity, v. 7.

Note, It is only the true religion, and the worship and service of the true God, that will stand us in stead in a day of trouble.

VI. It is a just and righteous destruction, and that which they have deserved, and brought upon themselves, by sin.

The Moabites which they had been most notoriously guilty of, and for which God now reckoned with them, was pride. It is mentioned six times, v. 29. We have all heard of the pride of Moab; his neighbours took notice of it, it has testified to his face, as Israel's did, he is exceeding proud, and grows worse and worse. Observe his looseness, his arrogance, his pride, his haughtiness; the multiplying of words which are the same purport, intimates in how many instances his haughtiness appeared. He had never been like it was both to God and man. It was charged upon them, Isa. xvi. 6. but here it is expressed more largely than there. Since then, they had been under humbling providences, and yet were unhumbled; nay, they grew more arrogant and haughty, which plainly marked them for that utter destruction of which pride is the forerunner. Two instances are here given on the pride of Moab; (1.) He had conducted himself insolently toward God. He must be brought down with shame, (v. 26.) for he has magnified himself against the Lord; and again, (v. 42.) he shall be destroyed from being a people, for this very reason; the Moabites preferred Chemosh before Jehovah, and thought themselves for their own good. (2.) He had consecrated himself entirely toward Israel, particularly in their late troubles; therefore Moab shall fall into the same troubles, into the same hands, and be a derision, for Israel was a derision to him, v. 26, 27. The generality of the Moabites, when they heard of the calamities and desolation of their neighbours the Jews, instead of lamenting them, rejoiced in them as if they had been thieves taken in the act of robbery; as often as they spoke of them, they skipped for joy. Many, in such a case, entertained in their minds a secret pleasure at the fall of those they had a dislike to, who yet have so much discretion as to conceal it, it is so invidious a thing; but the Moabites industriously proclaimed their joy, and avowed that it was the very thing they had to Israel, triumphing over every Israelite that was lamenting them. It was a reproach of them; their darkness was as inhuman as it was impious, and an impudent affront both to man, whose nature they were of, and to God, whose name they were called by. Note, These that deride others in distress will justly and certainly, sooner or later, come into distress themselves, and be had in derision.

The others that are glad at calamities, especially the calamities of God's church, shall not long go un punished.

2. Beside this, they had been guilty of malice against God's people, and treachery in their dealings with them, v. 50. They made a jest of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and pretended, when they laughed at them, that it was but in sport, and to make themselves merry; but, says God, "I know his wrath, I know it comes from the old enmity he has to the seed of Abraham, and the worshippers of the true God. I know he thinks these calamities of the Jewish nation will end in their utter extirpation. He now tells the Chaldeans what bad people the Jews are, and irritates them against them; but it shall not be so as he expects; his lies shall not so excel it. The nation, whose fall they triumph in, shall recover itself." Some read it, I know his rage. Is it not so? (Is he not very furious against the people of God?) And his lies I know also. Do they not do so? Do they not belie them? Note, All the fury and all the falsehood of
the church's enemies are perfectly known to God, whatever the pretenses are with which they think to puzzle him, ver. 28.

VII. It is a complicated destruction, and by one instance after another will at length be completed; for those that make their escape from one judgment, shall perish by another; Fear, and the fit, and the snare, shall be upon them, v. 43. There shall be fear to drive them into the pit, and a snare to hold them fast in it, when they are in it; so that they shall neither escape from the destruction, nor escape out of it. What was said of sinners in general, (Isa. xxvii. 18.) that who flee from the fear shall fall into the pit, and they who come up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare, is here particularly foretold concerning the sinners of Moab, (v. 44.) for it is the year of their visitation, when God comes to reckon with them, and will be known by the judgments which he executes, for he is the King, whose name is the Lord of hosts; (v. 15.) he is not only the King, who has authority to give judgment, but he is the Lord of hosts, who is able to do what he has determined. The figurative expressions used, v. 44. are explained in one instance; (v. 43.) Those that fled out of the villages for fear of the enemy's forces, put themselves under the protection of the city, stored up their provisions, supposed they stood safe, as now armies sometimes retire under the canopy of a fortified city, and it is their protection; but here they shall be disappointed, for when they flee out of the pit they fall into the snare; Heshbon, which they thought would have sheltered them, devours them, as Moses had foretold long since; (Numb. xxxi. 28.) "A fire is gone out of Heshbon, and a flame from the city of Sihon," and devours those that come from all the corners of Moab, and fastens upon the crown of the head of the tumultuous noisy ones, or of the revellers, or children of noise; not meant of the rude, clamorous multitude, but of the great men, who bluster, and hector, and make a noise; the judgments of God shall light on them. Shall we hear the conclusion of this whole matter? We have it; (v. 46.) We be to thee, O Moab! then art undone, the people that worship Chemosh perish, and are gone; farewell Moab. The sons and daughters, the hopes of the next generation, are gone into captivity after the Jews, whose calamities they rejoiced in.

VIII. Yet it is not a perpetual destruction. The chapter concludes with a short promise of their return out of captivity in the latter days. God, in this chapter, brings forth the Ammonites, and foretells their captivity, v. 47. Thus tenderly does God deal with Moabites, much more with his own people! Even with Moabites he will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth. When Israel returned Moab did; and perhaps the prophecy was intended chiefly for the encouragement of God's people, to hope for that salvation which even Moabites shall share in. Yet the Lord's words concerning the Ammonites, which he gives himself to refer it to the days of the Messiah; then the captivity of the Gentiles, under the yoke of sin and Satan, shall be brought back by divine grace, which shall make them free, free indeed. This prophecy concerning Moab is long, but here it ends, it ends comfortably, Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

CHAP. XLIX.

The cup of trembling still goes round, and the nations must all drink of it, according to the instructions given to Jeremiah, ch. xxv. 15. This chapter puts it into the hands. The Ammonites, or Edomites, v. 7. II. Of the Syrians, v. 23. 27. IV. Of the Kedarites, and the kingdoms of Hazor, v. 29. 33. V. Of the Elamites, v. 34. 39. When Israel was scarcely saved, where shall all these appear? 1. CONCERNING the Ammonites, thus saith the Lord, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit God, and his people dwell in his cities? 2. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burnt with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the Lord. 3. Howl, O Heshbon: for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird ye with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges: for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. 4. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me? 5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth. 6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the Lord.

The Ammonites were next, both in kindred and neighbourhood, to the Moabites, and therefore are next set to the bar. Their country joined to that of the two tribes and a half, on the other side Jordan, and was but a bad neighbour; however, being a neighbour, they shall have a share in these circular predictions. 1. An action is here brought, in God's name, against the Ammonites, for an illegal encroachment upon the rightful possessions of the tribe of Gad, that lay next them, v. 1. A writ of inquiry is brought to discover what title they had to these territories, which, upon the carrying away of the Gileadites by the king of Assyria, (2 Kings xxv. 30. 1 Chron. xxvi. 12.) were left almost despised, at least unguarded, and an easy prey to the next invader. What? Is it not said of Gad, (Deut. xxxii. 40.) that in the land of Moab, Gad shined like a morning star, (Isa. vi. 13.) and every nation is become as a prey to them, (Gen. xxxvi. 31.) for want of an heir? Hath Israel no sons? Hath he no heir? Are there no Gadites left, to whom the right of inheritance belongs? Or, if there were not, are there no Israelites, none left of Judah, that are nearer akin to them than you are? Why then doth his king, as if he were entitled to the forfeited estates, or Moab, their idol, as if he had the right to enjoy them? What? Does it eschew defection and that of his people dwell in the cities which fell by lot to that tribe of God's people. Nay, they were sons and heirs of their own body, en vente de sa mere—in their mother's womb, and the Ammonites, to prevent their claim, most barbarously murdered them; (Amos i. 13.) They ruffled up the women with child, of Gilgal, that they might enlarge their border; that, having seized it, none might rise up hereafter to recover it from them. Thus they magnified themselves against their border, and boasted it was their own, Zeph. ii. 8. Note, Though among men might often prevails against right, yet that might shall be controlled by the Almighty, who sits in the throne, judging aright; and these will find themselves mistaken, who think every thing their own which they can lay their hands on, or which none yet appears to lay claim to. As there is justice owing to
owners, so also to their heirs, when they are dead, when it is a great sin to defraud, though they either know not their right, or know not how to come at it. This shall be reckoned for particularly, when injuries of this kind are done to God's people.

2. Judgment is here given against them for this violence.

(1.) Terr is shall come upon them. God will come also, says Jere. (2.) He shall be bared, even in Rabba, their capital city, and a very strong one, v. 2. The Lord God of hosts, who has all armies at his command, will bring a far upon them from all that be about them, v. 5. Note, God has many ways to terrify those who have been a terror to his people.

(2.) Their cities shall be laid in ruins. Rabba, the mother-city, shall be desolate, and her daughters, the other cities that have a dependence upon her, and receive law from her as daughters, shall be burnt with fire; so that the inhabitants shall be forced to quit them, and they shall cry, and gird themselves with sackcloth, as having lost all they have, and not knowing whither to betake themselves.

(3.) Their country, which they were so proud of, shall be wasted, (v. 4.) Wherefore gloried thou in the valleys, and trustest in thy treasures, O backsliding daughter? They are charged with backsliding or turning away from God and his worship, for they were the posterity of righteous Lot. It is true, they had never been so in covenant with God as Israel was; yet all idolaters may be called backsliders, for the worship of the true God was prior to that of false gods. They were unwise and refractory; some read it: and when they have forsaken their God, they gloried in their valleys, particularly one that was called the flowing valley, because it flowed with all good things. These they had violently taken away from Israel, and gloried in it when they had done so. They gloried in the strength of their valleys, so surrounded with mountains, that they were inaccessible; gloried in the products of them, gloried in the treasures they got together out of them, saying, Who shall come unto me? While they bathed themselves in the pleasures of their country, they flattered themselves with a conceit that they should never be disturbed in the enjoyment of them; To-morrow shall be as this day; therefore they set God and his judgments aside, they were proud, voluptuous, and secure; but wherefore dost thou do so? Note, Those who backslide and turn away from God have little reason either to take complacency, or to put confidence, in any worldly enjoyments whatsoever, Hos. ix. 1.

(4.) Their people, from the least to the greatest, shall be forced out of the country; some shall flee to seek for shelter, others shall be carried into captivity, so that their land shall be quite evacuated; Their king and his princes, nay, and Milcom, their god, and his priests, shall go into captivity, (v. 3.) and every man shall be driven out right forth, shall take the next way, and make the best of it in his flight, (v. 5.) forgetting the valleys, the flowing valleys, which now fall them. And, to complete their ruin, enemies shall be carried into the captives, none shall open their doors to them, as Jael to Sisera, to entertain them; and those that flee shall be so much in care to secure themselves, that they shall not take notice of others, no, not of those that are nearest to them, that wander, and are at a less way which to go, as ch. xlvii. 3.

(5.) Then the country of the Ammonites shall fall in upon the remaining Israelites; (v. 2.) Then shall Israel be heir to them that were his heirs, shall possess himself of their land, who had possessed themselves of his, by way of reprisal,

Note, The equity of Divine Providence is to be acknowledged, when the losses of the injured are recompensed out of the unjust gains of the injurious. Though the enemies of God's Israel may make a prey of them for awhile, the tables will shortly be turned.

3. Yet there is a prospect given them of mercy hereafter, (v. 6.) as before to Moab. The day will come, when the captivity with him that was captive shall be brought again for so it is in human affairs, the wheel goes round.

7. Concerning Edom, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? 8. Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him. 9. If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleanings-grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. 10. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not. 11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. 12. For thus saith the Lord, Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. 13. For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes. 14. I have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. 15. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men. 16. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thy heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord. 17. Also Edom shall be a desolation; every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. 18. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it. 19. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her; and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her?
for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 20. Therefore hear the counsel of the Lord, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them. 21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall; at the cry, the noise thereof was heard in the Red Sea. 22. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

The Edomites come next to receive their doom from God, by the mouth of Jeremiah; they also were old enemies to the Israel of God; but their day will come to be reckoned with, and it is now at hand, and is foretold, not only by warning to them, but by judgment of God, whose afflic-
tions were very much aggravated by their triumphs over them, and joy in their calamity, Ps. cxxxvii. 7.

Many of the expressions used in this prophecy concerning Edom, are borrowed from the prophecy of Obadiah, which is concerning Edom; for all the prophets being inspired by one and the same Spirit, there must needs be a wonderful harmony and agreement in their predictions.

Now here it is foretold, 1. That the country of Edom should be all wasted, and made desolate: that the calamity of Esau should be brought upon him, the calamity he has deserved, and God has long designed him, for his old sins, v. 8. The time is at hand when God will visit him, and call him to an account, and then they shall flee from the sword, turn back from the battle, and dwell deep in some close caverns, where they shall hide themselves. All they have shall be carried off by the conqueror: whereas graze-gatherers will leave some gleanings, and even thieves know when they have enough, and will destroy no further, they that destroy them shall never be satiated, (v. 9, 10,) they shall make Esau quite bare, shall strip the Edomites of all they have, shall find out ways and means to come to their past haunts, and shall discover even the secret places, where they thought to secure their wealth, and rile them, so that they shall none of them save their wealth, no, nor save themselves or their children, that might be concealed in a little room; He shall not be able to hide himself, and his seed too is spoiled. His brethren the Moabites, and his neighbours the Philistines, when they see him in such distress, shall step into this feast, in the least shelter with, are spoiled as well as he, and disabled to do him any service. And he is not, or, there is not he, there is none to him, none left him, that may say what follows, (v. 11,) Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive. When they are flying, or dying, there shall be none left, no relation, no friend, no, not so much as any parish-officer, to whom the poor casual children may cling to, when they leave behind, Edom is not, he is cut off and gone; nor is there any to say, Leave me thine orphans. If the master of a family be cut off, or forced away, it is some comfort if he have a friend to leave his family with, whom he can confide in; but they shall have none such, for they shall all be involved in the same calamity. The Chaldee makes these to be the words of God to his people, distinguis-hing them from the Edomites in this calamity; and they read it, "But you, O house of Israel, you shall not leave your orphans, I will secure them, and let your widows rest on my word. Whatever becomes of the widows and fatherless of the Edomites, I will take care of yours." Note, It is an unspeakable comfort to the children of God, when they are dying, that they may leave their surviving relations with God, may, in faith, commit them to him, and encourage them to trust in him; and though their friends are thus left, yet God will preserve them in the world for them, yet they may hope that he will preserve them alive, always provided that they trust in him. Let the Edomites, for their part, count upon no other than to be made a desolation, and a reproach, for the decree is gone forth, God hath sworn it by himself, (v. 13,) that their cities shall be wasted, nay, they shall be perpetual wastes, they shall be made mean and despised; they shall be made a mighty figure, but God will make them small among the heathen; and they that despise God's people shall themselves be despised among men; (v. 15. Obad. 2.) nay, they shall be made monstrous, and even a predigy: (v. 17.) Edom shall be such a desolation, that every one who goes by shall be astonished; nay, worse yet, they shall be made a terror, Edom shall be made like Sodom and Gomorrha, and shall be consumed under the ruins of it, no man shall abide there, (v. 18,) such a frightful place shall it be made!

2. That the instruments of this destruction should be very resolute and formidable. They have their commission from God, he summons them into this service; (v. 14.) I have heard a rumour, or report, from the Lord, heard it by the prophecy of Obadiah, he heard it by a whisper to himself, that an ambassa-dor, or herald, or messenger, is sent to the Gentiles, who are to lay Edom waste, saying, Gather ye together, muster all the forces ye can, and come against her; for (v. 20) this is the counsel that he hath taken against Edom; the matter is settled, the decree is gone forth, and there is no resisting it; God has determined that Edom shall be laid waste, and then he that is to be employed in it shall come swiftly and strongly. Nebuchadrezzar is he, of whom it is here foretold, (1.) That he shall come up like a lion, with fierceness and fury, like a lion enraged by the swelling of Jordan overflowing his banks, which forces him out of his covert by the water-side, into the higher grounds, v. 19. He shall come roaring, come to devour all that come in his way. He shall come against the habitation of the strong, and spoil and rob him, and I will cause him to come suddenly into the land, (so the next words might well be read,) so as to find them unprovided with necessities for a defense; for I will look out a chosen man to affliction over her, to do this execution, a man fit for the purpose, one chosen out of the people; for when God has work to do, he will find out the fittest instruments to be employed in it. "He shall come against Edom, the habitation of the strong;" and spirits them for the work? And, who will, afflict me the time? Who will challenge me, and fix a time and place to meet me? Who will join issue with me in battle? And when I send a lion into the flock, Who is that shepherd, that can, or dare, stand before me, or against me, to oppose that lion, and live to rescue any of the flock? Note, How can God's people have comfort in the destruction of their enemies? They will not find those that are able to engage in it; and all the world cannot find those that are able to engage against it. Nay, if God will have Edom destroyed, and their people dislodged, there needs not a lion, a fierce lion, to do it; even the least of the flock shall drive them out; (v. 20.) the meanest servant in Nebuchadrezzar's retinue, the weakest of all that follow his camp, shall drive them out for the slaughter, shall force them to flee, or to surrender, and make their habitu-
tions devolute with them. God can bring to pass the greatest works by instruments least likely. When the Chaldean army comes against the Edomites, their hands shall be wet with the blood of the proudest soldier in it shall have a pluck at them. (2.) Nebuchadrezzar shall come, not only like a lion, the king of beasts, but like an eagle, the king of birds, v. 22. He shall fly as the eagle upon his prey, so swiftly, so strongly; shall clap his wings upon Bozrah, to secure it for himself, (as before, ch. xlviii. 40.) and immediately the hearts of the mighty men shall fail them; they shall see he is an enemy that it is in vain to struggle with.

3. That the Edomites' confidences should all fail them in the day of their distress. (1.) They trusted to their wisdom, but that shall stand them in no stead; this is the first thing fastened upon in this prophecy against Edom, v. 7. That nation used to be famous for wisdom, and their statesmen were thought to excel in politics; and yet now they shall take such wrong measures in all their counsels, and be so baffled in all their designs, that people shall ask, with wonder, What is the matter with the Edomites? Is wisdom no more in Teman? Are the wise men of the east country (1 Kings iv. 30.) become fools? Are those at their wits' end, that were thought to have the monopoly of prudence? Is counsel become the understood thing? It is so, when God is designing the ruin of a people; for whom he will destroy he infatuates. See Job xii. 20. Is their wisdom vanished? Is it tired? So some; Is it worn out? So others; Is it become useless? So others. Yes, it will do them no service when God comes forth to contend with them. (2.) They trusted to their strength, but neither shall that avail them, v. 18. They had been a terror to all their neighbours, every body feared them, and buckled to them, and this made them proud and conceited of themselves, and their own strength, and very secure; because no neighbouring nation durst meddle with them, they thought no nation in the world durst. Their country was much of it mountainous, having many passes which they thought themselves able to make good against any invader; but this terribleness of theirs deceived them, and so did their imaginary inaccessible; they did not prove so strong as they were formidable, nor so safe as they were secure. High as they are, God will bring them down; for as there is no wisdom, so there is no might, against the Lord. See these expressions, Obad. 3, 4, 8.

4. Their destruction should be inevitable, and very remarkable. (1.) God hath determined it; (v. 12.) he hath said it; nay, (v. 13.) he hath sworn it, that the Edomites shall not go unpunished, but they shall drink the cup of trembling, which is put into the hands of all their neighbours; even they, whose, judgment, or doom, was not to drink of the cup, who had not so well deserved it as they had, or at least, who were not so much exposed as they, were. The cup was first given to Israel as they had been; or, Israel itself, that was God's peculiar people, and among whom there were many, very many, who kept his ordinances, upon which account they might have expected an exemption, and yet they had been made to drink of the bitter cup; and shall the Edomites think to pass it? No; they shall surely drink of it. Note, What God's people enjoy, the very mercies of God, make the more guilty to promise themselves impunity; and when judgment begins at God's house, it will reach the strangers. (2.) All the world shall take notice of it; (v. 21.) The earth is moved, and all the nations put into a concern, at the noise of their fall; the news of it shall make them tremble. The noise of the outcry is heard at the Red sea, which flowed upon the coasts of Edom. So loud shall be the shouts of the conquerors, and the shrieks of the conquered, and such a mighty noise shall the news of this destruction of Idumea make in the nation, that it shall be heard among the ships that lie in the Red sea to the utmost of it, (1 Kings viii. 26.) and then they shall carry the news of it to the remotest shore. Note, The fall of those who have affected to make a noise with their pomp and power, will make so much the greater noise.

23. Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad; for they have heard evil tidings; they are faint-hearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet. 24. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her; anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail. 25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy! 26. Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord of hosts. 27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

The kingdom of Syria lay north of Cannaan, as that of Edom lay south, and thither we must now remove, and take a view of the approaching fate of that kingdom, which had been often vexatious to the Israel of God. Damascus was the metropolis of that kingdom, and the ruin of the whole is supposed in the ruin of that; yet Hamath and Arpad, two other considerable cities, are named, (v. 23.) and the palaces of Ben-hadad, which he built, are particularly marked for ruin; (v. 27.) see also Amos i. 4. Some think Ben-hadad (the sea of Hadad, either their idol, or one of their ancient kings, whence the rest descended,) was a common name of the kings of Syria, as Pharoh of the kings of Egypt. Now observe concerning the judgments of Damascus,

1. It begins with a terrible fright and faint-heartedness. They hear evil tidings, that the king of Babylon, with all his force, is coming against them, and they are confounded, they know not what measures to take for their own safety, their souls are melted, they are faint-hearted, they have no spirit left them, they are like the troubled sea, that cannot be quiet, (Isa. lvi. 20.) or like men in a storm; at sea; (Ps. cvii. 26.) or, the sorrow that begins in the city shall go to the sea-coast, v. 23. See how easily God can dispirit those nations that have been most celebrated for valour! Damascus now waxeth feeble; (v. 24.) a city that thought she could have looked the most formidable enemy in the face, now turns herself to flee; for her sons and tem. She was so proud, so overweening, so conceited of her strength, that she had no thought of contending with her fate, than for a woman in labour to contend with her pains, which she cannot escape, but must yield to. It was a city of praise, (v. 25.) not praise to God, but to herself; a city much commended and admired by all strangers that visited it. It was a city of joy, where there was an affluence and abundance of all the delicious fruits of the earth, and a great plenty of the enjoyment of them. We read it, (though there is no necessity for it,) the city of my joy, which the prophet himself had sometimes visited with pleasure. Or, it may be the speech of the king himself, lamenting the ruin of the city of his joy. But now it is all overwhelmed with fear and grief. Note, Those deceive themselves who place their happiness in carnal joys; for God in his providence can soon cast a damp upon them, and put an end to them.
can soon make a city of praise to be a reproach, and a city of joy to be a terror to itself.

2. It ends with a terrible fall and fire. (1.) The inhabitants are slain; (v. 26.) The young men, who should fight the enemy, and defend the city, shall fall by the sword in her streets; and all the men of war, mighty and strong who are the pride and joy of the country, shall be cut off. (2.) The city is laid in ashes; (v. 27.) The fire is kindled by the besiegers in the wall, but it shall devour all before it, the palaces of Ben-hadad particularly, where so much mischief had formerly been hatched against God's Israel, for which it is now thus visited.

23. Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the Lord; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. 29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtaine, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side. 30. Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the Lord; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you. 31. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the Lord, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone. 32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil; and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the Lord. 33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

These verses foretell the desolation that Nebuchadrezzar and his forces should make among the people of Kedar, (who descended from Kedar the son of Ishmael, and inhabited a part of Arabia the Stony,) and of the kingdoms, the petty principalities of Hazor, that joined to them, who, perhaps, were originally Canaanites, of the kingdom of Hazor, in the north of Canaan, which had Jabin for its king, but, being driven thence, settled in the deserts of Arabia, and associated themselves with the Kedarines. Concerning this people, we may here observe,

1. What was their present state and posture. They dwelt in tents, and had no walls, but curtains, (v. 29.) no fortified cities; they had no good gain, (v. 31.) they were shepherds, and had no treasures, but stock upon land, no money, but flocks and camels. They had no soldiers among them, for they were in no fear of invaders; no merchants, for they dwelt alone, v. 31. Those of other nations neither came among them, nor traded with them; but they lived within themselves, content with the produce and pleasures of their own country. This was their manner of living, very different from that of the nations that were round about them. And, (1.) They were very rich; though they had no trade, no treasures, yet they are here said to be a wealthy nation, (v. 31.) because they had a sufficiency to answer all the occasions of human life, and they were content with it. Note, These are truly rich who have enough to supply their necessities, and know when they have enough. We need not go to the treasures of kings and provinces, or to the cash of merchants, to look for wealthy people, they be found in the poorest countries, for God has provided them with enough for all the exigencies of life.

2. The design of the king of Babylon against them, and against the inhabitants of their country, was to take counsel against you, and has conceived a purpose against you, v. 30. That proud man resolves it shall never be said, that he, who had conquered so many strong cities, will leave those unconquered that dwell in tents. It was strange that that eagle would stoop to catch these flies; that so great a prince should play at such small game; but all is fish that comes to the ambitious, covetous man's net. Note, It will not be easy for any of us to bear the flogging wrong, to be able to say that they have done no wrong; not to have given offence will not be a defence against such men as Nebuchadrezzar. Yet, how unrighteous soever he was in doing it, God was righteous in directing it. These people had lived insensibly among their neighbours, as many do, who yet, like them, are guilty before God; and it was not to punish them for this; but to teach them, that God said, (v. 28.) Arise, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east. They will do it to gratify their own covetousness and ambition, but God orders it for the correcting of an unthankful people, and for warning to a careless world, to expect trouble when they seem to be most safe. God says to the Chaldeans, (v. 31.) "Arise, get up to the wealthy nation that dwelleth without; ye, gather them in alarm, that none may imagine their mountain stands so strong, that it cannot be removed." 3. The great amazement that this put them into, and the great desolation hereby made among them; They shall cry unto them, those on the borders shall send the alarm into all parts of the country, which shall be put into the utmost confusion by it; they shall cry, the alarm is on every side, we are surrounded by the enemy, the very terror of which shall drive them all to their feet, and they shall none of them have any heart to make resistance. The enemy shall proclaim fear upon them, or against them, on every side; they need not strike a stroke, they shall shout them out of their tents, v. 29. Upon the first alarm, they shall flee, get far off; and dwell deep, (v. 30.) as the Edomites, v. 8. And it will be found that this fear on every side is not groundless, for their calamity shall be brought from all sides thereof, v. 32. No marvel there are fears on every side, when there are foes on every side. The issue will be, (1.) What they have will be a prey to the Chaldeans; they shall take to themselves their curtains and vessels; though they are but plain and coarse, and they have better of their own, yet they shall take them for spite, and spoil for spoiling sake. They shall carry away their tents and their flocks, v. 29. Their camels shall be a booty to those that came for nothing else, v. 32. (2.) It is not said that any of them shall be slain, for they attempt not to make any resistance, and their tents and flocks are accepted as a ransom for their lives; but they shall be dislodged and dispersed through all the country, shall dwell in the utmost corners, out of the way, and therefore they think out of the reach, of danger, (by this character those people were distinguished, ch. ix. 26.—xxv. 23.) yet they shall from hence be scattered into all winds, into all
part of the world. Note, Privacy and obscurity are not always a protection and security. Many that affect to be strangers to the world, may yet by unthought-of providences be forced into it; and those that live most retired, may have the same lot with those that thrust themselves forth, and lie most exposed. 32. Their country shall lie uninhabited for, lying remote, and out of all high roads, and having neither cities nor lands inviting to strangers, none shall care to succeed them, so that Hazor shall be a desolation for ever, v. 33. If busy men be displaced, many strive to get into their places, because they lived great; but here are easy, quiet men displaced, and no man cares to abide where they did, because they lived mean.

34. The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, 35. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. 36. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. 37. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before that they seek their life; and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the Lord; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them: 38. And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the Lord. 39. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord.

This prophecy is dated in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign; it is probable that the other prophecies against the Gentiles, going before, were at the same time. The Elamites who thus descend from Elam the son of Shem (Gen. x. 22.) yet some think it was only that part of Persia which lay nearest to the Jews, which was called Elamites, and joined to Media-Elam, which, say they, had acted against God's Israel, bare the guiter in an expedition against them, (Isa. xxiii. 6.) and therefore must be reckoned with among the rest. It is here foretold, in general, that God will lay evil upon them, even his fierce anger, and that this evil enough, it has all evil in it, v. 37. In particular,

1. Their forces shall be disabled, and rendered incapable of doing them any service. The Elamites were famous archers, but, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, (v. 35.) will ruin their artillery, and their strength will be utterly destroyed, he orders it so, that that which we must trust to first fails us; and that which was the chief of our might proves the least of our help.

2. Their people shall be dispersed. There shall come enemies against them from all parts of the world, and they shall all carry some of them away captive into their respective countries; while others shall flee, some to the west, and some to the east, to shift for themselves, so that there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come, v. 36. The four winds shall be brought upon them; the storm shall come sometimes from one point, and sometimes from another, to toss and hurry them several ways; and we know not from what point the wind of trouble may blow; but if God compass us with his favour, we are safe, and may be easy, which way soever the storm comes. Fear shall drive them into other countries; they shall be dismayed before their enemies; but, as if that were not enough, I will send the sword after them, v. 37. Note, God can make his judgments follow those that think by flight to escape them, and to get out of the reach of them, Evil pursues sinners.

3. Their princes shall be destroyed, and the government quite changed; (v. 38.) I will set my throne in Elam. The throne of Nebuchadrezzar shall be set there, or the throne of Cyrus, who began his conquests with Elamites. Or, it may be the chief of the host of Babylon, who is God's anointed; he will make them know that he reigns, that he judges in the earth, and that kings and princes are accountable to him, and that high as they are he is above them. The king of Elam was famous of old, Gen. xiv. 1. Chedorlaomer was king of Elam, and a mighty man he was in his day; the nations about him served him; his successes, we may suppose, made a great figure; but the king of Elam is no more to God than the other another. When God takes his throne in Elam, he will destroy from thence the king and the princes that are, and set up whom he pleases.

4. Yet the destruction of Elam shall not be perpetual; (v. 39.) In the latter days I will bring again the captivity of Elam. When Cyrus had destroyed Babylon, he brought the enmities of the Persians, the Elamites, no doubt, returned in triumph out of all the countries whither they were scattered, and settled again in their own country, but this promise was to have its full and principal accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when we find Elamites particularly among those, who, when the Holy Ghost was given, heard spoken in their own language in the church of the Holy Ghost, (Acts ii. 9.) and that is the most desirable return of the captivity. If the Son makes you free, then you shall be free indeed.

CHAP. L.

In this chapter, and that which follows, we have the judgment of Babylon, which is put last of Jeremiah's prophecies against the Gentiles, because it was last fulfilled; and when the cup of God's fury went round, (ch. xxxv. 17.) the king of Sheshach, Babylon, drank last. Babylon was employed as the rod in God's hand for the chastising of the Gentile nations; other nations this rod shall be, that rod shall be thrown into the fire. The destruction of Babylon by Cyrus was foretold, long before it came to its height, by Isaiah, and now again, when it is come to its height, by Jeremiah. For while he saw that kingdom flourishing like a green bay-tree yet at the same time he foresaw it withered and cut down. And as Isaiah's prophecies of the destruction of Babylon, and the deliverance of Israel out of it, seem designed to typify the evangelical triumphs of all believers over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation wrought out by our Lord Jesus Christ; so Jeremiah's prophecies of the same subject are designed to typify the apocalyptic triumphs of the gospel-church in the latter days over the New Testament Babylon, many passages in the Revelation being borrowed from hence. The kingdom of Babylon, being much larger and stronger than any other of the kingdoms here prophesied against, its fall was the more considerable in itself; and it having been more oppressive to the people of God than any of the others, the prophet is very large upon this subject, for the comfort of the captives, and what he foresees they shall be comforted before, (ch. xxxv. 12. and xxxvii. 7.) is here more particularly described, and with a great deal of prophetic heat as well. The terrible judgments God had in store for Babylon, for those who were in store for his people that were captives there, are intermingled and counterchanged in the prophecy of this chapter; for Babylon was destroyed to make way for the turning again of the captivity of God's people. Here is 1. The ruin of Babylon, (v. 1. to 3.) and again, (v. 9. to 16.) and again, (v. 21. to 39.) and again, v. 35. to 46. 1. The
redemption of God's people, (v. 4., 8.) and again, (v. 17., 20.) and again, (v. 35., 34.) And these being set the one against the other, it is easy to say which one would choose to take one's lot with the persecuting Babylonians, who, though now in pomp, are reserved for so good a day, or the persecuted Israelites, who, though now in tribulation, are reserved for so great a glory.

1. THE word that the Lord spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet. 2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. 3. For out of the north there cometh a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

4. In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. 6. My people hath been lost sheep; their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains; they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place. 7. All that found them have devoured them; and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice; even the Lord, the hope of their fathers. 8. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

Here is, 1. A word spoken against Babylon, by him whose works all agree with his word, and none of whose words fall to the ground. The king of Babylon had been very kind to Jeremiah, and yet he must foretell the ruin of that kingdom; for God's prophets must not be governed by favour or affection. Whoever are our friends, if, notwithstanding, they are God's enemies, we dare not speak peace to them.

2. The destruction of Babylon is here spoken of as a thing done, (v. 26.) Let it be published to the nation as a piece of news, true news, and great news, and news they are all concerned in; let them hang out the flag, as is usual on days of triumph, to give notice of it; let all the world take notice of it, Babylon is taken; let God have the honour of it, let his people have the comfort of it, and therefore do not confound it. Take care that it be known, that the Lord may be exalted by those judgments which he executes. Ps. xvi. 16.

3. It is spoken of as a thing done thoroughly. For, (1.) The very idols of Babylon, which the people would protect with all possible care, and from which they expected protection, shall be destroyed. Bel and Merodach were their two principal deities, they shall be confounded, and the images of them broken to pieces. (2.) The country shall be levelled into a plain, (v. 22.) from Media, which lay north of Babylon, and from Arabia, through which Cyrus made his descent upon Babylon; from thence the nation shall come, that shall make her land desolate. Their land was north of the countries that they destroyed, who were therefore threatened with evil from the north; (Omne malum ab acquisione—Every evil comes from the north) but God will find out nations yet further to the north to lay waste upon them. The pomp and power of old Rome were brought down by northern nations, the Goths and Vandals.

II. Here is a word spoken for the people of God, and for their comfort, both the children of Israel and of Judah; for many there were of the ten tribes, that associated with those of the two tribes in their return out of Babylon. Now here, 1. It is promised that they shall return to their God first, and then to their own land; and the promise of their conversion and reformation is that which makes way for all the other promises, v. 4.

5. (1.) They shall lament after the Lord; (as the whole house of Israel did in Samuel's time, 1 Sam. vii. 2.) they shall go weeping. These tears flow not from the sorrow of the world, as those when they went into captivity, but from godly sorrow; and they are to show the people how tenderly affected under his hand. (2.) They shall inquire after the Lord; they shall not sink under their sorrows, but exalt themselves to find out comfort where it is to be had; They shall go weeping to seek the Lord their God; Those seek the Lord must seek him sorrows; as Christ's parents sought him, Luke ii. 48. And those that sorrow must seek the Lord, and then their sorrow shall soon be turned into joy. For the Lord will be found of them that seek him. They shall seek the Lord as their God, and shall now have no more to do with idols. When they shall hear that the idols of Babylon are confounded and broken, it will be seasonable for them to inquire after their own God, and to return to Him who lives for ever. Therefore men are deceived in false gods, that they may depend on the true God only. (3.) They shall think of returning to their own country again; they shall think of it not only as a mercy, but as a duty, because there only is the holy hill of Zion, on which once stood the house of the Lord their God, v. 5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward. Zion was the city of their solemnities, they often thought of it in the depth of their captivity; (Ps. cxlvii.) but now that the ruin of Babylon gave occasion of a release from the Mosaic yoke, this business else of getting back to Zion. Their hearts were upon it before, and now they set their faces thitherward; they long to be there, they set out for Zion, and resolve not to take up short. The journey is long, they know not the road, but they shall ask the way, for they will press forward till they come to Zion; and as they are determined not to turn back, so they are in no manner afraid of the way. This represents the return of poor souls to God; heaven is the Zion they aim at as their end, on this they have set their hearts, toward this they have set their faces, and therefore they ask the way thither. They do not ask the way to heaven, and set their faces toward the world; nor set their faces toward heaven, and
go on at a venture without asking the way. But in all true converts there are both a sincere desire to attain the end, and a constant care to keep in the way; and a blessed sight it is, to see people thus asking the way to heaven with their faces shiftings and returning, knowing they have the right path to walk with God closer for the future. Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant. They had broken covenant with God, had in effect separated themselves from him, but now they resolve to join themselves to him again, by engaging themselves fresh to be his. Thus, when backsliders return, they must do their first work; for the covenant they first made with him, it must be a perpetual covenant, that must never be broken; and, in order to that, must never be forgotten; for a due remembrance of it will be the means of a due observance of it.

2. Their present case is lamented as very sad, and as having been long so; “My people” (for he owns them as his, now that they are returning to him) “have been lost sheep, (v. 6.) they have gone from mountain to hill, have been hurried from place to place, and could find no pasture, they have forgotten their resting-place in their own country, and cannot find their way to it.” And that which aggravated their misery, was, (1.) That they were led astray by their own shepherds, their own princes and priests; they turned them from their duty, and did asked God to turn them out of the way won. It is doth it happen, when their leaders cause them to err; when those that should direct and reform them seduce and debauch them; and when those that should secure and advance their interests are the betrayers of them. (2.) That in their wanderings they lay exposed to the beasts of prey, who thought they were enticed to them, as wolves and strays that have no owner; (v. 7.) It is with them as they wander, all that found them have devoured them, and made a prey of them; and when they did them the greatest injuries, they laughed at them, telling them it was what their own prophets had many a time told them they deserved: that was far from justifying those who did them wrong, yet they mistreated them with this excuse, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord; but they could not have sinned without being sinned against them. And see what notion they had of the Lord they had sinned against, not as the only true and living God, but only as the Habitation of justice, and the Hope of their fathers; they had put a contempt upon the temple, and upon the tradition of their ancestors, and therefore deserved to suffer these hard things. And yet it was indeed an aggravation of their sin, and justified God, though it did not justly their adversaries in what was done to them, that they had forsaken the Habitation of justice, and him that was the Hope of their fathers.

3. They are called upon to hasten away, as soon as ever the door of liberty was opened to them; (v. 8.) “Remove, not only out of the borders, but out of the midst of Babylon; though you be ever so well settled there, think not to settle there, but hasten to Zion, and be as the he-goats before the flock, strive which shall be foremost, which shall lead in so good a work;” a he-goat is come in going, (Prov. xxx. 31.) because he goes first. It is a graceful thing to be forward in a good work, and to set others a good example.

9. For, lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her, from thence she shall be taken; their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. 10. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the Lord. 11. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of my heritage; because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls; 12. Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hindmost of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert. 13. Because of the wrath of the Lord, it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues. 14. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about; all ye that bend the bow shoot at her, spare no arrows; for she hath sinned against the Lord. 15. Shout against her round about; she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down; for it is the vengeance of the Lord: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. 16. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that lendeth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land. 17. Israel is a scattered sheep, the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him, and last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon hath broken his bones. 18. Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria. 19. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead. 20. In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

God is here, by his prophet, as afterward in his providence, proceeding in his controversy with Babylon. Observe,

1. The commission and charge given to the instruments that were to be employed in destroying Babylon. The army that is to do it, is called an assembly of great nations, (v. 9.) the Medes and Persians, and all their allies and auxiliaries; it is called an assembly, because regularly formed by the divine will and counsel to do this execution. God will raise them up to do it, will incline them to, and fit them for, this service, and then he will cause them to come up, for all their nations are under his conduct and direction: he shall give the word of command, shall order them to put themselves in array against Babylon, and then they shall put themselves in array, (v. 14.) and then they shall put themselves in array, (v. 9.) for what God appoints to be done shall be done, and from hence she shall
be quickly taken; from their first sitting down before it, they shall be still gaining ground against it till it be taken. God shall bid them shoot at her, and spare no arrows, (ver. 14.) and then their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man, that has both skill and strength, a good eye, and a good hand; (ver. 9.) nine shall return in vain. When God gives commission, he will give them not only to shoot, but to bid them shoot at her, (ver. 14.) but to shoot against her. (ver. 15.) with a triumphant shout, as those that are already sure of victory. Those whom God directs to shoot, may do it with shouting, for they are sure not to miss the mark.

2. The desolation and destruction itself that shall be brought upon Babylon. This is set forth here in a great variety of expressions: (1.) The wealth of Babylon shall be dispersed and he inhaimed; shall be wholly desolate, (ver. 13.) to that degree, that every one who goeth by shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condoling with them, shall hiss at all her plagues, v. 13. (2.) Their ancestors shall be ashamed of their cowardice, in fleeing from the first onset; (ver. 12.) or, Your mother, Babylon itself, the mother-city, shall be confounded, when she sees herself deserted by those that should have been her guards. From the first ages of Christians may justly be expected, that every one who goeth by shall triumph in her fall, and, instead of condoling with them, shall hiss at all her plagues. (3.) Their great city, the head of it, shall be quite ruined, her foundations are fallen, and therefore her walls are thrown down; for how can the walls stand, when divine vengeance is at the door, and shakes the very foundations? It is the vengeance of the Lord, which nothing can contend with either in law or battle. (6.) There shall not be left in it enough even to pitch a tent; not enough even to build a city, to dwell in, for vine-dressers and husbandmen, as there was in Israel; (ver. 16.) The sower shall be cut off from Babylon, and he that handles the sickle; the country shall be so emptied of people, that there shall be none to till the ground, and gather in the fruits of it. Harvest shall come, and there shall be no reapers; weediness shall come, and there shall be no sower; God will do his part, but there shall be no men to do theirs. (7.) All their auxiliary forces, which have hired into their service, shall desert them, as mercenary men often do upon the approach of danger; (ver. 16.) for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people. This was threatened before, concerning Egypt, ch. xlv. 16.

Now the impending, provoking cause of this destruction. It comes from God's displeasure; it is because of the wrath of the Lord, that Babylon shall be wholly desolate; (ver. 13.) and his wrath is righteous, for, (ver. 14.) she hath sinned against the Lord, therefore spare no arrows. Note, It is sin that makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments. An abundance of idolatry and immorality makes men a mark for the arrows of God's judgments, but the injuries they had done to the people of God, from a principle of enmity to them as his people. They have been the destroyers of God's heritage; (ver. 11.) herein indeed God made use of them for the necessary correction of his people; and yet it is laid to their charge as a horrid crime, because they designed nothing but their utter destruction.

1. What they did against Jerusalem, they did with pleasure; (ver. 11.) Ye were glad, ye rejoice. God does not afflict his people willingly, and therefore no triumphs were made over them, but afflicts them willingly. When Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem, he wept over it, but these Chaldeans triumphed over it. (2.) The spoils of Jerusalem they made use of, to feed their own luxury; *Ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and belove as bullocks; your having conquered Jerusalem has made you very wanton and proud, in order to your luxury. The king shall therefore be at home to you, therefore you must be a spoil.* That they have thus swallowed down riches, must vomit them up again. Therefore they have given their hand; (ver. 13.) they have surrendered themselves to the conqueror, have tamely yielded, so that now you may take vengeance on her, now you may make reprisals, and do unto her as she hath done. (3.) They pined at nothing less than the utter ruin of God's Israel; Israel is a scattered sheep, as before, (ver. 6.) that is not only barked at and worried by dogs, but even lions, the most potent adversaries, have roared upon him, and driven him away, v. 17. One King of Assyria carried ten tribes quite away, and devoured them; another invaded Judah, and plundered and impoverished it, tore the fleece and flesh off the body of its poor sheep, and now at last this Nebuchadnezzar, that is the terror and plague of all his neighbours, has taken advantage of the low condition to which he is reduced, and he has fallen upon him, and broken his bones, has quite ruined him, and therefore the king of Babylon must be punished as the king of Assyria was, v. 18. Note, Those who pursue and prosecute the sins of their predecessors, must expect to be pursued and prosecuted by their plagues; if they do as they did, let them fare as they fared.

4. The mercy promised to the Israel of God, which shall not only accompany, but accrue from, the destruction of Babylon. (1.) God will return their captivity, they shall be released out of their bondage, and brought again to their own habitation, as sheep that were scattered, to their own fold, (ver. 19.) to their own hills. If we remember how they were flung out of Canaan, it is their habitation still, the discontinuance of their possession was not the destruction of their right, but now they shall recover the enjoyment of it again. (2.) He will restore their prosperity; they shall not only live, but live comfortably, in their own land again; they shall feed upon Carmel and Bashan, the richest and most fruitful parts of the country. Those sheep shall be gathered from the deserts to which they were dispersed, and put again into good pasture, which their soul shall be satisfied with; though they shall come hungry to it, having been so long stinted, and straitened, and kept short, yet they shall find enough to satiate them, and shall have hearts to be satisfied with it. They inquired the way to Zion, (ver. 5.) where great numbers of them, when they were first called to their destruction, was it that they Chiefly aimed at in their return; but God will not only bring them thither, but bring them also to Carmel and Bashan, where they shall abundantly feed themselves. Note, They that return to God and their duty, shall find true satisfaction of soul in so doing; and they that seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, that aim at their own aggrandizement and advancement, shall have other things added to them, even all the comforts of Efraim and Gilgal, the fruitful hills. (3.) God will pardon their iniquity; this is
the root of all the rest; (v. 20.) In those days the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none. Not only the punishments of their iniquity shall be taken off, but the offence which it gave to God shall be forgotten, and he will be reconciled to them. Their sin shall be before him as if it had never been, it shall be blotted out as a cloud, crossed out as a debt, shall be cast behind his back; may, it shall be cast into the depth of the sea, shall be no longer scaled up among God's treasures, nor in any danger of appearing again, or rising up against them. This denotes how fully God forgives sin; he remembers it no more. Note, Deliverances out of trouble are the comforts derived, when they are the fruits of the forgetfulness of sin, Isa. xxxviii. 17. Judah and Israel were so fully forgiven when they were brought back out of Babylon, that they are said to have received of the Lord's hand double for all their sins, Isa. xl. 2. This may include also a thorough reformation of their hearts and lives, as well as a full remission of their sins. If any seek for idols or any idolatrous customs among them, after their return, there shall be none, they shall not find them; their dress shall be purely purged away, and by that it shall appear that their guilt is so for I will pardon them whom I reserve; I will be propitious to them; (so the word is;) and that must be through him who is the Great Propitiation. Note, Those whose sins God pardons, he reserves for something very great; for whom he justifies, them he glorifies.

21. Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the Lord, and do according to all that I have commanded thee. 22. A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction. 23. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations! 24. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the Lord. 25. The Lord hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the Lord God of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans. 26. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses; cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left. 27. Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter; wo unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation. 28. The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his temple. 29. Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about: let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done unto her: for she hath been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel. 30. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the Lord. 31. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee. 32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Here, 1. The forces are mustered and commissioned to destroy Babylon, and are nothing ready for a descent upon the distant kingdom. 2. Let us go up against that land by Merathaim, the country of the Mardii, that lay part in Assyria, and part in Armenia; and go among the inhabitants of Pekod, another country, (mentioned Ezek. xxiii. 23.) which Cyrus took in his way to Babylon. The forces of Cyrus are called to go up against Babylon, (v. 21.) to come against her from the utmost border. Let all come together, for there will be both work and pay enough for them all, v. 26. Distance of place must not be their hindrance from engaging in this work; the archers particularly must be called together against Babylon, v. 29. Thus the Lord hath opened his armoury, (v. 25.) his treasury, (so the word is,) and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation; as great princes fetch cut of the magazine and stores all necessary provisions for their armies, when they undertake any great expedition. Media and Persia are now God's armory, thence he fetches the weapons of his wrath, Cyrus, and his great officers and armies, whom he will make use of for the destruction of Babylon. Note, Great men are but instruments which the great God makes use of to serve his own purposes. He has his various instruments, has them at command, has armours ready to be opened according as the occasion is. This is the work of the Lord God of hosts. Note, When God has work to do, he will make it appear that he is God of hosts, and will not want instruments to do it with.

2. Instructions are given them what to do. In general, Do according to all that I have commanded thee, (v. 21.) It was said of Cyrus, (Isa. xlix. 28.) He shall pour out his soul in the multitude of his affection, in his expedition against Babylon. They must waste and utterly destroy after them; when they have destroyed once, they must go over them again; or destroy their posterity that should come after them. They must often her storehouses, (v. 26.) plie her treasures, and turn her artillery against herself; they must cast her up as heaps; let all the wealth and pomp of Babylon be shovelled up in a heap of ruins and rubbish. Tread her down as heaps, (so the margin reads it,) and destroy her utterly. See how little account the great God makes of those things which men so much value, and value themselves upon! Their princes and great men, who are fat and bulky, shall fall by the sword, not as men of war in the field of battle, which we call a bed of honour, but as beasts by the butcher's hand; (v. 27.) Slay all her bullocks, all her mighty men, let them go down sottishly and insensibly, as an ox to the slaughter. Wo unto them! their case is the more sad for the little sense they have of it; their day is come to fall, the time when they must be reckoned with, and they are not aware of it.

3. Assurances are given them of success. Let them do what God commands, and they shall accomplish what he threatens. A great destruction shall be made, v. 22. Babylon shall become a desolation; (v. 23.) her young men, and all her men of war, shall be cut off in that day, that should have been her defence; (v. 30.) God is against her,

Vol. iv.-3 Z
JEREMIAH, L.

(v. 31.) He has laid a snare for her; (v. 24.) he hath formed this enterprise against her, that she should be as a bird taken in a snare; she shall, no doubt, prevail, for he fights under God; God will kindle a fire in the cities of Babylon; (v. 32.) and who can stand before him when he is angry, or quench the fire that he has kindled?

4. Reasons are given for these severe dealings with Babylon. They that are employed in this war, may, if they please, know the grounds of it, and be satisfied in the justice of it, which it is fit all should be; (v. 23.) therefore, with this. (3.) Babylon has been very troublesome, vexatious, and injurious, to all its neighbours; it has been the hammer of the whole earth, (v. 23.) beating, beating down, and beating to pieces, all the nations far and near. It has done so long enough; it is time now that it be cut asunder and broken. Note, He that is the God of nations will, sooner or later, assert the injured right of nations against those that unjustly and violently invade them. The God of the whole earth will break the hammer of the whole earth. (2.) Babylon has bid defiance to God himself; Thou hast striven against the Lord, (v. 24.) hast joined issue with him, (so the word signifies,) as in law or battle, hast openly opposed him, set up rivals with him, raised rebellion against him; therefore thou art now found, and caught, as in a snare. Note, Those strive against the Lord who will soon find themselves over-matched. (3.) Babylon ruined Jerusalem, the holy city, and the holy house there, and must now be called to an account for that. This is the manifesto published in Zion, in the day of Babylon’s visitation; it is the vengeance of the Lord our God, the vengeance of his people, v. 28. The burning of the temple, and the carrying away of its vessels, were articles in the charge against Babylon, on which greater stress was laid than upon its being the hammer of the whole earth; for Zion was the joy and glory of the whole earth. Note, Whatever wrong is done to God’s church, (his temple in the world,) it will certainly be reckoned for; and no vengeance will be sorer and heavier than the vengeance of the temple. (4.) Babylon had been very haughty and insolent, and therefore must have a fall; so is it the glory of God to look upon those that are proud, and to abase them, Jer. xl. 12.) I am against thee, O thou most proud, v. 31. Thou pride; (so the word is;) and again, v. 32. as proud as pride itself. Note, The pride of men’s hearts sets God against them, and ripens them apace for ruin; for God resists the proud, and will bring them down. The most proud shall stumble and fall; they shall fall not so much by others, thrusting them down, as by their own stumbling; for they hold their heads so high, that they never look under their feet, to choose their way, and avoid stumbling-blocks, but walk at all adventures. Babylon’s pride must unavoidably be her ruin; for she has been proud against the Lord, against the Holy One of Israel, (v. 29.) has insulted him in insulting over his people; she has made him Enemie, and therefore, when she is fallen, none shall raise her up, v. 32. Who can help those up whom God will throw down?

33. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together; and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go. 34. Their Redeemer is strong; The Lord of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon. 35. A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the Lord, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men. 36. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote; a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed. 37. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women; a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed. 38. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. 39. Therefore the wild beasts of the desert, with the wild beasts of the islands, shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation. 40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the Lord; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein. 41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. 42. They shall hold the bow and the lance; they are cruel, and will not shew mercy; their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon. 43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble; anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travall. 44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong; but I will make them suddenly run away from her; and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me? 45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the Lord that he hath taken against Babylon, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans; Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out; surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them. 46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

We have, in these verses,

1. Israel’s sufferings, and their deliverance out of those sufferings. God takes notice of the bondage of his people in Babylon, as he did of their bondage in Egypt; he hath surely seen it, and has heard their cry. Israel and Judah were oppressed together, v. 33. Those that remained of the captives of the ten tribes, upon the uniting of the kingdoms of Assyria and Chaldea, seemed to have come and
mingled themselves with those of the two tribes, and to have mingled tears with them, so that they were oppressed together. They were humble suppliants for their liberty, and that also; they could not attempt any thing towards it, for all that took them captives held them fast, and were too hard for them. But this is their comfort in distress, that, though they are weak, their Redeemer is strong; (2.) Their sinfulness signifies (v. 2.) that has a right to them, and will claim his right, and make good his claim; he is stronger than their enemies that hold them fast: he can overpower all the force that is against them, and put strength into his own people though they are very weak. The Lord of hosts is his name, and he will answer to his name, and make it to appear that he is what his people call him, and will be that to them, for which they depend upon him. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of the people of God, that, though they have hosts against them, they have the Lord of hosts for them; and he shall thoroughly plead their cause; pleading he shall plead it, plead it with jealousy, plead it effectually, plead it, and carry it, that he may give rest to the land, to his people's land, rest from all their enemies round about. This is their case, 1. Their sinfulness, 2. Their weakness, 3. Their enemies. Therefore, (v. 3.) God will be their strength, will give them strength to stand and to conquer their enemies; and he will make them free, and they shall be free indeed; he will give them rest, that rest which remains for the people of God.

II. Babylon's sin, and their punishment for that sin.

1. The sin they are here charged with, is idolatry and persecution. (1.) They oppressed the people of God, they held them fast, and would not let them go; they opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa. xiv. 17. This was God's quarrel with them, as of old with Pharaoh; it cost him dear, and yet they would not take warning. The inhabitants of Babylon must be disquieted, (v. 24.) because they have disquieted God's people, whose honour and comfort he is jealous for, and therefore will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, as well as rest to them that are troubled. 2 Thess. 1. 6, 7. (2.) They wronged God himself, and robbed him, giving that glory to others, which is due to him alone. (v. 25.) It be the Statue of a man of war, all parts of the country abounded with idols, and they were mad upon them, were in love with them, and doted on them, cared not what cost and pains they were at in the worship of them, were unwearied in paying their respects to them, and in all this they were wretchedly infatuated, and acted like men out of their wits; they were carried on in their idolatry without reason or discretion, like men in a perfect fury. The word here used for idols, properly signifies terrors, Enim, the name given to giants that were formidable, because they made the images of their gods to look frightful, to strike a terror upon fools and children. Their idols were scarecrows, yet they doted on them. Babylon was the mother of harlots, (Rev. xviii. 5.) the source of their idolatry without reason or discretion, like men to make a god of any creature; and those who are proud against the Lord, the true God, are justly given up to strong delusions, to be made upon idols that cannot profit. But this madness is wickedness, for which sinners will be certainly and severely reckoned with.

2. The judgments of God upon them for these sins, they are such as will quite lay them waste, and ruin them. (1.) All that should be their defence and support shall be cut off by the sword. The Chaldeans had long been God's sword, wherewith he had done execution upon the sinful nations round about; but now, they being as bad as any of them, or worse, a sword is brought upon them, even upon the inhabitants of Babylon, (v. 35.) a sword of war, and, as it is in God's hand, sent and directed by him, it is a sword of justice. It shall be, [1.] Upon their princes; for, if they should be by it, and their dignity, wealth, and power, shall be lost, their security, their philosophers, their statesmen and privy-councillors; their learning and policy shall neither secure themselves, nor stand the public in any stead. [3.] Upon their sons; for they cheated with their prognostications of peace and prosperity; and the sword upon them shall make them dote, so that they shall seek after foolish things that the sword has lost all their wits. Note, God has a sword that can reach the soul and affect the mind, and bring men under spiritual plagues. [4.] Upon their mighty men; a sword shall be upon their spirits; if they are not slain, yet they shall be dismayed, and shall be no longer mighty men; for what steel will Their horses and chariots, the invaders shall make themselves masters of all their warlike stores, shall seize their horses and chariots for themselves, and destroy them. The hosts of other nations, that were in their service, shall be quite disheartened, the mingled people shall become as weak and timorous as women. [6.] Upon their exchequer; the sword shall be upon her treasures, which are the sinews of war, and they shall be robbed, and made use of by the enemy against them. See what universal destruction the sword makes when it comes with commission!

(2.) The country shall be made desolate; (v. 38.) The waters shall be dried up; the water that secures the city. Cyrus drew the river Euphrates into so many channels as made it passable for his army, so that they got with ease to the walls of Babylon, which were thought, having such a river before them, to be inaccessible. The water likewise, that made the country fruitful, shall be dried up, so that it shall be turned into barrenness, and shall be no more inhabited by the children of men, but by the wild beasts of the desert, v. 39. This was foretold concerning Babylon, Isa. xiii. 19—22. The same was foretold concerning Edom, ch. xlix. 18. As the Chaldeans had laid Edom waste, so they shall themselves be laid waste.

(3.) The king and kingdom shall be put into the utmost confusion and consternation by the enemies' invading of them, v. 41—45. All the expressions here used, bespeaking the formidable power of the invaders, where with they should array themselves, and the fright which both court and country should be put into thereby, we met with before, (ch. vi. 22—24.) concerning the Chaldeans invading the land of Judah. This battle, which is there said to be against thee, O daughter of Zion, is here said to be against thee, O daughter of Babylon, to intimate that they should be paid in their own measure, and what they could do to other, they should do to others. And those who have dealt cruelly, and have showed no mercy, may expect to be cruelly dealt with, and to find no mercy. Only there is one difference between these passages; there it is said, We have heard the fame thereof, and our hands wax feeble; here it is said, The king of Babylon has heard the report, and his heart waxed feeble; which intimates that that proud and daring prince shall, in the day of his distress, be as
weak and dispirited as the meanest Israelites were in the day of their distress.

(4.) That they shall be as much hurt as frightened, for the invader shall come up like a lion to tear and destroy, (v. 44.) and shall make them and their habitation desolate; (v. 45.) and the desolation shall be so astonishing, that all the nations about shall be terrified by it, v. 46. These three verses we had before, (ch. xlix. 19.—21.) in the prophecy of the destruction of Edom, which was accomplished by the Chaldeans, and they are here repeated, mutatis mutandis—with a few necessary alterations, in the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon, which was to be accomplished upon the Chaldeans, to show that though the distributions of Providence may appear unequal for a time, its retributions will be equal at last; when thou shalt make an end to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1.—Rev. xiii. 10.

CHAP. LI.

The prophet, in this chapter, goes on with the prediction of Babylon's fall, to which other prophets also bare witness. He is very large and lively in describing the foresight God had given him: for the destruction of the two capitals, whose deliverance depended upon it, and was to be the result of it. Here is, I. The record of Babylon's doom, with the particulars of it, intermixed with the grounds of God's controversy with her, malicious attempts against her, and great encouragements given from thence to the Israel of God, that suffered such hard things by her, v. 1—58. II. The representation and ratification of this, by the throwing of a copy of this prophecy into the river Euphrates, v. 59—64.

1. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; 2. And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about. 3. Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his chariotine: and spare ye not your young men; destroy ye utterly all her host. 4. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets. 5. For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel. 6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; be not cut off in her iniquity: for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompense. 7. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are mad. 8. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed. 9. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: for sake her, and let us go every one into his own country; for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies. 10. The Lord hath brought forth his righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God. 11. Make bright the arrows, gather the shields: the Lord hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the Lord, the vengeance of his temple. 12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong; set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the Lord hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon. 13. O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness. 14. The Lord of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men as with caterpillars; and they shall lift up a shout against thee. 15. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. 16. When he uttereth his voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. 17. Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. 18. They are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish. 19. The Portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the Former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance; The Lord of hosts is his name. 20. Thou art my battle-axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations; and with thee will I destroy kingdoms; 21. And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider; 22. With thee also will I break in pieces men and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid; 23. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers. 24. And I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. 25. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt moun-
tain. 26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the L ORD. 27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause her horses to come up as the rough caterpillars. 28. Prepare against her the nations, with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion. 29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the L ORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant. 30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burnt their dwelling-places; her bars are broken. 31. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, 32. And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burnt with fire, and the men of war are affrighted. 33. For thus saith the L ORD of hosts, the God of Israel, The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come. 34. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicacies, he hath cast me out. 35. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, My blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say. 36. Therefore thus saith the L ORD, Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. 37. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment, and a hissing without an inhabitant. 38. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps. 39. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the L ORD. 40. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with goats. 41. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! 42. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. 43. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. 44. And I will punish Bel in Babylon; and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him; yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. 45. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the L ORD. 46. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land: a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. 47. Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. 48. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the L ORD. 49. As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth. 50. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the L ORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. 51. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces; for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the L ORD's house. 52. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the L ORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images; and through all her land the wounded shall groan. 53. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the L ORD. 54. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: 55. Because the L ORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered. 56. Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken; every one of their bows is broken: for the L ORD God of recompenses shall surely requite. 57. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is The L ORD of hosts. 58. Thus saith the L ORD of hosts, The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burnt with fire; and the people shall labour
in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

The particulars of this copious prophecy are dispersed and interwoven, and the same things left and returned to so often, that it could not well be divided into parts, but we must endeavour to collect them under their proper heads.

Let us then observe here,

1. An acknowledgment of the great pomp and power that Babylon had been in, and the use that God in his providence had made of it; (v. 7.) Babylon hath been a golden cup, a rich and glorious empire, a golden city, (Isa. xiv. 4.) a head of gold, (Dan. ii. 38.) filled with all good things, as a cup with wine; nay, she had been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, he had in a particular manner filled and favoured her with blessings, he had made the earth drunk with this cup of drunkenness, and she had with her pleasures, and debauched by others intoxicated with her terrors, and destroyed by her. In both senses, the New Testament Babylon is said to have made the kings of the earth drunk, Rev. xvii. 4.—xviii. 2. Babylon had also been God's battle-axe; it was so at this time, when Jeremiah prophesied, and was likely to be yet more so, v. 29. The forces of Babylon were God's weapons of war, tools in his hand, with which he brake into pieces, and knocked down, nations and kingdoms, horses and chariots, which are so much the strength of kingdoms; (v. 21.) men and women, young and old, with which kingdoms are replenished; (v. 22.) the shepherd and his flock, the husbandman and his oxen, with which kingdoms are maintained and supplied, v. 23. Such havoc as this the Chaldeans had made, when God employed them as instruments of his wrath, it is incredible, and it makes Babylon herself must fall. Note, Those that have carried all before them a great while, will yet at length meet with their match, and their day also will come to fall, the rod will itself be thrown into the fire at last; nor can any think it will exempt them from God's judgments, that they have been instrumental in executing his judgments on others. Wonders of complaint made of Babylon, and a change drawn up against her by the Israel of God. (1.) They are complained of for their incorrigible wickedness; (v. 9.) We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed. The people of God that were captives among them, endeavoured, according to the instructions given them, (Jer. x. 11.) to convince them of the folly of their idolatry, but they could not do it; still the Babylonians doted as much as ever upon their graven images, and the Israelites resolve to quit them, and go to their own country. Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring that they had done their best to save her from ruin, but that it was all to no purpose, and therefore they had as good go home to their respective countries; for her judgment reaches unto heaven, (it does not refer to her person, but to her policy and power.) Whether the Israelites resolve to quit them, and go to their own country.

Yet some understand this as spoken by the forces they had hired for their assistance, declaring that they had done their best to save her from ruin, but that it was all to no purpose, and therefore they had as good go home to their respective countries; for her judgment reaches unto heaven; and they are now together with them, shall fall (it does not refer to her person, but to her policy and power.) Whether the Israelites resolve to quit them, and go to their own country.

(2.) They are complained of for their inveterate malice against Israel; other nations had been hardly used by the Chaldeans, but Israel only complains to God of it, and with confidence appeals to him, (v. 34, 35.) The king of Babylon has devoured me, and crushed me, and never thought he could do enough to ruin me; he has engrafted me and rooted me, and made me a dragon or white whelps upon the little fish by shoals; he has filled his belly, filled his treasures, with my delights, with all my pleasant things, and has cast me out, cast me away as a vessel in which there is no pleasure; and now let them be accountable for all this. Zionist and Jerusalem shall say, Let the violence done to me and my children, that are my own flesh, and pieces of myself, and all the blood of my people, which they have shed like water, be upon them; let the guilt of it lie upon them, and let it be required at their hand." Note, Ruin is not far off from those that lie under the guilt of wrong done to God's people.

3. Judgment given upon this appeal by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, on behalf of Israel against Babylon. He sits in the throne judging right, is ready to receive complaints, and answers, (v. 33.) "I have heard the outcry of the people; I will in due time plead it effectually, and take vengeance for thee; and every drop of Jerusalem's blood shall be accounted for with interest." Israel and Judah seem to have been neglected and forgotten, but God has an eye to them, v. 5. It is true, their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel, they were a provoking people, and their sin was the great offence to God, as a holy God, and as their God, their Holy One; and therefore he justly delivered them up into the hands of their enemies, and might justly have abandoned them, and left them to perish in their hands; but God deals better with them than they deserve, and, notwithstanding their iniquities and his severities, Israel is not forsaken, is not cast off, though he be cast out, but is owned and looked after by his God. by the Lord; who has his hand upon him, and will act as him as the Lord of hosts, a God of power. Note, Though God's people may have broken his laws, and fallen under his rebukes, yet it does not therefore follow that they are thrown out of covenant; but God's care of them and love to them will flourish again, Ps. lxxxix. 30, 33. The Chaldeans thought they should never be called to an account for what they had done against God's Israel; but there is a time, when all evil shall be fixed, and when it shall come, it will come; he will render unto Babylon a recompense, for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouses their cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, (v. 11.) as before, ch. i. 28. The Lord of recompenses, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely require, (v. 56.) will pay them with a double, with a triple, with a fourfold recompense. Note, When it should come sooner than the time fixed, but then it will come; he will render unto Babylon a recompense, for the avenging of Israel is the vengeance of the Lord, who espouses their cause; it is the vengeance of his temple, (v. 11.) as before, ch. i. 28. The Lord of recompenses, the God to whom vengeance belongs, will surely require, (v. 56.) will pay them with a double, with a triple, with a fourfold recompense.

4. A declaration of the greatness and sovereignty of that God who espouses Zion's cause, and undertakes to reckon with this proud and potent enemy; (v. 14.) It is the Lord of hosts that has said it, that has sworn it, has sworn it by himself, for he could
swear by no greater, that he will fill Babylon with vast and incredible numbers of the enemy's forces, will fill it with men as with caterpillars, that shall overpower it with multitudes, and need only to lift up a shout against it, for that shall be so terrible as to dispirit all to resistance. The destruction of this nation cannot be compared to this numerous army. But who, and where, is he that can break so powerful a kingdom as Babylon? The prophet gives an account of him from the description he had formerly given of him, and of his sovereignty and victory over all pretenders, (Jer. x. 12—16.) which was there intended for the conviction of the Babylonian idolaters, and the confirmation of God's Israel in the faith and worshipping of the God of Israel; and it is here repeated, to show that God will convince those by his judgments, who would not be convinced by his word, that he is God over all. Let not any doubt but that he who has determined to destroy Babylon, is able to make his words good, for, (1.) He is the God that made the world, (v. 15.) and therefore nothing is too hard for him to do; it is in his name that our help stands, and on him our hope is built. (2.) He has the command of all the creatures that he has made; (v. 16.) his providence is a continued creation; he has wind and rain at his disposal; if he speak the word, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and it is a wonder how they hang there, fed by vapours out of the earth; and it is a wonder how they ascend thence. Lightnings and rain seem connected with each other, and only produced together; and the wind, which seems arbitrary in its motions, and we know not whence it comes, is yet, we are sure, brought out of his treasures. (3.) The idols that oppose the accomplishment of his word, are a mere sham, and their worshippers brutish people, v. 17, 18. The idols are falsehood, they are vanity, they are the work of empty belief, and the box can be probed and inquired into, they perish, their reputation sinks, and they appear to be nothing; and those that make them are like unto them. But between the God of Israel and these gods of the heathen there is no comparison; (v. 19.) The portion of Jacob is not like them; the God who speaks this, and will do it, is the former of all things, and the end of all things; and the box can be proved to be without power; and there is a near relation between him and his people, for he is their Portion, and they are his; they put a confidence in him as their Portion, and he is pleased to take a complacency in them, and a particular care of them, as the lot of his inheritance; and therefore he will do what is best for them. The repetition of these things here, which were said before, intimates both the certainty and the importance of them, and obliges us to take special notice of them; God hath spoken once; yea, twice have we heard this, that power belongs to God; power to destroy the most formidable enemies of his church, and if God thus speak once, yea, twice, we are inexcusable if we do not perceive it, and attend to it. 5. A description of the instruments that are to be employed against Babylon. Darius and Cyrus, who come against Babylon by a divine instinct; for God's device is against Babylon to destroy it; they do it, but God devised it, he designed it; they are but accomplishing his purpose, and acting as he directed. Note, God's counsel shall stand, and according to it all hearts shall move. Those whom God employs against Babylon are compared to the destroying wind, (v. 1.) to a destroying wind, which either by its coldness blasts the fruits of the earth, or by its fierceness blows down all before it; this wind is brought out of God's treasures, (v. 16.) and it is here said to be raised up against them that dwell in the midst of the Chaldeans, those of other nations that inhabit among them, and are incorporated with them. The Chaldeans rise up against God by falling down before idols, and against them God will raise up destroyers, for he will be too hard for them that contest with him. These events are compared of the Chaldeans, (v. 3.) and not of their young men, but utterly destroy them, for the Lord has both devised and done what he spoke against Babylon, v. 12. This may animate the instruments he employs, by assuring them of success; the methods they take are such as God has devised, and therefore they shall surely prosper; what he has spoken shall be done, for he himself will do it; and therefore let all necessary preparations be made; this they are called to, v. 27, 28. Let a standard be set up, under which to enlist soldiers for this expedition: let a trumpet be blown to call men together to it, and animate them in it; let the nations, out of which Cyrus's army is to be raised, prepare their recruits; let the kingdoms of Arrarat and Mimi, and Ashkenaz, of Armenia, both the higher and the lower, and all the land of Bithynia, and their quota of men for this service; let general officers be appointed, and the cavalry advance; let the horses come up in great numbers, as the caterpillars, and come, like them, leaping and pawing in the valley; let them lay the country waste, as caterpillars do, (Job i. 4.) especially rough caterpillars; let the kings and captains prepare nations against Babylon, for the service is great, and there is occasion for many hands to be employed in it. 7. The weakness of the Chaldeans, and their inability to make head against this threatening, destroying force. When God employed them against other nations, they had spirit and strength in act offensively, and went on with admirable resolution, conquering and to conquer; but now that it comes to their turn to be conquered, all their might and courage are gone, their hearts fail them, and none of all their men of might and mettle have found their hands to act so much as defensively. They are called upon here to prepare for action, but it is ironically, and in an upbraiding way; (v. 11.) Make bright the arrows, which are grown rusty through disuse; gather the shields, which in a long course of peace and security have been scattered, and thereby out of the way; (v. 12.) Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, upon the towers on those walls, to summon all that owed suit and service to that mother-city, now to come in to her assistance. Let them make the watch as strong as they can, and appoint the sentinels to their respective posts, and prepare ambushes for the reception of the foe. To this the Chaldeans are said to be very secure and remiss, and would need to be thus quickened; (and they were so to that degree, that they were in the midst of their revels when the city was taken;) but that all their preparations should be to no purpose; who will make them to it, but they shall have no heart to come at the call, v. 29. The whole land shall tremble and be dismayed; (v. 13.;) all the neighboring nations shall see them, for they shall see both the irresistible arm, and the irrepressible counsel and decree, of God against them; they shall see that God is making Babylon a desolation, and therein is performing what he has purposed; and then the mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, v. 30. God having taken away their strength.
and spirit, so that they have remained in their holds, not daring so much as to peep forth, the might both of their hearts and of their hands fails, they become as timorous as women, so that the enemy has, without any resistance, burnt her dwelling-places, and broken her bars. It is to the same purport with ver. 50.—58. When the spoiler comes upon Babylon, her mighty men, who should make head against him, are immediately taken, their weapons fall from them; and if the broken bow is broken, and stands them in no stead; their policies fail them, they call councils of war, but their princes and captains, who sit in council to concert measures for the common safety, are made drunk, they are as men intoxicated through stupidity or despair, they can form no right notions of things, they stagger, and are unsteady in their counsels and resolves, and dash one against another worse than wolves and shepherds among themselves; at length they sleep a perpetual sleep, and never awake from their wine, the wine of God's wrath, for it is to them an opiate that lays them into a fatal lethargy. The walls of their city fall to pieces, ver. 58. When the enemy had found ways to ford Euphrates, which was thought impassable, yet surely, think they, the walls are impregnable, they are the great works of art and power which man made it, the walls of broad Babylon; the compass of the city, within the walls, was 385 furlongs, some say 480, that is, about sixty miles; the walls were 200 cubits high, and 50 cubits broad, so that two chariots might easily pass by one another upon them. Some say that there was a threefold wall about the inner city, and the like upon the outer; and that the stones of the wall, being laid four cubits pitch, instead of mortar, (Gen. xi. 3.) were scarcely separable; and yet these shall be utterly broken, and the high gates and towers shall be burnt, and the people that are employed in the defence of the city shall labour in vain, in the fire, they shall quite tire themselves, but shall do no good.

8. The destruction that shall be made of Babylon by these invaders: (1.) It is a certain destruction, the doom is past, and it cannot be reversed; a divine power is engaged against it, which cannot be resisted; (ver. 8.) Babylon is fallen and destroyed, is as sure to fall, to fall into destruction, as if it were fallen and destroyed already; though, when Jeremiah prophesied this, and many a year after, it was in the height of its power and greatness. God declares, God appears against Babylon; (ver. 25.) Babylon and the heathen whom God is against; he will stretch out his hand upon it, a hand which no creature can bear the weight of, or withstand the force of. It is his purpose which shall be performed, that Babylon must be a desolation, ver. 29. (2.) It is a righteous destruction; Babylon has made herself meet for it, and therefore cannot fail to meet with it. For, (ver. 25.) Babylon is as bulky as a mountain, and destroying all the earth, as the stones that are tumbled from high mountains spill the grounds about them; but now it shall itself be rolled down from its rocks, which were as the foundations on which it stood; it shall be levelled, its pomp and power broken. It is now a burning mountain, like Ætna and the other volcanoes; Babylon has eaten up destroyer mountains, every one; but it shall be a burnt mountain, it shall at length have consumed itself, and shall remain a heap of ashes—so will this world be, and shall be at the end of time. Again, (ver. 33.) Babylon is like a threshing-floor, in which the people of God have been long threshed, as sheaves in the floor; but now the time is come that she shall herself be threshed, and her sheaves in her; her princes and great men, and all her inhabitants, shall be beaten in their own land, as in the threshing-floor. The threshing-floor is prepared, Babylon is by sin made meet to be a seat of war, and her people, like corn in harvest, are ripe for destruction, Rev. xiv. 15. Mic. iv. 12. (3.) It is an unavoidable destruction. Babylon seems to be well fenced and fortified against it; she dwells upon many waters; (ver. 13.) the situation of her country is such, that it seems inaccessible, it is so surrounded, and the march of an enemy into it so embarrassed, by rivers. In allusion to this, the King of Babylon is said to be in the midst of his waters, to rule over many nations, as the other Babylon did, Rev. xvii. 15. Babylon is abundant in treasures; and yet thine end is come, and another thy waters nor thy wealth shall secure thee. This end that comes shall be the measure of thy covetousness, it shall be the stint of thy gettings, it shall set bounds to thine ambition and avarice, which destruction of Babylon, said to its proud waves, Hitherto shall ye come, and no further. Note, If men will not set a measure to their covetousness by wisdom and grace, God will set a measure to it by his judgments. Babylon, thinking herself very safe and very great, was very proud; but she will be deceived, ver. 53. Though Babylon should mount her head, and lift up her eyes; (Babylon means that, because what is high is apt to totter) she should take care to fortify the height of her strength, yet all will not do, God will send spoilers against her, that shall break through her strength, and bring down her height. (4.) It is a gradual destruction, which, if they had pleased, they might have foreseen, and had warning of; for, (ver. 46.) A rumour will come one year, that Cyrus is making vast preparations for war, and after that, in another year, shall come a rumour, that his design is upon Babylon, and he is steering his course that way; so that when he was a great way off, they might have sent, and desired conditions of peace; but they were too proud, too secure, to do that, and their hearts were hardened to their destruction. (5.) Yet, when it comes, it is a surprising destruction; Babylon is suddenly fallen; (ver. 6.) the destruction comes upon them when they did not think of it, and is perfected in a little time, as that of the New Testament Babylon in one hour, Rev. xvi. 17. The king of Babylon, who should have been observing the approaches of the enemy, was himself at such a distance from the place where the attack was made, that it was a great while ere he had notice that the city was taken; but when they set fire to the place, sent one messenger, one courier, after another, with advice of it, ver. 31. The foot-pasts shall meet at the court from several quarters with this intelligence to the king of Babylon, that his city is taken at one end, and there is nothing to obstruct the progress of the conquerors, but they will be at the other end quickly. They are to tell him that the enemy has seized the passes, (ver. 32.) the forts on blockades up the river; and that having got over the river, they set fire to the reeds on the river-side to alarm and terrify the city, so that all the men of war are affrighted, and have thrown down their arms, and surrendered at discretion. The messengers come, like Job's, one upon the heels of another, with these tidings, which are immediately confirmed with a great shout, (ver. 32.) the king brake his neck, shouting the king himself, Dan. v. 30. That profane feast which they were celebrating at the very time when their city was taken, which was both an evidence of their strange security, and a great advantage to the enemy, seems here to be referred to; (ver. 38, 39.) They shall roar together like lions, as men in their revels do, when the wine is got into their heads; they call it singing, but in scripture language, and in the language of sober men, it is called yelling like lions' whelps. It is probable that
they were drinking confusion to Cyrus and his army with loud huzzas; Well, says God, in their heat, when they are inflamed. (Isa. v. 11.) and their heads are hot with their drink. I will make a fountain, and the fountain shall give them their portion; they have passed their cup round, now the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto them, (Hab. ii. 15, 16.) a cup of fury, which shall make them drunk, that they may rejoice, or rather that they may revel it, and sleep a perpetual sleep let them be as merry as they can with that bitter cup, but it shall lay them to sleep, never to wake more; (v. 17.) for on that night, or the midst of the jollity, was Belshazzar slain. (6.) It is to be a universal destruction, God will make thorough work of it; for, as he will perform what he has purposed, so he will perfect what he has begun. The slain shall fall in great abundance throughout the land of the Chaldeans, multitudes shall be thrust through in her streets, v. 4. They are brought down like lambs to the slaughter, (v. 4G.) in such great numbers, so easily; and the enemies make no more of killing them than the butcher does of killing lambs. The strength of the enemy, and their invading of them, are here compared to an irruption and inundation of waters, (v. 42.) The sea is come up upon Babylon, which, when it has once broken through its bounds, there is no fence against, so that she is covered with the mingled waters; the sea waves shall run over the army; her cities then become a desolation, an uninhabited, uncultivated desert, v. 43. (7.) It is a destruction that shall reach the gods of Babylon, the idols and images, and fall with a particular weight upon them. In token that the whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall, and that throughout all the country the wounded shall groan, I will punish Bel, that great Destroyer, the image to which such abundance of sacrifices are offered, and such rich spoils dedicated, and to whose temple there is such a vast resort; he shall disgorge what he has so greedily regaled himself with; God will bring forth out of his temple all the wealth laid up there, Job xx. 15. His altars shall be forsaken, none shall regard him any more, and so that idol which was thought to be a wall to Babylon, shall fall, and fall them. (8.) It shall be a final destruction; you may take balm for your pain, but in vain; she that would not be healed by the word of God, shall not be healed by his providence, v. 8. 9. Babylon shall become heaps, (v. 37.) and to complete its infamy, no use shall be made even of the ruins of Babylon, so execrable shall they be, and so contemptible shall they be in the sight of the enemy. The world will not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations. People shall not care for having anything to do with Babylon, or whatever belonged to it. Or it denotes that there shall be nothing left in Babylon, on which to ground any hopes or attempts of raising it into a kingdom again; for, as it follows here, it shall be desolate, (v. 43.) unless the Lord shall have compassion on his people. 10. 15. The ruins of the city are to be seen, yet the ground enclosed by them was a forest of wild beasts. 9. Here is a call to God's people to go out of Babylon. It is their wisdom, when ruin is approaching, to quit the city, and retire into the country; (v. 6.) "Fly out of the midst of Babylon, and get into some remote corner, that you may save your lives, and may not be cut off in her iniquity." When God's judgments are abroad, it is good to get as far as we can from those against whom they are leveled, as Israel from the tents of Korah. This agrees with the case in the captivity of the ten tribes. It is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem; Let them which be in Judea, flee to the mountains, Matt. xxi. 16. It is their wisdom to get out of the midst of Babylon, lest they be involved, if not in her ruins, yet in her fears; (v. 45, 46.) Let your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land. Though God has told them that Cyrus would be their deliverer, and Babylon's destruction their deliverance, yet they had been told also, that in the peace thereof they should have peace, and therefore the alarms given to Babylon would put them into a fright, and perhaps they might not have faith and consideration enough to suppress these fears; for which reason they are here advised to get out of the hearing of the alarms. Note, Those who have not grace enough to keep their temper in temptation, should have wisdom enough to keep out of the way of temptation. But this is not all; it is not only their wisdom to quit the city when the ruin is approaching, but it is their duty to quit the country too, when the ruin is accomplished, and they are set at liberty by the pulling down of the prison over their heads. This they are told, v. 50, 51. "Ye Israelites, who have escaped the sword of the Chaldeans, you are now free to quit Babylon, and destroyers, now that the year of release is come, go away, stand not still, hasten to your own country again, however you may be comfortable settled in Babylon, for this is not your rest, but Canaan is." (1.) He puts them in mind of the inducements they had to return, "Remember the Lord afar off, his presence with you now, though you are here afar off from your native soil, and your families formerly in the temple, though you are now afar off from the ruins of it." Note, Wherever we are, in the greatest depths, at the greatest distances, we may and must remember the Lord our God; and in the time of the greatest fears and hopes it is seasonable to remember the Lord. (1.) And let Jerusalem come into your mind; though it be now in ruins, yet favour its dust, (Ps. ciii. 14.) though few of you saw Jerusalem destroyed, and believe the reports concerning it, from those that saw it when they remembered Zion; and think of Jerusalem until you come up to a resolution to make the best of your way thither. Note, When the city of our solemnities is out of sight, yet it must not be out of mind; and it will be of great use to us, in our journey through this world, to let the heavenly Jerusalem come often into our mind. (2.) He takes notice of the discouragement which the returning captives labour under; (v. 51.) being reminded of Jerusalem, they cry out, "We are confounded, we cannot bear the thought of it, shame covers our faces at the mention of it, for we have heard of the reproach of the sanctuary, that it is profaned and ruined by strangers; how shall we do there, we are in a way of destruction." Which he answers, (v. 52.) that God of Israel will give a triumph over the gods of Babylon, and so that reproach will be for ever rolled away. Note, The believing prospect of Jerusalem's recovery will keep us from being ashamed of Jerusalem's ruins. 10. Here is the diversified feeling excited by Babylon's fall, and it is the same that we have with respect to the destruction of Babylon in this chapter: (1.) Some shall lament the destruction of Babylon. There is the sound of a cry, a great outcry coming from Babylon, (v. 54.) lamenting this great destruction, the voice of mourning, because the Lord has destroyed the voice of the multitude, that great voice of mirth, which used to be heard in Babylon, v. 55. We are told what they shall say in their lamentations; (v. 41.) How is Sheba taken, and
how are we mistaken concerning her! How is that city surprised, and become an astonishment among the nations, that was the prase, and glory, and admiration, of the whole earth! See how that may fall into a general contempt, which has been universally cried up! (2.) Yet some shall rejoice in Babylon's fall, not as it is the misery of their fellow-creatures, but as it is the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, and as it opens the way for the release of God's captives: upon these accounts the heavens and the earth, and all that is in both, shall sing for Babylon; (v. 48.) the church in heaven and the church on earth shall give to God the glory of his righteousness, and take notice of it with thankfulness to his praise. Babylon's ruin is Zion's praise.

39. The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon, in the fourth year of his reign. And this Seraiah was a quiet prince. 60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon. 61. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words, 62. Then shalt thou say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. 63. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Epnphrates: 64. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her, and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

We have been long attending the judgment of Babylon, in this and the foregoing chapter; now here we have the conclusion of that whole matter.

1. A copy is taken of this prophecy, it should seem, by Jeremiah himself, for Baruch his scribe is not mentioned here; (v. 60.) Jeremiah wrote in a book all these words that are here written against Babylon. He received this notice, that he might give it to all whom it might concern. It is of great advantage both to the propagating, and to the perpetuating, of the word of God, to have it written, and to have copies taken of the law, prophets, and epistles.

2. It is sent to Babylon, to the captives there, by the hand of Seraiah, who went there attendant on, or perhaps for King Nebuchadnezzar, the fourth year of his reign, v. 59. He went with Zedekiah, or, as the margin reads it, on the behalf of Zedekiah, into Babylon. The character given of him is observable. That this Seraiah was a quiet prince, a prince of rest; he was in honour and power, but not, as most of the princes then were, hot and heady, making parties, and heads factions, and driving things furiously: he was of a calm temper, studied the things that made for peace, endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the king his master and the king of Babylon, and to keep his master from rebelling: he was no persecutor of God's prophets, but a moderate man. Zedekiah was happy in the choice of such a man to be his envoy to the king of Babylon, and Jeremiah might safely intrust such a man with his errand too. Note, It is the real honour of great men to be quiet men, and it is the wisdom of princes to put such into places of trust.

3. Seraiah is desired to read it to his countrymen that were already gone into captivity: "When thou shalt come to Babylon, and shalt see what a magnificent place it is, how large a city, how strong, how rich, and how well fortified, and shalt therefore be tempted to think, Surely it will stand for ever;" (as the disciples imagined, when they saw the magnificence of the temple, concluded that nothing would throw them down but the end of the world, Matt. xxiv. 13.) "then thou shalt read all these words to thyself, and thy particular friends, for their encouragement in their captivity: let them with an eye of faith see to the end of these threatening powers, and comfort themselves and one another herewith." He is directed to make a solemn protestation of the divine authority and unquestionable certainty of that which he had read; (v. 62.) Then thou shalt look up to God, and say, O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off. This is like the angel's protestation concerning the destruction of the New Testament Babylon; These are the true sayings of God. These words are true and faithful, Rev. xix. 9. — xx. 5. Though Seraiah sees Babylon flourishing, and never will fall, yet he is bid to foresee Babylon falling; and by virtue of it, must curse its habitation, though it be taking root; (Job v. 3.) "O Lord, thou hast spoken against this place, and I believe what thou hast spoken, that, as thou knowest every thing, so thou canst do every thing. Then hast passed sentence upon Babylon, and it shall be executed. Thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, and by virtue of it, the Lord will not endure its pomp, nor fear its power." We are bid to study this world, as how glittering its shows are, and how flattering its proposals, let us read in the book of the Lord that its fashion passes away, and it shall shortly be cut off, and be desolate for ever, and we shall learn to look upon it with a holy contempt. Observe here, When we have been reading the word of God, it becomes us to direct to him whose word it is; God's word is our rule and standard, by which to judge, and conduct our lives in the world, in truth, equity, and goodness, of what we have read.

5. He must then tie a stone to the book, and throw it into the midst of the river Euphrates, as a confirming sign of the things contained in it, saying, "Thus shalt Babylon sink, and not rise; for they shall be weary, they shall perfectly succumb, as men tired with a burden, under the load of the evil that I will bring upon them, which they shall never shake off, or get from under, v. 63, 64. In the sign, it was the stone that sunk the book, which otherwise would have swam, but in the thing signified, it was rather the book that sunk the stone; it was the divine sentence passed upon Babylon in this prophecy, that sunk that city, which seemed as firm as a stone. The fall of the New Testament Babylon was represented by something like this, but much more terrible. (Zech. xiv. 21.) A mighty angel cast a great millstone into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon fall. Those that sink under the weight of God's wrath and curse, sink irrecoverably. The last words of the chapter seal up the vision and prophecy of this book; Thus far are the words of Jeremiah. Not that this prophecy against Babylon was the last of his prophecies, for it was dated in the fourth year of Zedekiah; we will join before he finished his testimony; but this is recorded last of his prophecies, because it was to be last accomplished of all his prophecies against the Gentiles, ch. xlvii.

1. And the chapter which remains is purely historical, and, as some think, was added by some other hand.
Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

3. For through the anger of the Lord it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4. And it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, and he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about. 5. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine sore was in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain. 8. But the army of the Chaldeans pursuèd after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah, in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him. 10. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah. 11. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

This narrative begins no higher than the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, though there were two captivities before, one in the fourth year of Je-hoiakim, the other in the first of Jeconiah: but, probably, it was drawn up by some of those that were carried away with Zedekiah, as a reproach to themselves for imagining that they should not go into captivity after their brethren, with which hopes they had long flattered themselves. We have here,

1. God's just displeasure against Judah and Jerusalem for their sin, v. 5. His anger was against them to that degree, that he determined to cast them out from his presence, his favourable, gracious presence; as a father, when he is extremely angry with an unfruitful son, bids him get out of his presence. He expelled them from that good land that had such tokens of his presence in providential bounty, and that holy city and temple that had such tokens of his presence in covenant-grace and love.

Note, Those that are banished from God's ordinances have reason to complain that they are in some degree cast out of his presence; yet none are more cast out from his grace and favour than those that by sin have thrown themselves out of it. This fruit of sin we should therefore deprecate above any thing, as David, (Ps. lii. 11.) Cast me not away from thy presence.

2. Zedekiah's bad conduct and management, to which God left him, in displeasure against the people, and for which God punished him, in displeasure against Zedekiah. Zedekiah was cast out of years of discretion when he came to the throne; he was 21 years old; (v. 1.) he was none of the worst of the kings, (we never read of his idolatries,) yet his character is, that he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, for he did not do the good he should have done. But that evil deed of his, which did in a special manner hasten his destruction, was, his rebelling against the king of Babylon, which was his downfall and his ruin. And he was then brought ruim upon his people, not only meritoriously, but efficiently. God was greatly displeased with him for his pernicious dealing with the king of Babylon; (as we find, Ezek. xviii. 15, &c.) and because he was angry at Judah and Jerusalem, he put him into the hand of his own counsels, to do that foolish thing which proved fatal to him and his kingdom.

3. The possession which the Chaldeans at length gained of Jerusalem, after eighteen months' siege. They sat down before it, and blocked it up, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, in the tenth month, (v. 4.) and made themselves masters of it in the eleventh year in the fourth month, v. 6. In remembrance of these two steps towards their ruin, while they were in captivity, they kept a fest in the fourth month and a fast in the tenth; (Zech. viii. 19.) that in the fifth month was in remembrance of the burning of the temple, and that in the seventh of the murder of Gedaliah. We may easily imagine, or rather cannot imagine, what a sad time it was with Jerusalem, during this year and half that it was besieged, when all provisions were cut off from coming to them, and they were ever and anon alarmed by the attacks of the enemy, and, being obstinately prevailed to hold out to the last extremity, nothing remained but certain fearful looking for of judgment. That which disabled them to hold out, and yet could not prevail with them to capitulate, was, the famine in the city; (v. 6.) there was no bread for the people of the land, so that the soldiers could not make
good their posts, but were rendered wholly unserviceable; and then no wonder that the city was broken up, v. 7. Walls, in such a case, will not hold out long without men, any more than men without walls; nor will both together stand people in any stead without God and his protection.

4. The inglorious retreat of the king and his mighty men. They got out of the city by night, (v. 7.) and made the best of their way, I know not whither, nor perhaps they themselves; but the king was overtaken by the pursuers in the plains of Jericho, and his guards dispersed, and all his army scattered from him, v. 8. His flight was not caused, for where there is guilt there will be fear in time of danger. But his flight was fruitless, for there is no escaping of the judgments of God; they will come upon the sinner, and will overtake him, let him flee where he will; (Deut. xxxviii. 15.) and these judgments particularly that are here executed, were there threatened, v. 52, 53, &c.

5. The sad doom past upon Zedekiah by the king of Babylon, and immediately put in execution. He treated him as a rebel, gave judgment upon him, v. 9. One cannot think of it without the utmost vexation and regret, that a king, a king of Judah, a king of the house of David, should be arraigned as a criminal at the bar of this heathen king. But he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet; therefore God thus humbled him. Pursuant to the sentence passed upon him by the high priest and the chief of the priests, his sons were slain before his eyes, and all the princesses of Judah; (v. 10.) then his eyes were put out, and he was bound in chains, carried in triumph to Babylon; perhaps they made sport with him as they did with Samson when his eyes were put out; however, he was condemned to perpetual imprisonment, wearing out the remainder of his life (I cannot say his days, for he saw day no more) in darkness and misery: he was kept in prison till the day of his death, but had some honour done him at his funeral, ch. xxxiv. 5. Jeremiah had often told him what it would come to, but he would not take warning when he might have prevented it.

12. Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, (which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon,) came Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, 13. And burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burnt he with fire. 14. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about. 15. Then Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carried away captive certain of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude. 16. But Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard left certain of the poor of the land, for vine-dressers and for husbandmen. 17. Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the Lord, and the bases, and the brazen sea that was in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

18. The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass, where-with they ministered, took they away. 19. And the basins, and the fire-pans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away. 20. The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brazen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the Lord: the brass of all these vessels was without weight. 21. And concerning the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers: it was hollow. 22. And a chapter of brass was upon it; and the height of one chapter was five cubits, with net-work and pomegranates upon the chapters round about, all of brass: the second pillar also and the pomegranates were like unto these. 23. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the net-work were a hundred round about.

We have here an account of the woful havoc that was made by the Chaldean army, a month after the city was taken, under the command of Nebuzar-adan, who was captain of the guard, or general of the army, in this action. In the margin he is called the chief of the slaughter-men, or executioners; for soldiers are but slaughter-men, and God employs them as executioners of his sentence against a sinful people. Nebuzar-adan was chief of those soldiers, but in the execution he did, we have reason to fear he had no eye to God, but he followed the king of Babylon, and his commands, now that he came into Jerusalem, into the very bowels of it, as captain of the slaughter-men there. And, 1. He laid the temple in ashes, having first plundered it of every thing that was valuable; he burnt the house of the Lord, that holy and beautiful house, where their fathers praised him, Isa. lxiv. 11. 2. He burnt the royal palace, probably that which Solomon built, after he had built the temple, which was, ever since, the king's house. 3. He burnt all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great men, or those particularly, if any escaped, it was only some sorry cottages for the poor of the land. 4. He broke down all the walls of Jerusalem, to be revenged upon them for standing in the way of his army so long. Thus, of a defended city, it was made a ruin. Isa. xxxv. 2. 5. He carried away many into captivity, (v. 15.) he took away certain of the poor of the people, of the people in the city, for the poor of the land, the poor of the country, he left for vine-dressers and husbandmen. He also carried away the residue of the people that remained in the city, that had escaped the sword and famine; and the deserts, such as he thought fit, or rather such as God thought fit; for he had already determined for the pestilence, some for the sword, some for famine, and some for captivity, ch. xv. 2.

But nothing is more particularly and largely related here than the carrying away of the appurte-
557 said, Of now the 28. The And put Jeremiah's that Sam. pillars from land. was gone, the brass soon went after, because the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, ch. xxxvii. 19, &c. When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the Strength and Stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect nor pillars sustain those, from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support, (for there was nothing built upon them,) but for ornament and significance. They were called Jachin, He will establish; and Boaz, In him is strength; so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house, nor be the Strength of it. These pillars are here very particularly described, (v. 21—23. from 1 Kings vii. 13.) that the extraordinary beauty and stakeness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away, and theking, and all the vessels of the house of God, out of the temple, and out of the court, and out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there, it is said that there were five, here, there were seven, of those that were near the king; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself and Elbad-melech, as four to death, which we have before read, so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and it is probable that such were made examples of, as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. Seraiah the chief priest is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was a quiet prince, (ch. lxi. 59.) but perhaps Seraiah the priest was not so, but quiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made manifest, and turned out of their estimation.

2. Of the captivity of the rest. Come, and see how Judah was carried away captive out of his own land, (v. 27.) and how it spued out the Canaanites that went before them, which God had told them it would certainly do, if they trod in their steps, and copied out their abominations, Lev. xviii. 28. Now here is an account, (v. 28—40.) Of twocaptivities which we had an account of before, one in the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, the same with that which is said to be in his eighth year, (2 Kings xxiv. 12.) another in his eighteenth year, the same with that which is said (v. 12.) to be in his nineteenth year. But the sums here are very small, in comparison with what we find expressed concerning the former, (2 Kings xiv. 14, 16.) when there was 18,000 carried captive, whereas here they are said to be 3025; small too in comparison with what we may reasonably suppose concerning the latter; for when all the residue of the people were carried away, (v. 13.) one would think there should be more than 832 souls; therefore Dr. Lightfoot conjectures that these accounts being joined to the story of the putting to death of the great men at Riblah, all that are here said to be carried away but ten thousand, are less than the tenth part of the former. (1.) Of a third captivity, not mentioned before, which was in the twenty-third year of Nebuchadnezzar, four years after the destruction of Jerusalem; (v. 30.) then Nebuzar-adan came, and carried away 745 Jews; it is probable that this was done in revenge of the murder of Gedaliah, which was another rebellion against the king of Babylon, and that those who were murderers were taken and abettors of Ishmael in that murder, and were not only carried away, but put to death, for it; yet this is uncertain. If this be the sum total of the captives, (All the persons were 4600, v. 30.) we may see how strangely they were reduced from what they had been, and may wonder as much how much they came to be so numerous again, as afterward we find them; for it should have been, as at first, a number, that in Babylon, the Lord made them fruitful in the land of their affliction, and the more they were oppressed the more they multiplied. And the truth is, this people were often miracles both of judgment and mercy.

31. And it came to pass, in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the

nuences of the temple. All that were of great value were carried away before, the vessels of silver and gold, yet some of that sort remained, which were now carried away, v. 19. But most of the temple-precy that was now seized, was of brass; which, being of less value, was carried off last. When the gold was gone, the brass soon went after, because the people repented not, according to Jeremiah's prediction, ch. xxxvii. 19, &c. When the walls of the city were demolished, the pillars of the temple were pulled down too, and both in token that God, who was the Strength and Stay both of their civil and their ecclesiastical government, was departed from them. No walls can protect nor pillars sustain those, from whom God withdraws. These pillars of the temple were not for support, (for there was nothing built upon them,) but for ornament and significance. They were called Jachin, He will establish; and Boaz, In him is strength; so that the breaking of these signified that God would no longer establish his house, nor be the Strength of it. These pillars are here very particularly described, (v. 21—23. from 1 Kings vii. 13.) that the extraordinary beauty and stakeness of them may affect us the more with the demolishing of them. All the vessels that belonged to the brazen altar were carried away, and the king, and all the vessels of the house of God, out of the temple, and out of the court, and out of the city, five out of the court, and sixty out of the country. The account here agrees with that, except in one article; there, it is said that there were five, here, there were seven, of those that were near the king; which Dr. Lightfoot reconciles thus, that he took away seven of those that were near the king, but two of them were Jeremiah himself and Elbad-melech, as four to death, which we have before read, so that there were only five of them put to death, and so the number was reduced to seventy-two; some of all ranks, for they had all corrupted their way; and it is probable that such were made examples of, as had been most forward to excite and promote the rebellion against the king of Babylon. Seraiah the chief priest is put first, whose sacred character could not exempt him from this stroke; how should it, when he himself had profaned it by sin? Seraiah the prince was a quiet prince, (ch. lxi. 59.) but perhaps Seraiah the priest was not so, but quiet and turbulent, by which he had made himself obnoxious to the king of Babylon. The leaders of this people had caused them to err, and now they are in a particular manner made manifest, and turned out of their estimation.

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31. And it came to pass, in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the
five and twentieth day of the month, that evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, 32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, 33. And changed his prison-garments; and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. 34. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion, until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

This passage of story concerning the reviving which king Jehoiachin had in his bondage, we had likewise before, 2 Kings xxv. 27.—30. Only there it is said to be done on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month, here on the twenty-fifth; but in a thing of this nature, two days make a very slight difference in the account. It is probable that the orders were given for his release on the twenty-fifth day, but that he was not presented to the king till the twenty-seventh. We may observe in this story,

1. That new lords make new laws. Nebuchadnezzar had long kept this unhappy prince in prison; and his son, though well-affecting to the prisoner, could not procure him any favour, not one smile, from his father; any more than Jonathan could for David from his father; but when the old peevish man was dead, his son countenanced Jehoiachin, and made him a favourite. It is common for children to undo what their fathers have done; it were well if it were always as much for the better as this here.

2. That the world we live in is a changing world. Jehoiachin, in his beginning, fell from a throne into a prison, but here he is advanced again to a throne of state, (v. 32.) though not to a throne of power. As, before, the robes were changed into prison-garments, so, now, they were converted into robes again. Such chequer-work is this world; prosperity and adversity are set the one over against the other, that we may learn to rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

3. That though the night of affliction be very long, yet we must not despair but that the day may dawn at last. Jehoiachin was thirty-seven years a prisoner; in confinement, in contempt, ever since he was eighteen years old, in which time we may suppose him so inured to captivity, that he had forgotten the sweets of liberty; or rather, that after so long an imprisonment it would be doubly welcome to him. Let those whose afflictions have been lengthened out, encourage themselves with this instance; the vision will at the end speak comfortably, and therefore wait for it. Dum spiro spero—While there is life, there is hope. Non si male nunc, et ulim sic erit—Though now we suffer, we shall not always suffer.

4. That God can make his people to find favour in the eyes of those that are their oppressors, and unaccountably turn their hearts to pity them, according to that word, (Ps. civ. 46.) He made them to be fitted of all those that carried them captives. He can bring those that have spoken roughly to speak kindly, and those to feed his people that have fed upon them. Those therefore that are under oppression will find that it is not in vain to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Therefore our times are in God’s hand, because the hearts of all we deal with are so.

And now, upon the whole matter, comparing the prophecy and the history of this book together, we may learn, in general, (1.) That it is no new thing for churches and persons highly dignified to degenerate, and become very corrupt. (2.) That iniquity tends to the ruin of those that harbour it; and if it be not repented of and forsaken, will certainly end in their ruin. (3.) That external professions and privileges will not only not amount to an excuse for sin, and an exemption from ruin, but will be a very great aggravation of both. (4.) That no word of God shall fall to the ground, but the event will fully answer the prediction; and the unbelief of man shall not make God’s threatenings, any more than his promises, of no effect. The justice and truth of God are here written in bloody characters, for the conviction or the confusion of all those that make a jest of his threatenings. Let them not be deceived, God is not mocked.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE

LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

Since what Solomon says, though contrary to the common opinion of the world, is certainly true, that Sor-
row is better than laughter, and, It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting,
we should come to the reading and consideration of the melancholy chapters of this book, not only willingly,
but with an expectation to edify ourselves by them; which that we may do, we must compose ourselves
to a holy sadness, and resolve to weep with the weeping prophet. Let us consider,

I. The title of this book; in the Hebrew it has none, but is called, (as the books of Moses are,) from the
first word, Ecah—How; but the Jewish commentators call it, as the Greeks do, and we from them,
Kinoth—Lamentations. As we have sacred odes or songs of joy, so have we sacred elegies or songs of
lamentation; such variety of methods has Infinite Wisdom taken to work upon us, and move our affec-
tions, and so soften our hearts, and make them susceptible of the impressions of divine truths, as the
wax of the seal. We have not only fitted unto you, but have mourned likewise, Matth. xi. 17.

II. The penman of this book; it was Jeremiah the prophet, who is here Jeremiah the poet, and verses sig-
nifies both; therefore this book is fitly joined to the book of his prophecy, and is as an appendix to it.
We had there at large the predictions of the desolations of Judah and Jerusalem, and then the history
of them, to show how punctually the predictions were accomplished, for the confirming of our faith:
now here we have the expressions of his sorrow upon occasion of them, to show that he was very sin-
cere in the protestations he had often made, that he did not desire the woful day, but that, on the con-
trary, the prospect of it filled him with bitterness. When he saw these calamities at a distance, he
wished his head waters, and his eyes fountains of tears; and when they came, he made it to appear
that he did not disseminate in that wish, and that he was far from being disaffected to his country,
which was the crime his enemies charged him with. Though his country had been very unkind to him,
and though the ruin of it was both a proof that he was a true prophet, and a punishment of them for
prosecuting him as a false prophet, which would have tempted him to rejoice in it, yet he sadly lamented
it, and herein showed a better temper than that which Jonah was of, with respect to Nineveh.

III. The occasion of these Lamentations was the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldean
army, and the dissolution of the Jewish state both civil and ecclesiastical thereby. Some of the Rabhi-
ins will have these to be the Lamentations which Jeremiah penned upon occasion of the death of Jo-
siah, which are mentioned, 2 Chron. xxxvev. 25. But though it is true that that opened the door to all
the following calamities, yet these Lamentations seem to be penned in the sight, not in the foresight of
those calamities; when they were already come, not when they were at a distance; and there is nothing
of Josiah in them, and his praise, as was, no question, in the Lamentations for him. No, it is Jeru-
salem's funeral that this is an elegy upon. Others of them will have these Lamentations to be contained
in the roll which Baruch wrote from Jeremiah's mouth, and which Jehoiakim burnt, and they suggest,
that at first there were in it only the 1st, 2d, and 4th chapters, but that the 3d and 5th were the many
like words that were afterward added; but this is a groundless fancy; that roll is expressly said to be a
repetition and summary of the prophet's sermons, Jer. xxxvii. 2.

IV. The composition of it: it is not only poetical, but alphabetical, all except the 5th chapter, as some of
David's psalms are; each verse begins with a several letter in the order of the Hebrew alphabet, the
1st aleph, the 2nd bet, &c. but the third chapter is a triple alphabet, the three first beginning with
aleph, the next with bet, &c. which was a help to memory, (it being designed that those mourn-
ful duties should be got by heart,) and was an elegance in writing then valued, and therefore not now to
be despised. They observe, that in the 2d, 3d, and 4th chapters, the letter he is put before qain, which
in all the Hebrew alphabets follows it; for a reason of which Dr. Lightfoot offers this conjecture, That
the letter qain, which is the numeral letter for LXX., was thus, by being displaced, made remarkable,
to put them in mind of the seventy years, at the end of which God would turn again their captivity.

V. The use of it: of great use, no doubt, it was to the pious Jews in their sufferings, furnishing them with
spiritual language to express their natural grief by; helping to preserve the lively remembrance of Zion
among them, and their children that never saw it, when they were in Babylon; directing their tears
into the right channel; for they are here taught to mourn for sin, and mourn to God; and withal en-
couraging their hopes, that God would yet return, and have mercy upon them; and it is of use to us, to
affect us with godly sorrow for the calamities of the church of God, as becomes those that are living
members of it, and are resolved to take our lot with it.
We have here the first alphabet of this lamentation, twenty-two stanzas, in which the miseries of Jerusalem are bitterly bewailed, and her present deplorable condition aggraved by comparing it with her former prosperous state; and, all along, sin is acknowledged and complained of as the procuring cause of all these miseries; and God is appealed to for justice against their enemies, and applied to for compassion toward them. The chapter is all of a piece, and the several remonstrances are interwoven; but here is, I. A complaint made to God of their calamities, and his compassionate concern expressed, v. 1-7. II. The same complaint made to their friends, and their compassionate consideration desired, v. 8-11. III. An appeal to God and his righteousness concerning it, (v. 18-22.) in which he is justified in their affliction, and is humbly solicited to justify himself in their deliverance.

1. How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princes among the provinces, how is she become tributary! 2. She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her: they are become her enemies. 3. Judah is gone into captivity, because of affliction, and because of great servitude; she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. 4. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate; her priests sigh, her virgins are affliccted, and she is in bitterness. 5. Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. 6. And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture; and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. 7. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction, and of her miseries, all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths. 8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despised her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward. 9. Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy hath magnified himself. 10. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation. 11. All her people sigh, they seek bread; they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O Lord, and consider; for I am become vile.

Those that have any disposition to weep with them that weep, one would think, should scarcely be able to refrain from tears at the reading these verses, so very pathetic are the lamentations here.

I. The miseries of Jerusalem are here complained of as very pressing, and by many circumstances very much aggravated. Let us take a view of these miseries.

1. As to their civil state.

(1.) A city that was populous, is now depopulated, v. 1. It is spoken of by way of wonder, Who would have thought that ever it should come to this! Or by way of inquiry, What is it that has brought it to this? Or by way of lamentation: Alas, alas, (as Rev. xviii. 10, 16, 19.) how doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! She was full of her own people that replenished her, and full of the people of other nations that resorted to her, with whom she had both profitable commerce and pleasant converse; but now her own people are carried into captivity, and strangers make no court to her; she sits solitary. The chief places of the city are not now, as they used to be, places of concourse, where Wisdom cries (Prov. i. 20, 21.) and justly are they left unfrequented, because Wisdom's cry is withdrawn from her. Note, Those that are ever so much increased, God can soon diminish. How is she become as a widow! Her king that was, or should have been, as a husband to her, is cut off, and gone; her God is departed from her, and has given her a bill of divorce; she is emptied of her children, is solitary and sorrowful as a widow. Let no family, no state, not Jerusalem, no, nor Babylon herself, be secure; and, say, I sit as a queen, and shall never sit as a widow, Isa. xlviii. 8. Rev. xviii. 7. (2.) A city that had dominion, is now in subjection. She had been great among the nations, greatly loved by some, and greatly feared by others, and greatly observed and obeyed by both; some made her present, and others paid her taxes; so that she was really princess among the provinces, and every sheaf bowed to her, even the princes of the people planted in her favour; but now the tables are turned, she has not only lost her friends, and sits solitary, but has lost her freedom too, and sits tributary; she paid tribute to Egypt first, and then to Babylon. Note, Sin brings a people not only into solitude but into slavery. (3.) A city that used to be full of mirth, is now become melancholy, and upon all accounts full of grief. Jerusalem had been a joyous city, whither the tribes went up on purpose to rejoice before the Lord; she was the joy of the whole earth, but now she weeps sore, her laughter is turned into mourning, her solemn feasts are all gone; she weeps in the night, as true mourners do who weep in secret, in silence and solitude; in the night, when others compose themselves to rest, her thoughts are most intent upon her troubles, and grief then plays the tyrant. What the prophet's hand was for her, when she regarded it not, now her head is as waters, and her eyes fountains of tears, so that she weeps day and night, (Jer. ix. 1.) her tears are continually on her cheeks. Though nothing dries away sooner than a tear, yet fresh griefs extort fresh tears, so that her cheeks are never free from them. Note, There is nothing more commonly seen under the heavens, than the tears of the eyes of the beholders of women, whom the clouds return after the rain, (Eccl. iv. 1.) (4.) Those that were separated from the heathen, now dwell among the heathen; those that were a peculiar people, are now a mingled people; (v. 3.) Judah is gone into captivity, out of her own land
The land of her enemies, and there she abides, and is likely to abide, among those that are aliens to God and the covenants of promise, with whom she findeth no rest, no satisfaction of mind, nor any settlement of abode, but is continually hurried from place to place at the will of the victorious, impetuous tyrants. And again, (v. 5.) *Her children wept for days*; so long as the old woman were to have been the seed of the next generation, are carried off, so that the land that is now desolate, is likely to be still desolate and lost for want of heirs. Those that dwell among their own people, and that a free people, and in their own land, would be more thankful for the mercies they thereby enjoy, if they would but consider the miseries of those that are foreigners to their country.

(3.) Those that used in their wars to conquer, are now conquered and triumphed over; *All her persecutors overtook her between the straits.* (v. 3.) They gained all possible advantages against her, so that her people unavoidably fell into the hand of the enemy, for there was no way to escape, (v. 7.) they were hemmed in on every side, and which way soever they attempted to flee, they found themselves embarrassed; and when they made the best of their way, they could make nothing of it, but were over taken and overcome; so that every where her adversaries are the chief, and her enemies strongest; (v. 5.) which way soever their sword turns, they get the better. Such straits do men bring themselves into by sin! If we allow that which is our greatest adversary and enemy to have dominion over us, and to be chief in us, justly will all other enemies be suffered to have dominion over us.

(6.) Those that had been not only a distinguished but a dignified people, on whom God had put honour, and to whom all their neighbours had paid respect, are now brought into contempt; (v. 8.) *All that honoured her before, despise her;* those that counted an alliance with her, now value it not; those that abominated her when she was in pomp and prosperity, slight her now that she is in distress, because they have seen her nakedness. By the prevalence of the enemies against her they perceive her weakness, and that she is not so strong a people as they thought she had been; and by the prevalence of God's judgments against her they perceive her wickedness, which now comes to light, and is everywhere to be seen, (v. 9.) it appears how they have done themselves by their sins; the enemies magnify themselves against them, (v. 9.) they triumphant over them, and insult over them, and in their eyes they are become vile; the tail of the nations, though once they were the head. *Note, Sin is the reproach of every people.*

(7.) Those that lived in a fruitful land were very rich, and many of them did perish, for want of necessary food; (v. 11.) *All her people sigh in despondency and despair, they are ready to faint away, their spirits fail, and therefore they sigh, for they seek bread,* and seek it in vain. They were brought at last to that extremity, that there was no bread for the people of the land; (Jer. iii. 6.) and in their captivity they had much ado to get bread, (ch. vi. 5.) They have given their pleasant things, their jewels and pictures, and all the furniture of their closets and cabinets, which they used to please themselves with looking upon, they have sold these, to buy bread for themselves and their families, have parted with them for meat to relieve the soul, or, as the margin is, to make the soul come again, when they were ready to faint away. They desired no other comfort, then to have bread. (Ps. lxxxix. 27.) *To be given for life, and for bread which is the staff of life.* Let those that abound in pleasant things, not be proud of them, or fond of them, for the time may come when they may be glad to let them go for necessary things. And let those that have competent food to relieve their soul, be content with it, and thankful for it, though they have not pleasant things.

2. We have here an account of their miseries in their ecclesiastical state, the ruin of their sacred interest, which was much more to be lamented than that of their temporal. They have been persecuted with the following miseries.

(1.) Their religious feasts were no more observed, no more frequented; (v. 4.) *The ways of Zion do mourn,* they look melancholy, overgrown with grass and weeds. It used to be a pleasant diversion to see people continually passing and repassing in the high way that led to the temple, but now you may stand there long enough, and see nobody stir; for, for a long time, the people have been deposed from them by the destruction of that which was the city of our solemnities, Isa. xxxiii. 20. *The solemn Feasts had been neglected and profaned,* (Isa. i. 11, 12) and therefore justly is an end now put to them. But when thus the ways of Zion are made to mourn, all the sons of Zion cannot but mourn with them. It is very grievous to good men to see religious assemblies broken up and scattered, and those restrained from them, that would gladly attend them. And as the ways of Zion mourned, so the gates of Zion, in which the faithful worshippers used to meet, are desolate, there is none to meet in them.

Time was when the Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but now he has forsaken them, and is provoked to withdraw from them, and therefore it is not for men to have with them as it did with the temple when Christ quitted it. *Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, Matt. xxiii. 38.*

(2.) Their religious persons were quite disabled to perform their wondrous services, were quite dispirited; *Her priests sigh for the desolations of the temple, their songs are turned into sighs; they sigh, for they have nothing to do, and therefore there is nothing to be had; they sigh, as the people, (v. 11,) for want of bread, because the offerings of the Lord, which were their livelihood, failed. It is time to sigh when the priests, the Lord's ministers, sigh.* Their virgins also, that used, with their music and dancing, to grace the solemnities of their feasts, are afflicted and in heaviness. Notice is taken of their service in the day of Zion's prosperity, (Ps. lxxviii. 1.) *Among them were the damsels playing with timbrels,* and therefore notice is taken of the failing of it now. Her virgins are afflicted, and therefore she is in bitterness; all the inhabitants of Zion are so, whose character it is, that they are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, and that to them the reproach of it is a burthen, Zeph. iii. 18.

(3.) Their religious places were profaned; (v. 11.) *The house entered into her sanctuary, into the temple itself, into which no Israelite was permitted to enter, though ever so reverently and devoutly, but the priests only. The stranger that comes nigh, even to worship there, shall be put to death.* Thither the heathen now crowd rudely in, not to worship, but to plunder. God had commanded that the heathen should not so much as enter into the assembly, or be associated with the people of the Jews; (Deut. xxiii. 3.) yet now they enter into the sanctuary without control. Note, Nothing is more grievous to those who have a true concern for the glory of God, nor is more lamented, than the violation of God's laws, and the contempt they see put upon sacred things. What the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary, was complained of, 1 Par. xxxiv. 23.

(4.) Their religious utensils, and all the rich things with which the temple was adorned and beautified, and which were made use of in the worship of God, were made a prey to the enemies;
LAMENTATIONS, I.

(v. 10.) The adversary has spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things, has grasped them all, seized them all, for himself. What these pleasant things are, we may learn from Isa. xiv. 11. where, to the complaint of the burning of the temple, it is added, All our pleasant things are laid waste; the ark and the altar, and all the other tokens of God’s presence with them, these were their pleasant things above any other things, and these were now broken to pieces, and carried away. Thus from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed, v. 6. The beauty of holiness was the beauty of the daughter of Zion; when the temple, that holy and beautiful house, was destroyed, her beauty was gone; that was the breaking of the staff of beauty, the taking away of the pledges and seals of the covenant, Zech. xi. 10.

(5.) Their religious days were made a jest of; (v. 7.) The adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths. They laughed at them for their observing of one day in seven, as a day of rest from worldly business. Juvenal, a heathen poet, ridicules the Jews in his time for losing a seventh part of their time;

"Quaestors quaesitque for her
Exercitationes viginti octo agamin
They keep their sabbaths to their cost,
For thus one day in seven is lost;"

whereas sabbaths, if they be sanctified as they ought to be, will turn to a better account than all the days of the week besides. And whereas the Jews professed that they did it in obedience to their God, and to his honour, their adversaries asked them, *What do you get by it now? What profit have you in keeping the ordinances of your God, who now descents in your distress?* Note, It is a very great trouble to all that love God, to hear his ordinances mocked at, and particularly his sabbaths. Zion calls them her sabbaths, for the sabbath was made for men; they are his institutions, but they are her privileges; and the contempt put upon sabbaths all the sons of Zion take to themselves, and lay to heart accordingly; nor will they look upon sabbaths, or any other divine ordinances, as less honourable, nor value them less for their being mocked at.

(6.) That which greatly aggravated all these grievances, was, that her present state was just the reverse of what it had been once; (v. 7.) Now, in the days of affliction and misery, when every thing was black and distressing, she remembers all her troubles, and it was as if she had in the days of old, and now knows how to value them better than formerly, when she had the full enjoyment of them. God often makes us know the worth of mercies by the want of them: and adversity is most hardly borne by those that are fallen into it from the height of prosperity. This cut David to the heart, when he was banished from God’s ordinances, that he could remember them with the multitude to the honour of God, Ps. xxxi. 4.

II. The sins of Jerusalem are here complained of as the procuring, provoking cause of all these calamities. Whoever are the instruments, God is the Author, of all these troubles; it is the Lord that has afflicted her, (v. 3.) and he has done it as a righteous Judge, for she has sinned.

1. Her sins are not only numberless. Are her troubles many? Her sins are many more. It is for the multitude of her transgressions that the Lord has afflicted her. See Jer. xxxix. 14. When the transgressions of a people are multiplied, we cannot say, as Job does, in his own case, that wounds are multiplied without cause, Job xix. 17.

2. They are for nature exceeding heinous; (v. 8.) Jerusalem has grievously sinned; has sinned sin, so the word is; sinned willfully, deliberately; has sinned that sin, which of all others is the abominable thing that the Lord hates, the sin of idolatry. The sins of Jerusalem, that makes such a profession, and enjoys such privileges, are of all others the most grievous sins. She has sinned grievously, (v. 8.) and therefore (v. 9.) she came down wonderfully. Note, Grievous sins bring wondrous ruin; there are some workers of iniquity, to whom there is a strange punishment, Job xxxi. 5.

3. There are such sins as may plainly be read in the punishment. (1. They have been very oppressive, and therefore justly oppressed; (v. 5.) Judah is gone into captivity, and it is because of affliction and great servitude, because the rich among them afflicted the poor, and made them serve with rigour, and particularly, as the Chaldee paraphrases it, because they had oppressed their Hebrew servants, which is charged upon them, Jer. iv. 21. Oppression was one of their crying sins, (Jer. vi. 7. 6.) and it is a sin that cries loud. (2.) They have made themselves vile, and therefore are justly violated. They all despise her, (v. 8.) for her filthiness is in her skirts; it appears upon her garments, that she has rolled them in the mire of sin. None can stain our glory, if we did not stain ourselves. (3.) They have been very secure, and therefore justly surprized. Thus we have it, (v. 9.) She remembers not her last end; sh. did not take the warning that was given her, to consider her latter end, to consider what would be the end of such wicked courses as she took, and therefore she came down wonderfully, in an astonishing manner, that she might be made to feel what she would not fear; therefore God shall make their plagues wonderful.

IV. Jerusalem’s friends are here complained of as false and faint-hearted, and very unkind; They have all dealt treacherously with her, (v. 2.) so that, in effect, they are become her enemies. Her deceivers have created as much vexation as her destroyers. The staff that breaks under us, may do us as great a mischief as the staff that beats us, Ezek. xxix. 6. 7. Her princes, that should have protected her, have not courage enough to make head against the enemy for their own preservation; they are like karts, that, upon the first alarm, betake themselves to flight, and make no resistance; nay, they are like karts that are famished for want of pasture, and therefore are gone without strength before the pursuer, and, having no strength for flight, are soon run down, and made a prey of. Her neighbours are unneighborly, for, 1. There is none come to help her, (v. 7.) they would not help her; and, 2. She has no comforter, none to sympathize with her, or suggest any thing to alleviate her griefs; (v. 7. 9.) like Job’s friends, they saw it was to no purpose, her grief was so great; and miserable comforters were they all in such a case.

12. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. 13. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevails against them: he hath spread a net
for my feet; he hath turned me back; he hath made me desolate and faint the whole day.

14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand; they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck; he hath made my strength to fail; the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up. 15. The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me; he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as in a wine-press. 16. For these things I weep: mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me; my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed. 17. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her: the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them. 18. The Lord is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. 19. I called for my lovers, but they deceived me; my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat, to relieve their souls. 20. Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled: my heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword hereafter, at home there is as death. 21. They have heard that I sigh; there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it: thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me. 22. Let all their wickedness come before thee; and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions: for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.

The complaints here are, for substance, the same with those in the foregoing part of the chapter; but, in these verses, the prophet, in the name of the lamenting church, does more particularly acknowledge the hand of God in these calamities, and the rigour of his displeasure.

1. The church in distress here magnifies her affliction; and yet no more than there was cause for; her groaning was not heavier than her strokes. She appeals to all spectators; See if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, v. 12. This might, perhaps, be truly said of Jerusalem's griefs; but we are apt to apply it too sensibly to ourselves when we are in trouble, and more than there is cause for. Because we feel most from our own barthom, and cannot be persuaded to reconceive ourselves to it, we are ready to cry out. Surely, never was sorrow like unto our sorrow; whereas, if our troubles were to be thrown into a common stock with those of others, and then an equal dividend made, share and share alike rather than stand to that, we should each of us say, "Pray, give me my own again." 2. She here looks beyond the instruments to the Author of their troubles, and owns them all to be directed, disposed, and disposed of by him. "The Lord that has afflicted me, and he has afflicted me because he is angry with me; the greatness of his displeasure may be measured by the greatness of my distress; it is in the day of his fierce anger," v. 12. Afflictions cannot but be very much our griefs, when we see them arising from God's wrath; for the church does here. (1.) She is as one in a forest, and the hunter, and disposed of, by him. "I sent fire into my bones," (v. 13.) preternatural heat, which prevails against them, so that they are burnt like a hearth, (Ps. cii. 3.) painted and wasted, and dried away. (2.) She is as one in a net, which the more he struggles to get out of, the more he is entangled in, and this net is of God's spreading: "The enemies could not have succeeded in their stratagems, had not God spread a net for my feet," (v. 13.) (3.) She is as one in a wilderness, whose way is embarrassed, solitary, and tiresome; "He has turned me back, that I cannot go on, has made me desolate, that I have nothing to support me with, but am faint all the day." (4.) She is as one in a yoke, not yoked for service, but for penance, tied neck and heels together; (v. 14.) The yoke of my transgressions is bound by him. Observe. We never are entangled in any yoke but one that is framed out of our own transgressions. The sinner is holden with the cords of his own sins, Prov. v. 22. The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke, (Matth. xi. 30.) but that of our own transgressions is a heavy one, God is said to bind this yoke, when he charges guilt upon us, and brings us into those inward and outward troubles which our sins have deserved; when conscience, his duty, his might, and his yoke, standing in his way, then the yoke is bound and wreathed by the hand of his justice, and nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy will unbind it. (5.) She is as one in the dirt, and he it is that has trodden under foot all her mighty men, that has disabled them to stand, and overthrown them by one judgment after another, and so left them to be trampled upon by their foes and conquerors. Nay, she says, this is as in a wine-press, not only trodden down, but trodden to pieces, crushed as grapes in the wine-press of God's wrath, and her blood pressed out as wine, and it is God that his the virgin, the daughter of Judah. (6.) She is in the hand of her enemies, and it is the Lord that has delivered her into their hands; (v. 14.) He has made my strength to fall, so that I am not able to make head against them; nor, not only not able to rise up against them, but, not able to rise up from them, and then he has delivered me into their hands; noi, (v. 15.) he has called an assembly against me, to crush my young men, and such an assembly as it is in vain to think of opposing; and again, (v. 17.) The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him. He has made his adversaries his enemies, and even his enemies his instruments for Jacob, (Ps. xlv. 4.) now commands an invasion against Jacob, because Jacob had disobeyed the commands of his law.

3. She justly demands a share in the pity and compassion of those that were the spectators of her misery; (v. 12.) "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Can you look upon me without concern? Wilt thou be he that will harden his heart, as marbles, that you cannot be moved upon me? I am compassionate thought, or look, or tear? Are not you also in the body? Is it nothing to you that your neighbour's house is on fire?" There are these to whom Zion's sorrows and ruins are nothing; they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. How pathetically does she beg their compassion! (v. 18.)
LAMENTATIONS, I.

"Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: hear my complaints, and see what cause I have for them." This is a request like that of Job, (ch. xxxii. 28.) wishing for their sympathy, for their tears with ours, for this is an evidence that, though we are in affliction, we are not in contempt, which is commonly as much dreaded in an affliction as any thing.

4. She justifies her own grief, though it was very extreme in these passages; (v. 16.) "For these things I weep, I weep in the night;" (v. 2.) "nor do I see mine eye, mine eye runs down with water." Note, This world is a vale of tears to the people of God.

Zion's sons are often Zion's mourners. Zion spreadeth forth her hands, (v. 17.) which is here an expression rather of despair than of desire; she flings out her hands as giving up all for gone. Let us see how she accounts for this passionate grief. (1.) Her God is withdrawn from her; and Micah, that had but gods of gold, when they were stolen from him, cried out, What have I more? And what is this that ye say unto me? What aileth thee? The church here grieves excessively, For, says she, the comforter that should relieve my soul, is far from me. God is the Comforter; he used to be so to her, he only can administer effectual comforts, it is his word that speaks them, it is his Spirit who speaks them to us. His are strong consolations, able to relieve the soul, to bring it back when it is gone, and we cannot of ourselves fetch it again; but now he is departed in displeasure, he is far from me, and beholds me afier off. Note, It is no marvel that the souls of the saints faint away, when God, who is the only Comforter that can relieve them, keeps at a distance. (2.) Her children are removed from her, and she in her prosperity; it is said of the Chaldeans, that they had no compassion upon young men or maidens, not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2 Chron. xxxvii. 16. (3.) Her friends failed her; some would not, and others could not, give her any relief. She spread forth her hands, as begging relief, but there is none to comfort her, (v. 17.) none that can do it, none that cares to do it; she called for her lovers, and to engage them to help her, called them her lovers, but they deceived her, (v. 19.) they proved like the brooks in summer to the thirsty traveller, Job vi. 15. Note, Those creatures that we set our hearts upon and raise our expectations from, we are commonly deceived and disappointed in. Her idols were her lovers, Egypt and Assyria were her confidants; but they deceived her; under their professed care and companionship, they were shy of her and strange to her in her adversity. Happy they that have made God their Friend, and keep themselves in his love, for he will not deceive them! (4.) Those whose office it was to guide her, were disabled to do her any service. The priests and the elders, that should have appeared at the head of affairs, die for hunger, (v. 18.) they were sweating, ready to expire, while they sought their meat; they went a begging for bread to keep them alive. The famine is sore indeed in the land, when there is no bread to the wise, when priests and elders are starved. The priests and elders should have been her comforters; but how should they comfort others when they themselves were comfortless? "They have heard that I sigh, which should have summoned them to mine assistance; but there is none to comfort me. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me." (5.) Her enemies were too hard for her, and then insulted over her; they have besieged her. Abroad the sword bereaves, and slays all that comes in its way, and at home all provisions are cut off by the besiegers, so that there is as death, famine, which is as bad as the pestilence, or worse—the sword without, and terror within, Deut. xxxii. 25.

And as the enemies, that were the instruments of the calamity, were very barbarous, so were they that were the sufferers by, the Elders and Aaron. 16. And as those that bore ill-will to Israel: They have heard of my trouble, and are glad that they hast done it, (v. 21.) they rejoice in the trouble itself, they rejoice that it is God's doing, it pleases them to find that God and his Israel are fallen out, and they act accordingly with a great deal of strangeness towards them: Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them, that they are afraid of touching, and are shy of, v. 17. Upon all these accounts, it cannot be wondered at, nor can she be blamed, that her sighs are many, in grieving for what is, and that her heart is faint, (v. 22.) in fear of what is yet further likely to be.

5. She justifies God in all that is brought upon her, acknowledging that her sins had deserved these severe chastenings. The stroke that lies so heavy, and binds so hard, is the yoke of her transgressions, v. 14. The fetters are held in awe of our own making, and it is with our own red that we are beaten. When the church had spoken here, as if she thought the Lord severe, she does well to correct herself, at least to explain herself, by acknowledging, (v. 18.) The Lord is righteous. He does us no wrong in dealing thus with us, nor can we charge him with what he has done. In case angry sovereign men are, we are sure that the Lord is righteous, and manifests his justice, though they contradict all the laws of theirs. Note, Whatever our troubles are which God is pleased to inflict upon us, we must own that therein he is righteous; we understand neither him nor ourselves if we do not own it, 2 Chron. xiii. 6. She owns the equity of God's dealing, and expresses his justice in her heart in this very word, if. 18. She is of the Chaldeans, that they had no compassion upon young men or maidens, not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2 Chron. xxxvii. 16. It is said of the Chaldeans, that they had no compassion upon young men or maidens, not on the fair sex, not on the blooming age, 2 Chron. xxxvii. 16. (3.) Her friends failed her; some would not, and others could not, give her any relief. She spread forth her hands, as begging relief, but there is none to comfort her, (v. 17.) none that can do it, none that cares to do it; she called for her lovers, and to engage them to help her, called them her lovers, but they deceived her, (v. 19.) they proved like the brooks in summer to the thirsty traveller, Job vi. 15. Note, Those creatures that we set our hearts upon and raise our expectations from, we are commonly deceived and disappointed in. Her idols were her lovers, Egypt and Assyria were her confidants; but they deceived her; under their professed care and companionship, they were shy of her and strange to her in her adversity. Happy they that have made God their Friend, and keep themselves in his love, for he will not deceive them! (4.) Those whose office it was to guide her, were disabled to do her any service. The priests and the elders, that should have appeared at the head of affairs, die for hunger, (v. 18.) they were sweating, ready to expire, while they sought their meat; they went a begging for bread to keep them alive. The famine is sore indeed in the land, when there is no bread to the wise, when priests and elders are starved. The priests and elders should have been her comforters; but how should they comfort others when they themselves were comfortless? "They
remembered, let it come to be reckoned for; take vengeance on them, for all the wrong they have done to me; (Ps. cx. 14, 15.) hasten the time when thou wilt do them for their transgression as thou hast done to me for mine.” This prayer amounts to a protestation against all thoughts of coalition with them, and to a prediction of their ruin, subscribing to that which God had in his word spoken of it. Note, Our prayers may and must agree with God’s word; and what day God has there called, we are to call for, and no other. And though we are bound in charity to forgive our enemies, and to pray for them, yet we may in faith pray for the accomplishment of that which God has spoken against his and his church’s enemies, that will not repent to give him glory.

CHAP. II.

The second alphabetical elegy is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and the substance of it is much the same; it begins with Ecab, as that did, “How sad is our case! Alas! for us.” I. Here is the anger of Zion’s God taken notice of, as the cause of her calamities, v. I., 9. II. Here is the sorrow of Zion’s children taken notice of, as the effect of her calamities, v. 10. 19. III. The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compassionate consideration, v. 20. 22. The hand that wounded must make whole.

1. HOW hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger! 2. The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground: he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof. 3. He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, which devoureth round about. 4. He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire. 5. The Lord was as an enemy; he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces; he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. 6. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly: the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised, in the indignation of his anger, the king and the priest. 7. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast. 8. The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daugh
ter of Zion; he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying: therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament; they languished together. 9. Her gates are sunk into the ground; he hath destroyed and broken her bars; her king and her princes are among the Gentiles: the law is no more; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.

It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God’s church, of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem; but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were mourning upon. The grief is not so much that such and such things are done, as that God has done them, that he appears angry with them; it is he that chastens them, and chastens them in wrath and in his hot displeasure; he is become their Enemy, and fights against them; and this, this is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery.

I. Time was, when God’s delight was in his church, and he appeared to her, and for her, as a Friend; but now, a displeased he is against her, he is angry with her, and appears and acts against her as an Enemy. This is frequently repeated here, and sadly lamented. What he has done he has done in his anger; this makes the present day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is the day of his anger, (v. 1.) and again, (v. 2.) it is in his wrath, and (v. 3.) in his fierce anger, that he has thrown down and laid it off, and (v. 6.) in the indignation of his anger. Note. To those who know how to value God’s favour, nothing appears more dreadful than his anger; corrections in love are easily borne, but rebukes in wrath wound deep. It is God’s wrath that burns against Jacob like a flaming fire, (v. 3.) and it is a consuming fire, it devours round about, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the fury that is poured out like fire, (v. 4.) like the fire and brimstone which were rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah: but it was their sin that kindled this fire. God is such a tender Father to his children, that we may be sure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him, and give him cause to be angry; nor is he ever angry more than there is cause for. God’s covenant with them was, that if they would not hold the office of a vessel of wrath, they should be destroyed to their enemies, (Exod. xxviii. 22.) and he had been so long as they kept close to him; but now he is an Enemy to them; at least he is an Enemy, v. 5. He has bent his bow like an Enemy, v. 4. He stood with his right hand stretched out against them, and a sword drawn in it as an Adversary. God is not really an Enemy to his people, no, not when he is angry with them, and corrects them in anger. We may be sorely displeased against our dearest friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having an enmity to. But sometimes he is as an Enemy to them, when all his providences concerning them seem in outward appearance to have a tendency to their ruin; when every thing makes against them, and nothing for them. But, blessed be God, Christ our Peace appears in the midst of their enmity, and in him we may agree with our Adversary, which it is our wisdom to do, since it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

II. Time was when God’s church appeared very bright and illustrious, and considerable among the nations; but now the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud, (v. 1.) a dark cloud, which is very terrible to herself, and through which she cannot see his face; a thick cloud, (so the word signi-
lies), a black cloud, which eclipses all her glory, and conceals her excellency; not such a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderness, or that in which God took possession of the temple, and filled it with his glory: no, that side of the cloud is now turned toward them, which was turned toward the Egyptians in the Red sea. The beauty of Israel is now cast down from heaven to the earth: their princes, (2 Sam. i. 19.) their rich glory, their beauty, their pride, which recommended them to the affection and esteem of their neighbours, and rendered them amiable, which had lifted them up to heaven, was now withered and gone; because God had covered it with a cloud. He has cut off all the horn of Israel, (v. 3.) all her beauty and majesty, (Ps. cxxii. 17.) all her plenty and fulness, and all her power and authority. They had, in their pride, lifted up their horn against God, and therefore justly will God cut off their horn; he disabled them to resist and oppose his enemies, he turned back their right hand, so that they were not able to follow the blow which they gave, nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy, when God draws it back, and withers it, as he did Jericho's? Thus was the beauty of Israel cast down, when a people famished, and not able to stand their ground, or make good their post.

III. Time was, when Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were strong and well fortified, were trusted to by the inhabitants, and let alone by the enemy as impregnable; but now the Lord has in anger swallowed them up, they are quite gone, the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invaders meet with no opposition; the stately structures, which were their strength and beauty, are pulled down and laid waste. 1. The Lord has in anger swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, (v. 2.) both the cities and the country-houses; they are burnt, or otherwise destroyed, so totally ruined, that they seem to have been swallowed up, and no remains left of them. He has swallowed up, and has not left; one would have thought it pity that such sumptuous houses, so well built, so well furnished, should be quite destroyed; and that some pity should have been had for the poor inhabitants, that were thus dislodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compassions seemed to fail; He has swallowed up Israel, as a lion swallows up his prey, v. 5. 2. He has swallowed up not only her common habitations, but her palaces, all her palaces, all her palaces, all her palaces, (v. 5.) those were most stately, and strong, and rich, and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commission, level palaces with cottages, and as easily swallow them up. If palaces be polluted with sin, as theirs were, let them expect to be visited with a curse, which shall consume them, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. ii. 15. He has swallowed their palaces, their palaces, their palaces, they are long-palaces, but their strongholds, their castles, citadels, and places of defence; these he has thrown down in his wrath, and brought them to the ground; for shall they stand in the way of his judgments, and give a check to the progress of them? No, let them drop like leaves in autumn, let them be razed to the foundations, and made to touch the ground, v. 2. And again, (v. 5.) how could they have against God? And thus has he increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation, for they could not but be in a dreadful consternation when they saw all their defence departed from them. This is again insisted on, v. 7—9. In order to the swallowing up of her palaces, he has given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces, which were their security, and when they are broken down the palaces themselves are soon broken into. The walls of palaces cannot protect them, unless God himself be a Wall of fire round about them. This God did in his anger, and yet he has done it deliberately; it is the result of a previous purpose, and is done by a wise and steady providence; for the Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, he brought the Chaldean army in, on purpose to do this excutient work for him. Where his church, be they are all according to his counsels; he performs the thing that is appointed for us, even that which makes most against us. But when it is done, he has stretched out a line, a measuring-line, to do it exactly and by measure: hitherto the destruction shall go, and no further; no more shall be cut off than what is marked to be so. Or, it is meant by the line of constraint, the bounds which he marked out; for he will go on with his work, he has not withdrawn his hand from destroying, that right hand which he stretched out against his people as an adversary; (v. 4.) as far as the purpose went the performance shall go, and his hand shall accomplish his counsel to the utmost, and not be withdrawn. Therefore he made the ramparts and the wall which the people had rejoiced in, and upon which, perhaps, they had trusted, which proved themselves delusory; the walls and the ramparts, or bulwarks upon them, fall together, and were left to condole with one another on their fall. Her gates are gone in an instant, so that one would think they were sunk into the ground with their own weight, and he has destroyed and broken her bars, these bars of Jerusalem's gates which formerly he had strengthened, Ps. cxxvii. 5. The ramparts and the wall, cxxxvi. But there is no need when God has withdrawn his protection.

IV. Time was, when their government flourished, their princes made a figure, and their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their side; but now it is quite otherwise; He has polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof, v. 2. They had first polluted themselves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things, he threw them to the dunghill, the fittest place for them. He has given up their glory, which was looked upon as sacred, (that is a character we give to majesty,) to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the priest, whose characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are despised by every body, when God has, in indignation of his name, cast them down, v. 6. He has abandoned them; he looks upon them as no longer worthy of the honours conveyed to them by the covenants of royalty and priesthood, but as having forfeited both; and then Zedekiah the king was used deservedly, and Seraah the chief priest put to death as a malefactor. The crown is fallen from their heads, for her king and her princes are among the Gentiles, prisoners among them, insulted over by them, (v. 9.) and treated not only as common persons, but as the basest, without any regard had to their character. Note, It is just with God to debase those by his judgments, who have by sin debased themselves.

V. Time was, when the ordinances of God were administered among them in their power and purity, and they had those tokens of God's presence among them, but now they are gone, so that part of the beauty of Israel was gone, which was indeed their greatest beauty.

1. The ark was God's footstool, under the mercy-seat, between the cherubims; this was of all others the most sacred symbol of God's presence; (it is called his footstool, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2. Ps. xcv. 5.—cxxxii. 7.) there the Shechinah rested, and with an eye to this, Israel was often protected and saved; but now he remembered not his footstool, the ark itself was suffered, as it should seem, to fall into the
hands of the Chaldeans. God, being angry, threw that away, for it shall be no longer his footstool, the earth shall be so, as it had been before the ark was, Isa. lxvi. 1. Of what little value are the tokens of his presence, when his presence is gone! Nor was this the first time that God gave his ark into captivity. In days of God and his kingdom can stand without that footstool.

2. They that ministered in holy things had been pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion, (v. 4.) they had been purer than snow, whiter than milk, (ch. iv. 7.) none more pleasant in the eyes of all good people than those that did the service of the tabernacle; but now these are slain, and their blood mingled with their sacrifices; thus is the glory of Solomon's house defiled, and of the ark of God. When those that were pleasant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are slain, God must be acknowledged in it, he has done it, and the burning which the Lord has kindled must be bewailed by the whole house of Israel, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. x. 6.

3. The temple was God's tabernacle, (as the tabernacle, while that was in being, is called his temple, Ps. xxvi. 4.) and this he has violently taken away, (v. 6.) he has plucked up the stakes of it, and cut the cords, it shall be no more a tabernacle, much less his; he has taken it away, as the keeper of a garden takes away his hovel or shade, when he has done with it, and has no more occasion for it: he takes it down as easily, as speedily, and with as little regret and reluctance, as if it were but a cottage, a tent, a table and an aubergine, (Isa. i. 8.) but a booth which the keeper makes, Job xxvii. 18. When men profane God's tabernacle, it is just with him to take it from them. God had justly refused to smell in their solemn assemblies; (Amos v. 21.) they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has destroyed his places of the assembly; what should they do with the places when the services were become an abomination? He has now abhorred his sanctuary; (v. 7.) it has been defiled with sin, that only thing which he hates, and for the sake of that he abhors even his sanctuary, which he had delighted in, and called his rest for ever, Ps. xxviii. 14. Thus he had done to Shiloh. Now the enemies have made as great a noise of revelling and blasphemy in the house of God, as ever had been made with the temple-songs and music in the day of a solemn feast, Ps. lxxxiv. 4. Some, by the places of the assembly, (v. 6.) understand not only the temple, but the synagogues, and the schools of the prophets, which the enemy had burnt up, Ps. lxxxiv.

4. The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people constantly put in mind of them; but now the Lord has caused those to be forgotten, not only in the country, among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were the places left where they used to be observed. Now that Zion was in ruins, no difference was made between sabbath-times and other times; every day was a day of mourning, so that all the solemn feasts were forgotten. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts, who have not duly valued them, nor conscientiously observed them, but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. They that have seen the Son of man, and slighted him, may desire to see one of those days, and not have them, Luke xxi. 22.

5. The altar that had sanctified their gifts is now cast off, for God will no more accept their gifts nor beHonoured by their sacrifices, v. 7. The altar was the table of the Lord, but God will no longer keep house among them, he will neither feast them, nor feast with them.

6. They had been blest with prophets, and teachers of the law; but now the law is no more, (v. 9.) it is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the scribes, the tables of the law are gone with the ark, the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What should they do with Bibles, who had made no better improvement of them when they had them? Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord; God answers them no more by prophets and dreams, which was the melancholy case of Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 13. They had persecuted God's prophets, and despised the visions they had from the Lord, and therefore it is just with God to say that they shall have no more prophets, no more visions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with visions of their own hearts, for they shall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them how long. They that misuse God's prophets justly lose them.

10. The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence: they have cast up dust upon their heads; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground. 11. Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people; because the children and the sucking swoon in the streets of the city. 12. They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine! when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom. 13. What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion! for thy breach is great like the sea; who can heal thee? 14. Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee; and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment. 15. All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth? 16. All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it. 17. The Lord hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee; he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries. 18. Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of
LAMENTATIONS, II.

Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease. 19. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord; lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street. 20. Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast dealt this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? 21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men fallen by the sword; thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, and not pitied. 22. Thou hast called, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about; so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

Justly are these called Lamentations, and they are very pathetic ones; the expressions of grief in perfection, mourning and wo, and nothing else, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, Ezek. ii. 10.

I. Copies of lamentations are here presented, and they are painted to the life. 1. The judges and magistrates, who used to appear in robes of state, have laid them aside, or rather are stripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners. Young men of the elders now sit no longer in the judgment-seats, the thrones of the house of David, but they sit upon the ground, having no seat to repose themselves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends sat with him upon the ground, Job ii. 13. They open not their mouth in the gate, as usual, to give their opinion, but they keep silence, overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing how to speak. Their eyes are smitten with sorrow, their heads, and girded themselves with sackcloth, as deep mourners used to do; they had lost their power and wealth, and that made them take on thus; Pioratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris—Genuine are the tears which we shed over lost property. 2. The young ladies, who used to dress themselves so richly, and walk with stretch ed-fourth necks, (Isa. iii. 16.) now are humbled; the virgin of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground: they are made to know sorrow, who seemed to bid defiance to it, and were always disposed to be merry. 3. The prophet himself is a pattern to the mourners; (v. 11.) his eyes do fail with tears, he has wept till he can weep no more, has almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind. Nor are the inward impressions of grief short of the outward expression, and their mother, and their mother, and their mother are troubled, as they were, when he saw these calamities coming, (Jer. iv. 19, 20.) which, one would think, might have excused him now; but even he, to whom they were no surprise, felt them an insupportable grief, to that degree that his liver is poured out on the earth; he felt himself a perfect collecting; all his enthrals are melted and dissolved, as Ps. xxii. 14. Jeremiah himself had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had before from his own countrymen, nay, their destruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement; the same that made them prisoners, made him a favourite, and yet his private interests are swallowed up in a concern for the public, and he bewails the destruction of the daughter of his people, as sensibly as if he himself had been the greatest sufferer in that common calamity. Note, The judgments of God upon the land and all that are to be lamented by his people, we, for our parts, may escape pretty well.

II. Calls to lamentation are here given; The heart of the people cried unto the Lord, v. 18. Some fear it was a cry, not of true repentance, but of bitter complaint; their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in doleful shrieks and entreaties, in which they made use of God's name; and thus we will make haste to call on him, in so great a day of calamity, we will do it in sincerity cry unto God for mercy in their distress, and the prophet bids them go on to do so; O wall of the daughter of Zion, either ye that stand upon the wall, ye watchmen on the wall, (Isa. lxiii. 6.) when ye see the enemies encamped about the walls, and making their approaches towards them, or because of the wall, (that is the subject of the lamentation,) because of the breaking down of the wall, which was not done till about a month after the city was taken, because of this further calamity, let the daughter of Zion lament still. This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, Neh. i. 3. 4. Let tears run down like a river day and night, weep without intermission, give thyself no rest from weeping, let not the apple of thine eye cease. This intimates, 1. That the calamities would be of some continuance, that the calamities should con sequently recur, and fresh occasion would be given them every day and every night to bewail themselves. 2. That they would be apt, by degrees, to grow insensible and stupid under the hand of God, and would need to be still called upon to afflict their souls yet more and more, till their proud and hard hearts were thoroughly humbled and softened.

III. Causes for lamentation are here assigned, and the calamities which attended the city of Jerusalem are very particularly and pathetically described.

1. Multitudes perish by famine; a very sore judgment, and piteous is the case of those that fall under it. God had corrected them by scarcity of provisions through want of rain some time before, (Jer. xiv. 1.) and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment, and therefore the Lord gives them over, both by the sword and by the famine, to satisfy them in extremity; for, (1.) The children died for hunger in their mothers' arms; The children and sucklings, whose innocent and helpless state entitles them to relief as soon as any, swoon in the streets, (v. 11.) as the wounded, (v. 12.) there being no food to be had for them; they that are starved die as surely as they that are stabbed; they lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them, and come to refresh them, for they are such as had been bred up to the use of wine, and wanted it now; but there is none for them, so that at length their soul is poured out into their mothers' bosom, and there they breathe their last. This is mentioned again, (v. 19.) They faint for hunger in the top of every street. Yet this is not the worst, (2.) There were some little children that were slain by hunger, (v. 16.) even those that were too young to walk. 20. Such was the scarcity of provision, that the women ate the fruit of their own bodies, even their children, when they were but of a span long, according to the threatening, Deut. xxviii. 53. The like was done in the siege of Samaria, 2 Kings vi. 29. Such extremities, nay, such barbarities, were they brought to by the famine. Let us, in our abundance, thank God that we are delivered, and take care of grief would prevail among us, but for our children.

2. Multitudes fall by the sword, which devours one as well as another, especially when it is in the hand of such cruel enemies as the Chaldeans were. (1.) They spared no character, no, not the most distinguished; even the priest and the prophet, who of
all men, one would think, might expect protection from heaven, and vengeance on earth, are slain, not alone on the field of battle, where they are out of their place, as Hoplins and Phinehas, but in the sanctuary of the Lord, the place of their business, and which they hoped would have been a refuge to them. (2.) They spared no age, no, not those who, by reason of their tender or their decrepit age, were exempted from taking up the sword; for even they perished by the sword, the young man, and the old, who had had their discharge, lie on the ground, slain in the streets, till some kind hand is found that will bury them. (3.) They spared no sex; My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword. In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of, the virgins were spared, and made part of the spoil; (Num. xxxi. 18. Judges v. 30.) but, in this case, though Jerusalem was made a perfect desolation from sea to sea, she was spared neither old nor young, man nor woman. (4.) This was the Lord's doing, he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction; Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger, for it is God that kills and makes alive, and saves as he pleases. But that which follows is very harsh, Thou hast killed, and not fittest; for his soul is not grieved for the rigour of the sword, which he and his sons and his daughters to such an extent as such as he had mustered and summoned; (v. 22.) Thou hast called in, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about, the Chaldeans, who are such a terror to me; enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thick as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival; so that they were quite overpowered with numbers, and none escaped nor re- mained; Jerusalem was made a perfect desolation from sea to sea. Mothers are cut to the heart to see these whom they have taken such care of, and pains with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used, suddenly cut off, though not soon reared; Those that I have swaddled and brought up, has mine enemy consumed, as if they were brought forth for the murderer, like lambs for the butcher, Hos. ix. 13. Zeph, who was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey. 3. Their false prophets cheated them, v. 14. This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern; (Jer. xix. 13.) Ah, Lord God, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall have peace, and shall live in the land; in which among his lamentations; Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee, they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see the visions of the Almighty, and then to speak his words; but they were all vain and foolish things, their visions were all their own fancies, and if they thought they had any, it was only the product of a crazed head, or such as were immediately as appeared by what they delivered, which was all idle and impertinent; nay, it is most likely that they themselves knew that the visions they pretended, were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they designedly imposed upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves; they are thy prophets, not God's, prepared, but not set, but fitter for the purifier after his heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were prophets after their hearts. (1.) Prophets should tell people of their faults, should show them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin; but these prophets knew that would lose them the people's affections and contributions, and knew they could not remove their hearers without reproaching themselves at the same time, and therefore they have not discovered thee iniquity, they saw it not themselves, or, if they did, saw so little evil in it, or danger from it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means, by taking away their iniquity, to turn away their captivity. (2.) Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them, but these saw for them false harbingers; the messages they pretended to deliver to them from God, they knew not, unless it was, that by sending them up in carnal security, they caused that banishment which, by plain dealing, they might have prevented. 4. Their neighbours laughed at them; (v. 15.) All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee. Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and borne a great sway, among the nations; it was more than all the sons of Egypt, Jeremiah xxii. 12.; but, in that city was thus reduced, they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall, they hissed, and wagged the head, pleasing themselves to see how much it was fallen from its former preten- sions; Is this the city (said they) that men called the perfection of beauty? Ps. l. 2. How is it now the perfection of deformity? Where is all its beauty? Le. xvi. 21. Where is the joy of the whole earth? (Ps. lxxvii. 2.) which rejoiced in the gifts of God's beauty and grace more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in? Where is all its joy now, and all its glory? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted. 5. Their enemies triumphed over them, v. 16. Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace, now vented their spite and malice, which before they concealed; they now open their mouths, they in Motion to make themselves masters of Jerusalem: We have swallowed her up, it is our doing, and it is our gain, it is all our own now; Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been; certainly this is the day that we have long looked for, we have found it, we have seen it, Aha, so would we have it. Note, The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly; but they will find themselves de- ceived; for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church. The Lord, in all this, appeared against them, (v. 17.) The Lord has done that which he had devised. The destroyers of Jerusalem could have no power against her, unless it were given them from above; they are but the sword in God's hand, it is he that has thrown down, and has not fitted; "In this controversy of his with us, we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us. The Lord has caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee; (see Job xxx. 11.) he has set up the horn of thine adversary, has given them power and matter for pride; this is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God is become their Enemy, and yet it is the strongest argument for patience under it; we are bound to submit to what God does, for, (1.) It is the performance of his purpose; The Lord has done his purpose, and caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee with counsel and deliberation, not rashly, or upon a sudden re- solve; it is the evil that he has framed, (Jer. xviii. 11.) and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention; what God devises against his people is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue. (2.) It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the scripture; the man now put in execution his word that he had commanded in the days of old. When he gave them his law by Moses, he told them what judgments he
LAMENTATIONS.

CHAP. III.

The scope of this chapter is the same with that of the two foregoing chapters, but the composition is somewhat different; that was in long verse, this in short; another kind of metre; that was in single alphabets, this in a triple one. Here is, I. A sad complaint of God's displeasures, and the fruits of his hand, v. 1-29. II. Words of comfort to God's people when they are in trouble and distress, v. 21-36. III. Duty prescribed in this afflicted state, v. 37-41. IV. The complaint renewed, v. 42-54. V. Encouragement to the people, and to himself, in waiting for his salvation; with an appeal to his justice against the persecutors of the church, v. 55-66. Some make all this to be spoken by the prophet himself, when he was imprisoned and persecuted; but it seems rather to be spoken in the person of the church now in captivity, and in a manner desolate; and in the deviations of which the prophet did in a particular manner himself. But the complaints here are more general than those in the foregoing chapter, being accommodated to the case as well of particular persons as of the public; and intended for the use of the closest rather than of the solemn assembly. Some think Jeremiah makes these complaints, not only as an intercessor for Israel, but as a type of Christ, who was thought by some to be Jeremiah the weeping prophet, because he was much in tears; (Matt. xvi. 14,) and to him many of the passages here may be applied.

1. A man that hath seen affliction, by the rod of his wrath. 2. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. 3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. 4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. 5. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travails. 6. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old. 7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy. 8. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. 9. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stones; he hath made my paths crooked. 10. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places. 11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces; he hath made me desolate. 12. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. 13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. 14. I was a desolation to all my people, and their song all the day. 15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. 16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel-stones, he hath covered me with ashes. 17. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace; I forgot prosperity. 18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord; 19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. 20. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

The title of the 102d Psalm might very fitly be prefixed to this chapter: The prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and pours out his complaint before the Lord; for it is very feehingly and
LAMENTATIONS, III. 571

1. The prophet complains that God is angry; this gives both birth and bitterness to the affliction; (v. 1.) I am the man, the remarkable man, that has seen affliction, and has felt it sensibly, by the rod of his wrath. Note, God is sometimes angry with his own people; yet it is to be complained of, as a signal proof of his sovereign goodness, that is, (1.) because it is by his rod, a chastening which, though grievous for the present, will in the issue be advantageous. By this rod we must expect to see affliction, and if we be made to see more than ordinary affliction by that rod, we must not quarrel; for we are sure that the anger is just, and the affliction mild, and mixed with mercy.

2. That he is now led altogether in the dark; darkness is put for great trouble and perplexity, the want both of comfort and of direction; this was the case of the complainant; (v. 2.) He has led me by his providence, and an unaccountable chain of events, into darkness, and not into light; the darkness I feared, and not into the light I hoped for. And, (v. 6.) He has set me in dark places, dark as the grave, like those that be dead of old, that they may not see what they were. Note, The Israel of God, though children of light, sometimes walk in darkness.

3. That God appears against him as an Enemy, as a professed Enemy. God had been for him, but now Surely against me is he turned, (v. 3.) as far as I can discern, for his hand is turned against me all the day, I am chastened every morning; Ps. lix. 14. And when God's hand is turned against us, we are tempted to think that his heart is turned against us too; God had said once, (Hos. v. 14.) I will be as a lion to the house of Judah, and now he has made his word good; (v. 10.) He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, surprising me with his judgments, and as a lion in secret places, so that which way soever I went, I was in continual fear of being set upon, and could never think myself safe. Do men shoot at those that are enemies to? He has bent his bow, the bow that was ordained against the church's persecutors, that is bent against her sons, v. 12. He has set me as a mark for his arrow, which he aims at, and will be sure to hit, and then the arrows of his quiver enter into my reins, give me a mortal wound, an arrow wound; and God has many arrows in his quiver, and they fly swift, and pierce deep.

4. That he is as one sorely afflicted both in body and mind. The Jewish state may now be fitly compared to a man wrinkled with age, for which there is no remedy; (v. 4.) My flesh and my skin has he made old, they are wasted and withered, and I look like one that is ready to drop into the grave; and now, he has broken my bones, and so disabled me to help myself, v. 15. He has filled me with bitterness, a bitter sense of these calamities. God has access to the spirit, and can so imbitter that, as thereby to imbitter all the enjoyments; as when the stomach is foul, whatever is eaten, sour in it. He has made me drunk with wormwood, so intoxicated me with the sense of my afflictions, that I know not what I am, he has broken my bones, and so disabled me to help myself; or, as some read it, he has fed me with ashes; I have eaten ashes like bread,” Ps. ch. 9.

5. That he is not able to discern any way of escape or deliverance; (v. 2.) He has builded against me a besieged city; where there was a way open, it is now quite made up; he has compassed me on every side with gall and travail; v. vex, and fret, and tire myself, to find a way of escape, but can find none. v. 7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out.” When Jerusalem was besieged, it was said to be compassed in on every side, Luke xix. 43. “I am chained, and as some notorious factures are double-tormented, and loaded with irons, so he has made my chain heavy. He has also (v. 9.) enclosed my ways with broken stone, not only hedged my way with walls, but he has formed a way in the midst of a stone wall, which cannot be broken through, so that my paths are made crooked; I traverse to and fro, to the right hand, to the left, to try to get forward, but am still turned back.” It is just with God to make those who walk in the crooked paths of sin, crossing God's laws, walk in the crooked paths of affliction, crossing their designs, and breaking their measures; and, in the midst of their way, he has blasted all my counsels, ruined my projects, so that I am necessitated to yield to my own ruin; he has fulfilled me in pieces, he has torn, and is gone away, (Hos. v. 14.) and has made me desolate, has deprived me of all society, and all comfort in my own soul.

6. That God turns a deaf ear to his prayers; (v. 8.) When I cry and shout, because I am not heard, I cry, and shout in my distress, yet he shutts out my prayer, and will not suffer it to have access to him. God's ear is wont to be open to the prayers of his people, and his door of mercy to them that knock at it; but now both are shut, even to one that cries and shouts. Thus sometimes God seems to be angry even against the prayers of his people, (Ps. lxix. 4.) and their case is deplorable indeed, when God is angry, not only with the evil, but also with the good; they play upon, as Nero on his harp, when Rome was on fire.

7. That his neighbours made a laughing matter of his troubles; (v. 13.) I was a derision to all my people; to all the wicked among them, that made themselves, and one another merry with the public judgments, and particularly the prophet Jeremiah's griefs. I am their song, their mirth; every hand instrument of mirth, their taunt, (Job xvii. 6.) that they play upon, as Nero on his harp, when Rome was on fire.

8. That he was ready to despair of relief and deliverance; When hest not only taken peace from me, but has removed my soul far off from peace, (v. 17.) so that it is not only not within reach, but not within view: I forget prosperity; it is so long since I had seen it, and so hard by many arrows in his quiver, and they fly swift, and pierce deep. That I have lost the idea of it; I have been so inundated to sorrow and servitude, that I know not what joy and liberty mean. I have even given up all for gone, concluding, My strength and my hope are perished from the Lord, (v. 18.) I can no longer stay myself upon God as my Support, for I do not find that he gives me encouragement to do so; nor can I look for his appearing in my behalf, so as to put an end to my troubles, for the case seems remediless, and even my God inexorable. Without doubt, it was his infirmity to say thus, (Ps. cxxxvi. 10.) for with God there is everlasting strength, and he is his people's never-failing Hope, whatever they may think.

9. That grief returned, upon every remembrance of his treachery, and his reflections were as melancholy as his prospects, v. 19, 20. Did he endeavour, as Job did, to forget his complaint? (Job ix. 27.) Alas; it was to no purpose, he remembers upon all occasions, the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall; thus emphatically does he speak of his affliction, for thus did he think of it, thus heavy did it lie when he reviewed it! It was an affliction to him; he would not be as an instrument and my transgression; (so some read it,) my trouble, and my sin that brought it upon me; that was the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the
LAMENTATIONS, III.

Lamentations, his hope. 10. When they remembered Zion; even then, if they could have been made to understand, how much they needed to have been there. Observe here, (1.) The streams of mercy acknowledged; we are not consumed. Note, The church of God is like Moses's bush burning, yet not consumed; whatever hardships it has met with, or may meet with, it shall have a being in the world to the end of time. It is persecuted of men, but not forsaken of God, and therefore, though it is cast down, yet it is not destroyed. It is not cut off; refined in the furnace as silver, but not consumed as dross. (2.) These streams followed up to the fountain; it is of the Lord's mercies. Here are mercies in the plural number, denoting the abundance and variety of those mercies; God is an inexhaustible fountain of mercy, the Father of mercies. Note, We all owe it to the sparing mercy of God, that we are not consumed; others have been consumed round about us, and we ourselves have been in the consuming, and yet we are not consumed; we are out of the grave, we are out of hell. Had we been dealt with according to our sins, we had been consumed long ago; but we have been dealt with according to God's mercies, and we are bound to acknowledge it to his praise.

1. That even in the depth of their affliction they should have evidence as to the certainty of divine pity, and the truth of the divine promise. The Lord had several times complained that God had not pitied (ch. ii. 17, 21.) but here they corrected themselves, and own, (1.) That God's compassions fail not; they do not really fail, no, not then when in anger he seems to have shut up his tender mercies. These rivers of mercy run fully and constantly, but never run dry; no, they are new every morning, and our morning's portion is as new and fresh as if God had been dealing with them all the night, and with compassion toward us; he visits us with them every morning, (Job vii. 18.) every morning does he bring his judgment to light, Zeph. iii. 5. When our comforts fail, yet God's compassions do not. (2.) That great is his faithfulness. Though the covenant seemed to be broken, they own that it still continues in full force; and though Jerusalem be in ruins, the truth of the Lord endures for ever. Note, Whatever hard things we suffer, we must never entertain any hard thoughts of God, but must still be ready to own that he is both kind and faithful.

2. That God is, and ever will be, the all-sufficient happiness of his people, and they have chosen him, and depend upon him to be such; (v. 24.) The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; that is, (1.) When I have lost all I have in the world, liberty and livelihood, and almost life itself, yet I have not lost my interest in God. Portions on earth are perishing things, but God is a portion for ever. (2.) While I have an interest in God, therein I have enough; I have that which is sufficient to balance all my troubles, and make up all my losses. Whatever we are robbed of, our portion is safe. (3.) That is that which I depend upon, and rest satisfied with, and therefore we need not lay myself upon him, and encourage myself in him, when all other supports and encouragements fail me. Note, It is our duty to make God the portion of our souls, and then to make use of him as our portion, and to take the comfort of it in the midst of our lamentations.

4. That those who deal with God will find it in vain in vain to trust in him; for, (1.) He is good to those who do so, v. 25. He is good to all, his tender mercies are over all his works, all his creatures taste of his goodness; but he is in a particular manner good to them that wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. Note, While trouble is prolonged, and deliverance is deferred, we must patiently wait for God, and his gracious returns to us, while we wait
for him by faith, we must seek him by prayer; our souls must seek him, else we do not seek so as to find; our seeking will help to keep up our waiting; and to those who thus wait and seek, God will be gracious, he will show them his marvellous-loving-kindness. (2.) They that so do will find it good for them; (v. 27.) It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Many of the young men were carried into captivity; to make them easy in it, he tells them that it was good for them to bear the yoke of that captivity, and they would find it so, if they would but accommodate themselves to their condition, and labour to answer God's ends in laying that heavy yoke upon them. It is very applicable to the yoke of God's commands; it is good for young people to take that yoke on in the youth of life, when it is too soon to be religious; it will make our duty the more acceptable to God, and easy to ourselves, if we engage in it when we are young. But here it seems to be meant of the yoke of affliction; many have found it good to bear this in youth, it has made them humble and serious, and has weaned them from the world, who otherwise would have been profane and ungodly; but, though they may seem to be hard, it will suit the spiritual advantage. The sum is, If tribulation work patience, that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that makes not ashamed.

6. That God will graciously return to his people with seasonable comforts, according to the time that they have offended him; but before they can receive these, they must be penitent, and patient under their afflictions, and do not expect too much, as the reason of this, for he gave his back to the smiters, Isa. i. 6. He who can bear contempt and reproach, and not render railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness; who, when he is filled full with reproach, keeps it to himself, and does not report it, and empty it again, upon those who filled him with it, but pours it out before the Lord, (as these did, Ps. cxxiii. 4. whose souls were exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud,) he shall find that it is good to bear the yoke, and that it shall turn to his spiritual advantage. The sum is, If tribulation work patience, that patience will work experience, and that experience a hope that makes not ashamed.

7. That, when God does cause grief, it is for wise and holy ends, and he takes not delight in our calamities, v. 33. He does indeed afflict, and grieve the children of men, all their grievances and afflictions are from him, but he does not do it willingly, not from the heart; so the word is. (1.) He causes griefs to befall us, but when we give him cause to do it, he does not dispense his favours as he does his favours, ex nero motu—from his mere good pleasure; if he show us kindness, it is because so it seems good unto him; but if he write bitter things against us, it is because we both deserve it, and need it. (2.) He does not afflict with pleasure; he delights not in th
LAMENTATIONS, III.

death of sinners, or theiquit of saints, but pun-
ishes with a kind of reluctance; he comes out of
his place to punish, for his place is the mercy-seat; he
delights not in the misery of any of his creatures,
but, as it respects his own people, he is so far from it,
that in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and his
soul is grieved for the misery of Israel. (3.) He
reigns his kindness towards people more than when
he afflicts them: if he does not willingly grive the
children of men, much less his own children: how-
ever it be, yet God is good to them, (Ps. lxxiii. 1.)
and they may by faith see love in his heart even
then when they see trows in his face, and a rod in
his hand. 

8. That, though he uses more of men as his
hand, or rather instruments in his hand, for cor-
correcting of his people, yet he is far from being
pleased with the injustice of their proceedings, and
the wrong they do them, v. 34.—36. Though God
serves his own purposes by the violence of wicked
and unreasonable men, yet it does not therefore fol-
low that he countenances that violence, as his op-
pressed people are sometimes tempted to think; (Hab. i. 13.) Wherefore lookest thou upon them
that deal treacherously? (v. 34.) But God has
found a way to change the people of God are injured and oppressed by their enemies, and
the prophet here assures us that God does not ap-
prove of either of them. (1.) If men injure
them by force of arms, God does not appro\v of it
for that. He does not himself crush under his feet the
prisoners of the earth, but he regards the cry of the
prisoners; nor does he approve of men's doing it;
may, he is much displeased with it. It is barbarous
to example on them that are down; (v. 35.) That
God sees them. It is before the face of the Most
High, (v. 35.) it is in his sight, under his eye, and
is very displeasing to him; they cannot but know it
is so, and therefore it is in defiance of him that they
do it. He is the Most High, whose authority over
them they continue by abusing their authority over
their subjects; not considering that he that is higher
than the highest, regardeth, Eccl. v. 8. [2.] That
God has found a way to do this. The- thing is but
than is expressed; the perverting of justice, and
the subverting of the just, are a great affright to
God; and though he may make use of them for the
correction of his people, yet he will, sooner or later,
severely reckon with those that do thus. Note,
However God may for a time suffer evil-doers to
prosper, and serve his own purposes by them, yet
he does not therefore approve of their evil doiings.
For the people of God must do iniquity, or countenance those that do it.

37. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to
pass, when the Lord commandeth it not? 33. Out
of the mouth of the Most High proceeedeth not evil
and good? 39. Where-
fore doth a living man complain? the punish-
ment of his sins! 40. Let us search and try our
ways, and turn again to the Lord. 41. Let us lift
up our heart with our hands unto God in the heave-
ns.

That we may be entitled to the comforts admini-
stered to the afflicted in the foregoing verses, and
may taste the sweetness of them, we have here the
duties of an afflicted state prescribed to us, in the
performance of which we may expect those com-
forts.

We must see and acknowledge the hand of God
in all the calamities that befal us at any time,
whether personal or public, v. 37, 38. This is
here laid down as a great truth, which will help to
rectify our views of our sufferings, and to steady
ify them to us. (1.) That, while God's actions
are, it is God that overrules them; Who is he that
saith, and it cometh to pass, that designs a thing,
and brings his designs to effect, if the Lord command
it not? Men can do nothing but according to the
counsel of God, nor have any power or success but
what is given them from above. A man's heart de-
vides his ways; he projects and purposes; he says
I will, and it will be done; and, (v. 13.) but the
Lord directeth his steps far otherwise than he de-
signed them, and what he contrived and expected
does not come to pass, unless it be what God's hand
and his counsel had determined before to be done,
Prov. xvi. 9. Jer. x. 23. The Chaldeans said
that they would destroy Jerusalem, and it came to pass,
not because they said it, but because God com-
manded it, Jer. xxxii. 14. Note, Men are but tools which the great God breaks of,
and manages as he pleases, in the government of
this lower world; and they cannot accomplish any
of their designs without him. (2.) That, what-
ever men's let it is, it is God that orders it; Out
of the mouth of the Most High do not evil and good
proceed? Yes, certainly they do; and it is more em-
phatically expressed in the original. Do not this
evil, and this good, proceed from the mouth of the
Most High? Is it not what he has ordained and ap-
pointed for us? Yes, certainly it is; and for the re-
coupling of us to our own afflictions, whatever they\be, this general truth must thus be particularly ap-
plied. This comfort I receive from the hand of
God, and shall not receive that evil also? so Job
argues, ch. ii. 10. Are we healthful or sickly, rich
poor? Do we under disapprov'd or are we cress-
ed in them? It is all what God orders; every
man's judgment proceeds from him. The Lord
gave, and the Lord has taken away; he forms the
light, and creates the darkness, as he did at first.
Note, All the events of Divine Providence are the
products of a divine counsel; whatever is done God
has the directing of it, and the works of his hands
agree with the words of his mouth; he speaks, and
it is done; and thus, so effectually are all his pur-
poses fulfilled.

2. We must not quarrel with God for any afflic-
tion that he lays upon us at any time; (v. 30.)
Wherefore do a living man complain? the pro-
phet here seems to check himself for the complaint he
had made in the former part of the chapter, wherein
he seemed to reflect upon God as unkind and se-
vere; "Do I well to anger? Why do I fret thus?"
Those who are troubled from time have children with
God, must, in the reflection, chide themselves for it.
From the doctrine of God's sovereign and universal
providence, which he had asserted in the verses
before, he draws this inference, Wherefore do a
living man complain? What God does we must not
open our mouths against, Ps. xxxix. 9. They that
blame his lot, reproach him, and challenge it to
him, are subjected to the will of God in all their suf-
ferrings. Note, Though we may pour out our complaints before
God, we must never exhibit any complaints against
God. What! Shall a living man complain, a man
for the punishment of his sins? The reasons here
urged are very cogent. (1.) We are men; let us
herein show ourselves men. Shall a man complain?
And again, a man! We are men, and not brutes,
reasonable creatures, who should act with reas-

who should look upward, and look forward, and both ways may fetch considerations enough, to silence our complaints. We are men, and not children that cry for every thing that hurts them; we are men, and not gods, subjects, not lords; we are not our own masters, not our own carvers, we are bound, and must obey; must submit; we are men, and not angels, and therefore cannot expect to be free: nor (for we are not angels) are we not inhabitants of that world where there is nothing but sorrow; we are men, and not devils, are not in that deplorable, helpless, hopeless state that they are in, but have something to comfort ourselves with, which they have not. (2.) We are living men; through the good hand of God upon us we are alive yet, though dying daily; and shall a living man complain? No, he has more reason to complain of the burdens and calamities of life. Our lives are frail and forfeited, and yet we are alive; now the living, the living, they should praise, and not complain; (Isa. xxxviii. 19.) while there is life there is hope, and therefore, instead of complaining that things are bad, we should encourage ourselves with the hope that they will be better. (3.) We are suffering under the inflicting of just punishment of our sins; nay, it is far less than our iniquities have deserved; we have little reason to complain of our trouble, for it is our own doing, we may thank ourselves, our own wickedness corrects us; (Prov. xix. 3.) we have no reason to quarrel with God, for he is righteous in it, he is the Governor of the world, and it is necessary that he should maintain the honour of his government by chastising the disobedient. Are we suffering for our sins? Then let us not complain, for we have other work to do; instead of repining, we must be repenting; and as an evidence that God is reconciled to us, we must be endeavours to reconcile ourselves to his holy will. Are we punished for our sins? Is it our wisdom then to submit, and to kiss the rod; for if we still walk contrary to God, he will punish us yet seven times more, for when he judges he will overcome; but if we accommodate ourselves to him, though we be chastened of the Lord, we shall not be condemned with the world.

3. We must set ourselves to answer God's intention in afflicting us, which is, to bring sin to our remembrance, and to bring us home to himself, v. 40. These are the two things which our afflictions should put upon us. They should impress us with meditation upon ourselves, and a reflection upon our lives past; Let us search and try our ways, search what they have been, and then try whether they have been right and good or not; search as for a malefactor in disguise, that flies, and hides himself, and then try whether guilty or not guilty. Let conscience be employed both to search and to try, and let it have leave to part with a deal of good, and to discern what was corrupted, and what was sound, and to reflect on our circumstances, and to consider our ways, (Hag. 1. 3.) that what is any way may be repeated of, and amended for the future, and so we may answer the intention of the affliction. We are apt, in times of public calamity, to reflect upon other people's ways, and lay blame upon them, whereas our business is to search and try our own ways; we have work enough to do at home; we must beschew each of us, say, 'What have I done? What have I contributed to the public flames?' That we may each of us mend one, and then we should all be

mended. (2.) A sincere conversion to God; "Let us turn again to the Lord, to him who is turned against us, and whom we have turned from; to him let us turn by repentance and reformation, as to our Owner and Ruler: we have been with him, and it has never been well with us since we forsook him, let us therefore now turn again to him." This must accompany the former, and be the fruit of it; therefore we must seek and try our ways, that we may turn from the evil of them, and to this end the method David took; (Ps. cxix. 59.) I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto the testimonies.

4. We must offer up ourselves to God, and our best affections and services, in the flames of devotion; v. 41. When we are in affliction, (1.) We must look up to God, as a God in the heavens, infinitely above us, and who has an infinite and eternal benefit upon us, and are therefore not to be quarrelled with, but to submit to. (2.) We must pray to him, with a believing expectation to receive mercy from him; for that is implied in our lifting up our hands to him, (a gesture commonly used in prayer,) and sometimes put forth, as, (Ps. xxvii. 8.) Let the lifting up of my hands be acceptable in thy sight. It signifies our requesting mercy from him, and our readiness to receive that mercy. (3.) Our hearts must go along with our prayers; we must lift up our hearts with our hands, as we must pour out our souls with our words. It is the heart that God looks at in that, and every other service; for what will a sacrifice without a heart avail? If inward impressions be not in some measure answerable to outward expressions, we do but mock God, and deceive ourselves. Praising is lifting up the soul to God, (Ps. xxxv. 1.) as to our Father in heaven; and the soul that hopes to be with God in heaven for ever, will thus, by frequent acts of devotion, be still learning the way thereto, and pressing forward in that way.

42. We have transgressed, and have rebelled: thou hast not pardon'd. 43. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied. 44. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through. 45. Thou hast made us as the scoffing and refuse in the midst of the people. 46. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. 47. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction. 48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. 49. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission. 50. Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven. 51. Mine eye affecteth my heart, because of all the daughters of my city. 52. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause. 53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me. 54. Waters flowed over my head; then I said, I am cut off.

It is easier to chide ourselves for complaining than to chide ourselves out of it: the prophet had owned that a living man should not complain, as if he checked himself for his complaints in the former part of the chapter; and yet here the clouds return after the rain, and the wounds bleed afresh; for great
pains must be taken with a troubled spirit, to bring it into temper.

I. They confess the righteousness of God in afflicting them; (v. 42.) We have transgressed and have rebelled. Note, It becomes us, when we are in trouble, to justify God, by owning our sins, and laying the load upon ourselves for them. Call sin a transgression, call it a rebellion, and you do not misclassify it. This is the result of their searching and their wondering, they inquired into them, the worse they found them.

II. Yet they complain of the afflictions they are under, not without some reflections upon God, which we are not to imitate, but, under the sharpest trials, must always think and speak highly and kindly of him.

1. They complain of his frowns, and the tokens of his displeasure against them. Their sins were repented of, and yet, (v. 42.) Thou hast not pardoned. They had not the assurance and comfort of the pardon; the judgments brought upon them for their sins were not removed, and therefore they thought they could not say the sin was pardoned, which was a mistake, but a common mistake with the people of God when their souls are cast down, and disquieted within them. Their case was really pitiable, and they were in danger of overloading God with their miseries, v. 43. Their enemies persecuted and slew them, but that was not the worst of it, they were but the instruments in God's hands; Thou hast persecuted us, and thou hast slain us, though we expected thou shouldst have protected and delivered us.

They complain that there was a wall of partition between them and God, and, (1.) This hindered God's favours from coming down upon them: The reflection of beams of God's kindness to them, used to be the beauty of Israel; but now thou hast covered us with anger, so that our glory is concealed and gone; now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illustrious people that we have formerly been thought to be. Or, Thou hast covered us up as men that are buried or covered up and forgotten. (2.) It hindered their prayers from coming up unto God; (v. 44.) Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud; not like that bright cloud in which he took possession of the temple, which enabled the worshippers to draw near to him, but like that in which he came down upon mount Sinai, which obliged the people to stand at a distance. This cloud is so thick, that our prayers seem as if they were lost in it, they cannot pass through, we cannot obtain an audience. The reflection of beams of God's kindness to them, used to be the beauty of Israel; but now God is angry with us, and we do not appear that illustrious people that we have formerly been thought to be. Or, Thou hast covered us up as men that are buried or covered up and forgotten.

2. They complain of the contempt of their neighbours, and the reproach and ignominy they were under; (v. 43.) Thou hast made us as the scoffing, or scarring of the first floor, which are thrown to the dunghill. This St. Paul refers to, in his address to the Jews, when he said, (v. 13.) We are made as the filth of the world, and are the scoffing and scaring of all things. We are the refuse, or dross, in the midst of the people, trodden upon by every body, and looked upon as the vilest of the nations, and good for nothing but to be cast out as salt which has lost its savour. Our enemies have opened their mouths against us, (v. 48.) Have gaped upon us, and mocked, and said, Where are their mouth? or have taken liberty to say what they please of us. These complaints we had before, ch. ii. 15. 16. Note, It is common for base and ill-natured men to run upon, and run down, those that are fallen into the depths of distress from the height of honour. But this they brought upon themselves by sin; if they had not made themselves vile, their enemies could not have made them so; but there-
LAMENTATIONS, III.

the sufferings of saints; our Lord Jesus was so; for when he came near, he beheld this same city, and wept over it, which the daughters of Jerusalem did not. (2.) She is overwhelmed with fears; not only grieveth for what is, but fears worse, and gives up all for gone; (v. 54.) "Then I said, I am cut off, ruined, and see no hope of recovery; I am as one dead.

Note, Those that are cast down, are commonly taken to think themselves cast off, Ps. xxxvii. 22. Jon. iii. 4.

5. In the midst of these sad complaints here is one word of comfort, by which it appears that their case was not altogether so bad as they made it, v. 50. We continue thus weeping till the Lord look down and behold from heaven. This intimates, (1.) That they were satisfied that God's gracious regard to them in their miseries would be an effectual redress of all their grievances; "If God, who now covers himself with a cloud, as if he took no notice of our troubles, (Job xxxii. 13.) would but shine forth, all would be well; if he look upon us, we shall be saved," Ps. lxxx. 19. Dan. ix. 17. Bad as the case is, one favourable look from heaven will set all to rights.

(2.) That they had hopes that he would at length look upon them, and grace them to see through their circumstances, (v. 3.) though they had cause to grudge that he will; "Though he contend long, he will not contend for ever, though we deserve that he should," (3.) That while they continued weeping they continued waiting; neither did nor would expect relief and succor from any hand but his; nothing shall comfort them but his gracious returns, nor shall any thing wipe tears from their eyes till he look down. Their eyes which now run down with water, shall still wait upon the Lord their God until that he have mercy upon them, Ps. xii. 2.

55. I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. 56. Thou hast heard my voice; hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry. 57. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not. 58. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life. 59. O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; judge thou my cause. 60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance, and all their imaginations against me. 61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord, and all their imaginations against me; 62. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day. 63. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their music. 64. Render unto them a recompense, O Lord, according to the work of their hands. 65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them. 66. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord.

We may observe throughout this chapter a struggle in the prophet's breast between sense and faith, fear and hope; he complaints and then comforts himself, yet drops his comforts, and returns again to his complaints, as Ps. xlii. But as there, so here, faith gets the last word, and comes off a conqueror; for in these verses he concludes with some comfort. And here are two things with which he encourages himself and experience, with which he encourages himself in reference to the public troubles. He that has seasonably succoured particular saints, will not fail the church in general. Or, it may include the remnant of good people that were among the Jews, who had found it was not in vain to wait upon God. In three things the prophet and his pious friends had found God good to them. 1. His dealings were the most effectual in their distress, through fear that the cloud of wrath was such as their prayers could not pass through, (v. 44.) yet, upon second thoughts, at least upon further trial, they find it otherwise, and that God had not said unto them, Seek ye me in vain. When they were in the low dungeon, as free among the dead, they called upon God's name; (v. 53.) their weeping did not hinder praying. Note, Though we are cast into ever so low a dungeon, we may thence find a way to access God in the highest heavens; Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, (Ps. cxxxv. 1.) as Jonah out of the whale's belly. And could God hear them out of the low dungeon, and would he? Yes, he did; Thou hast heard my voice; and some read the following words as carrying on the same thankful acknowledgment; (v. 59.) "Then didst thou cover thy face, hear my cry; and the original will bear that reading. We read it as a petition for further audience; Hide not thine ear. God's having heard ear voice when we cried to him, even out of the low dungeon, is an encouragement for us to hope that he will not at any time hide his ear. Observe how he calls prayer his breathing; for in prayer we breathe toward God. We breathe at him; though and thought I was breathing my last, thou tookst cognizance of my distressed case." 2. He had silenced their fears, and quieted their spirits; (v. 57.) "Thou didst near in the day that I called upon thee; thou didst graciously assure me of thy presence with me, and give me to see thee nigh unto me, whereas I had thought thee to be at a distance from me." Note, When we draw nigh to God in a way of duty, we may by the Holy Spirit, in our prayer, put away the distance of our way of mercy; but this was not all; Thou saidst, Fear not. This was the language of God's prophets preaching to them not to fear, (Isa. xii. 13.) of his providence preventing those things which they were afraid of, and of his grace quieting their minds, and making them easy, by the witness of his Spirit with their spirits, that they were his people, call, though in distress, and therefore ought not to fear. 3. He had already begun to appear for them; (v. 58.) "O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul," (that is, as it follows,) "thou hast redeemed my life, hast rescued that out of the hands of those who would have taken it away, hast saved that when it was ready to be swallowed up, hast given me that for a prey." And this is an encouragement to perseverance to the believing, that he would yet further appear for them; "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and therefore wilt deliver my feet from falling; thou hast pleaded the causes of my life, and therefore wilt plead my other causes." II. He comforts himself with an appeal to God's justice, and (in order to the sentence of that) to his omniscience. He appeals to God's knowledge of the matter of fact, how very spiteful and malicious his enemies were; (v. 59.) "O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong, that I have done no wrong at all, but suffer a great
deal." He that knows all things, knew, (1.) The malice they had against him; "Thou hast seen all their vengeance; how they desire to do me a mischief, as it were by way of reproal for some great injury I had done them." Note, We should consider, to our terror and caution, that God knows all the revengeful thoughts we have in our minds against others, and therefore we should not allow of such thoughts, or harbour them; and that he knows all the revengeful thoughts others have causiously in their minds against us, and therefore we should not be afraid of them, but leave it to him to protect us from them. (2.) The designs and projects they had had to do him a mischief; "Thou hast seen all their imaginations against me," (v. 66.) and again, (v. 61.) They had taken their imaginations against me, both the desire and the device they have to ruin me; whether it show itself in word or deed, it is known to thee; may, though the products of it are not to be seen or heard, yet their device against me all the day is perceived and understood by him to whom all things are naked and open.

Note, The most secret contrivances of the church's enemies are perfectly known to the church, they have no secrets from God.

(3.) The contempt and calumnies whereby they led him, all that they spake slightly of him, and all that they spake reproachfully; "Thou hast heard their reproach," (v. 61.) all the bad characters they give me, laying to my charge things that I know not; all the methods they use to make me odious and contemptible, even the lips of those that rose up against me, (v. 62.) the odious, malicious, exaggerated, they use, when they speak of me; and that at their sitting down and rising up, when they lie down at night, and get up in the morning, when they sit down to their meat, and with their company, and when they rise from both, still I am their music, they make themselves and one another merry with my miseries, as the Philistines made sport with Samson. Jerusalem was the subject of their sport; perhaps they had some tune or play, some opera or interlude, that was called the destruction of Jerusalem, which though in the nature of a tragedy, was very entertaining to those who wished ill to the holy city. Note, God will one day call sinners to an account for all the hard speeches which they have spoken against him and his people, Jude 15. 

He appeals to God's judgment upon this fact, "Lord, thou hast seen my wrong; there is no need of any evidence to prove it, or any prosecutor to enforce and aggravate it, thou seest it in its true colours; and now I leave it with thee, judge thou my cause," v. 59. Let them be dealt with," (1.) "As they deserve; (v. 64.) Render to them a recompense according to the work of their hands. Let them be dealt with as they have dealt with us; let thy hand be against them as their hand has been against us. They have created us a great deal of vexation; now, Lord, give them sorrow of heart; (v. 65.) perplexity of heart;" (so some read it:) "let them be surrounded with threatening mischiefs on all sides, and not be able to see their way out; give them despondency of heart;" (so others read it:) "let them be driven to despair, and give themselves up for lost. Give the hand of the oppressor to itself, and sink the heart that thinks itself stoutest. (2.) "Let them be dealt with according to the threatenings; Thy curse unto them; let thy curse come upon them, all the evils that are pronounced in thy word against the enemies of thy people, v. 65. They have loaded us with curses; as they loved cursing, so let it come upon them, thy curse which will make them truly miserable. Theirs is causeless, and therefore fruitless, it shall not come; but thine is just, and shall take effect; those whom thou curseth are cursed indeed. Let the curse be executed, v. 66. Persecute and destroy them in anger, as they persecute and destroy us in their anger. Destroy them from under the heavens of the Lord, let them have no benefit of the light and influence of the heavens. Destroy them in such a manner, that all who see it may say, It is a destruction from the Almighty, who sits in the heavens and laughs at them, (Ps. ii. 4.) and may own that the heavens do rule," Dan. iv. 26. What is said of the idols is here said of their worshippers, (who in this also shall be like unto them,) They shall perish from under these heavens, Jer. x. 11. They shall be not only excluded from the happiness of the invisible heavens, but cut off from the comfort even of these external advantages, which are the blessings of the Lord, (Ps. xxv. 16.) and which they therefore are unworthy to be taken under the protection of, who rebel against him.

CHAP. IV.

This chapter is another single alphabet of Lamentations for the destruction of Jerusalem, like those in the two first chapters. 1. The prophet here laments the injuries and indignities done to those to whom respect used to be showed, v. 1, 2. II. He laments the direful effects of the famine to which they were reduced by the siege, v. 3, 10. III. He laments the taking and sucking of Jerusalem, and its amazing desolations, v. 11, 12. IV. He acknowledges that the sins of their leaders were the cause of all these calamities, v. 13, 16. V. He gives us up all as doomed to utter ruin, for their enemies were every way too hard for them, v. 17, 20. VI. He foretells the destruction of the Edomites who triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, v. 21, 23. he foretells the return of the captivity of Zion at last, v. 22.

1. HOW is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. 2. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter? 3. Even the sea-monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones; the daughter of my people is become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness. 4. The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst; the young children ask bread, and no man breaketh it unto them. 5. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. 6. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her. 7. Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire: 8. Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets; their skin cleaveth to their bones it is withered, it is become like a stick. 9. They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field. 10. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own chil
children, they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. 11. The Lord hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof. 12. The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

The elegy in this chapter begins with a lamentation of the very sad and doleful change which the judgments of God had made in Jerusalem. The city that had been as gold, as the most fine gold, so rich and splendid, the perfection of beauty, and the joy of the whole earth, is become dunghill, and is changed, has lost its lustre, lost its value, is not what it was, it is become dress. Alas, what an alteration is here!

1. The temple is laid waste, which was the glory of Jerusalem and its protection; it is given up into the hands of the enemy. As some understand the gold spoken of, (v. 1.) to be the gold of the temple, the thing that is hid, the face of the fire, and were poured out, and thrown about in the top of every street, they lay mangled without distinction among the common ruins. When the God of the sanctuary was by sin provoked to withdraw, no wonder that the stones of the sanctuary were thus profaned.

2. The princes and priests who were in a special manner the sons of Zion, were trampled upon and abused, v. 2. Both the house of God and the house of David were in Zion; the sons of both those houses were upon this account precious, that they were heirs to the privileges of those two covenants of priesthood and royalty; they were comparable to fine gold; Israel was more rich in them than in treasures of gold and silver; but now they are esteemed as earthen pitchers; they are broken as earthen pitchers in a man's hand, and there is no favour. They are grown poor, and brought into captivity, and thereby are rendered mean and despised, and every one treads upon them, and insults over them. Note, The contempt put upon God's people ought to be matter of lamentation to us.

3. Little children were starved for want of bread and water, v. 3, 4. The mourning-mothers, having no meat for themselves, had no milk for the babies at their breast, so that though in disposition they were really compassionate, yet in fact they seemed to be cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness, that leave their eggs in the dust; (Job xxxix. 14, 15.) having no food for their children, they were forced to neglect them, and do what they could to forget them, because it was a pain to them to think of them when they had nothing for them; in this they were worse than the seals, or sea-monsters, or whales, (as some render it,) for they drew out the breast, and gave suck to their young, which the daughter of my people will not do. Children cannot shift for themselves as grown people can; and therefore it was the more painful to see the tongue of the sucking-child cleave to the roof of his mouth for thirst, because there was not a drop of water to moisten it; and to hear the young children, that could but just speak, ask bread of their parents, who had none to give them, no, nor any friend that could supply them. As doleful as our thoughts are of this case, so thankful should our thoughts be of the great plenty we enjoy, and the food convenient we have for ourselves and for our children, and for those of our own house.

4. Persons of good rank were reduced to extreme poverty, v. 5. They who were well-born and well-bred, and did not draw their subsistence from the earth, were reduced to a state of the greatest misery. They fed and clothing, who had fed delicately, had every thing that was curious and nice, (they call it eating well, whereas those only eat well, who eat to the glory of God,) and lived sumptuously every day; they had not only been advanced to the scarlet, but from their beginning were brought up in scarlet, and were never acquainted with anything mean or shabby. Note, The wisdom of those who have abundance, not only by their own means, but by the means of others, must not make them so used to their own luxury, as to think themselves too nicely for their hardships, when they come, will be doubly hard. Deut. xxviii. 56. 5. Persons who were eminent for dignity, may, perhaps, for sanctity, shared with others in the common calamity, v. 7, 8. Her Nazarites are extremely changed. Some understand it only of her honourable ones, the young gentlemen, who were very clean, and neat, and well-dressed, washed and perfumed; but I see not why we may not understand it of those devout people among them, who separated themselves to the Lord by the Nazarites' vow, Num. vi. 2. That there were such among them in the most degenerate times, appears, Amos ii. 11. I raised up of your young men for Nazarites. These Nazarites, though they were not to cut their hair; yet, by reason of their temperate diet, their frequent washings, and the care with which they had in devoting themselves to God, and conversing with him, which made their faces to shine as Moses', were fairer than snow, and whiter than milk; drinking no wine nor strong drink, they had a more healthful complexion and cheerful countenance than those who regulated themselves only with the blood of the grape. In Daniel and his fellows with juice and water. Others understand that God's great exertion and veneration which all good people had for them; though perhaps to the eye they had no form or comeliness, yet, being separated to the Lord, they were valued as if they had been more ruddy than rubies, and their polishing had been as sapphire. But now their victory is marred, (as is said of Christ, Matt. xvi. 14.) it is blacker than a coal, they lost miserably, partly to their own great grief and perplexity; they are not known in the streets, who respected them now take no notice of them, and they who had been intimately acquainted with them now scarcely knew them, their countenance was so altered by the miseries that attended the long siege. Their skin teareth to their bones, their flesh being quite consumed and wasted away; it is withered, it is become like a stick, a dry and hard as a piece of wood. Note, It is a thing to
be much lamented, that even those who are separated to God, are yet, when desolating judgments are abroad, and are then involved with others in the common calamity.

6. Jerusalem comes down slowly, and dies a lingering death, for the famine contributes more to her destruction than any other judgment whatsoever. Upon this account, the destruction of Jerusalem was greater than that of Sodom, (v. 6.) for that was overthrown in a moment; and before she could despatch it, she could not endure any long siege, as Jerusalem has done, she fell immediately into the hands of the Lord, who strikes home at a blow, and did not fall into the hands of man, who, being weak, is long in doing execution, Judg. viii. 21. Jerusalem is kept in many months upon the rack, in pain and misery, and dies by inches, dies so as to feel herself die. And when the iniquity of Jerusalem is more aggravated than that of Sodom, no wonder that the punishment of it is so. Sodom never had the means of grace that Jerusalem had, the oracles of God, and his prophets, and therefore the condemnation of Jerusalem will be more intolerable than that of Sodom, Matt. xix. 23, 24.

The extremity of the famine is here set forth by two passages of it: (1.) The tedious deaths that it was the cause of; (v. 9.) many were slain with hunger, their stores being spent, and the public stores so scantily spent, that they could not have any relief out of them; they were stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field; they who were starved were as sure to die as if they had been stricken and stricken through: only their case was much more miserable; they who are stricken with the sword, are soon rid out of their pain, in a moment they go down to the grave; (Job xxi. 13.) they have not the terror of seeing death make its advances toward them, and scarcely feel it when the blow is given; it is but one sharp struggle, and the work is done. And if we be ready for another world, we need not be afraid of a short passage to it, the quicker the better. But they who die by famine pine away, hunger press upon their spirits, and wastes them gradually, may it frets their spirits, and fills them with vexation, and is as great a torture to the mind as to the body. There are bands in their death, Ps. lxviii. 11. (2.) The barbarous murders that it was the occasion of; (v. 10.) The hands of the pitiful women have first slain, and then sodden, their own children. This was lamented before; (ch. ii. 20.) and it was a thing to be greatly lamented, that any should be so wicked as to do it, and that they should be brought to such extremities as to be tempted to it. But this horrid effect of long sieges had been threatened in general, (Lev. xxvi. 29. Deut. xxviii. 53.) and particularly against Jerusalem in the siege of the Chaldeans, Jer. xix. 9. Ezek. v. 10. The case was sad enough that they had not wherewithal to make mocking sport of them, (v. 4.) but much worse that they could find in their hearts to feed upon their children, and make meat of them. I know not whether to make it an instance of the power of necessity, or of the power of iniquity; but as the Gentile idolaters were justly given up to vile affections, (Rom. i. 26.) so these Jewish idolaters, and the women particularly, who had made sale to the queen of heaven, and to their children to do so too, were stript of natural affection, and that to their own children. Being thus left to dishonour their own nature, was a righteous judgment upon them for the dishonour they had done to God.

7. Jerusalem comes down utterly and wonderfully. (1.) The destruction of Jerusalem is a complete destruction; (v. 11.) The Lord has accomplished his fury, he has made thorough work of it, he has executed all that he purposed in wrath against Jerusalem, and has wrought no punishment of the sentence. He has poured out the full vials of his fierce anger, poured them out to the bottom, even the dregs of them. He has kindled a fire in Zion, which has not only consumed the houses, and levelled them with the ground, but, beyond what other fires do, has devoured the foundations thereof, as if they were the second built upon. (2.) It is an amazing destruction, v. 12. They have sent them to the kings of the earth, who are acquainted with, and inquisitive about, the state of their neighbours; nay, it was so to all the inhabitants of the world, who knew Jerusalem, or had ever heard or read of it; they could not have believed that the adversary and enemy should ever have entered into the gates of Jerusalem; for, [1.] They knew that Jerusalem was strongly fortified, not only by walls and bulwarks, but by the numbers and strength of its inhabitants; the strong hold of Zion was thought to be impregnable. [2.] They knew that it was the city of the great King, where the Lord of the whole earth had in a more peculiar manner his residence; it was the holy city, and therefore they thought that it was so much under the divine protection, that it would be in vain for any of its enemies to make an attack upon it. [3.] They knew that many an attempt made upon it had been baffled, witness that of Sennacherib. They were therefore amazed when they heard of the Chaldeans making themselves masters of it, and concluded that it was certainly by an immediate hand of God that Jerusalem was given up to them; it was by a commission from him that the enemy broke through, and entered the gates of Jerusalem.

13. For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her. They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments. They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there. The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders. As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us. They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

We have here, (1.) The sins they are charged with, for which God brought this destruction upon them, and which serve to justify God in it; (v. 13, 14.) It is for the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests.
not that the people were innocent, no, they loved to have it so, (Jer. v. 31.) and it was to please them that the prophets and priests did as they did; but the fault is chiefly laid upon them who should have taught them better, should have reproved and admonished them, and told them what would be in the end the lot of the hands of those watchers who did not give them warning, will their blood be required. Note, Nothing ripens a people more for ruin, nor fills the measure faster, than the sins of their priests and prophets. The particular sin charged upon them is, persecution; the false prophets and corrupt priests joined their power and interest to shed the blood of the just in the midst of her folk; and of God's children, they to whom he had adhered to them: they not only shed the blood of their innocent children, whom they sacrificed to Moloch, but the blood of the righteous men that were among them, whom they sacrificed to that more cruel idol of enmity to the truth and true religion. This was that sin which the Lord would not pardon, (2 Kings xxiv, 4.) and which brought the last destruction upon Jerusalem; (Jam. v. 6.) Ye have condemned and killed the just. And the priests and prophets were the ringleaders in persecution, as in Christ's time the chief priests and scribes were the men that incensed the people against him, who otherwise would have persisted in their heresies. Now these are they that were blander as blind men in the streets; (v. 14.) they should not touch their garments, they thought every thing that is good, but to do evil they were quick-sighted. God says of corrupt judges, They know not, neither do they understand, they walk in darkness; (Ps. lxxxix. 5.) and Christ says of the corrupt teachers, They are blind leaders of the blind, Matt. xxv. 14. They have so polluted themselves with innocent blood, the blood of the saints, that men could not touch their garments; they themselves odious to all about them, so that good men were as shy of touching them as of touching a dead body, which contracted a ceremonial pollution; or of touching the bloody clothes of one slain, which tender spirits care not to do. There is nothing that will make prophets and priests to be abhorred so much as a spirit of persecution. The people's neighbours produced in evidence against them, both to convict them of sin, and to show the equity of God's proceedings against them. Some that are grown very impudent in sin, boast that they care not what people say of them; but God, by the prophet, would have the Jews to take notice of what people said of them, and what was the opinion of the standers-by concerning them; (v. 15, 16.) what they said, may, we may, they said unto them, especially to the corrupt priests and prophets, among the heathen. (1.) They upbraided them with their pretended purity, while they lived in all manner of real iniquity. They cried to them, Depart ye, it is uncleane. You were so precise, you would not touch a Gentile, but cried, Depart, depart, stand by thyself, I am holier than thou, Isa. lx. 7. You could not touch their garments, they went into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled. But can you now keep the Gentiles from touching you, when God has delivered you into their hands? When you fly away and wander, you will bid them stand off, and not touch you, because they are uncleane; but in vain, these serpents will not be charmed or enchanted thus, or, they will not retreat to the shelter of the priests, how could the elders, the most venerable persons will to them be despised. (2.) They upbraided them with their sins, and the anger of God against them for their sins, and the direful effects of that anger. They cried to them, Depart ye, it is uncleane; they all cried out shame on them, and could easily foresee that God would not long suffer so provoking a people to continue in so good a land. They knew their statutes and judgments were righteous, and expected they should be a wise and understanding people, Deut. iv. 6. But when they saw them quite otherwise, they cried, Depart, depart; they seen read their doom, that the land should be cursed for them, but it had done their predecessors, and when they saw the dispersed of Jacob fleeing and wandering, they told them of it. They said, Now the anger of the Lord has divided them, has dispersed them into all countries, because they respected not the persons of the priests, the pious priests that were among them, such as Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, Jer. remiah, and others; that the Lord had not despised them and their authority, when they went about to check them for their vicious courses; the very heathen foresaw this would ruin them. (3.) They triumph in their ruin as irrecoverable. They said, when they saw them expelled out of their own land, Now they shall no more sojourn there, they have had it a final farewell, never more to return to it, for God will no more regard them; and how then can they help themselves? Herein they were mistaken, God had not cast them off, for all this; yet thus much is intimated, that all about them observed them to be so very provoking to their God, that there was no reason to expect any other, than that they should be quite abandoned. 3. The despair which they themselves were almost brought to are in vain; God has in mind what they said concerning them among the heathen, let us now hear what they say concerning themselves; (v. 17.) As for us, we look upon our case to be in a manner helpless. Our end is near, (v. 18.) the end both of our church and of our state; we are just at the brink of the ruin of both; nay, our end is come, we are utterly undone, a fatal, final period is at hand, and all our comforts, the days of our prosperity are fulfilled, they are numbered and finished. Thus their fears concurred with the hopes of their enemies, that the Lord would no more regard them. For, (1.) The refuges they fled to disappointed them. They looked for help from this and the other powerfull ally, but to no purpose, it proved vain help, the succours they expected did not come in, or at least they were so incomparable as expected, and they waited for, and their eyes failed with looking to that which never came; (v. 17.) they watched in watching, they watched long, and with a great deal of earnestness and impatience, for a nation that promised them assistance, but failed them, and frustrated their expectations, they could not save them, they were too weak to contend with the Chaldean army, and therefore were retired. Help from creatures is vain help, (Ps. lx. 11.) and we may look for it till our eyes fail, till our hearts fail, and come short of it at last. (2.) The persecutors they fled from overtook them, and overcame them; (v. 18.) They hunt our steps, that we cannot go into our streets. When the Chaldeans besieged the city, they raised their batteries so high above the walls, that they could command all things, and put their hands at people as they went along the streets; they hunted them, and with their arrows from place to place. When the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, their persecutors were swifter than the eagles of heaven when they fly upon their prey, (v. 19.) there was an escaping them; they pursued them upon the mountains, and when they thought they had got clear of them, they knew not how the hands of the three that laid wait for them in the wilderness, to cut off their retreat, and to pick up stragglers; may, the king himself, though he may be supposed to have all the advantages the exigence of the case would admit to favour his flight, yet he cannot escape, for divine vengeance pursues him with them, and then, (v.
20. The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits. Some apply it to Josiah, who was killed in battle by the king of Egypt; but it is rather to be understood of Zedekiah, who was the last king of the house of David, and who was pursued by the Chaldeans, and slain in the 5th year of Jehoahaz, Jer. xxxix. 5. He was the anointed of the Lord, heir of that family which God had appointed to the government; he was very much confided in by the Jewish state; they said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen; they promised themselves that the remnant which were left after Jeconiah's captivity, should, under the protection of his government, yet remain in a state of relative safety.

They thought, though they were so reduced that they could not think of reigning over the heathen, as they had done, yet they might make a shift to live among them, and not be insulted and pulled to pieces by them. Thus apt are sinking interests not only to catch at every twig, but to think it will recover them. Jerusalem died of a consumption, a flattering distemper; even when she was ready to expire she formed some hopeful symptoms to herself, and on them grounded a hope that she should recover; but what came of it? The shadow, under which they thought they should live, proved like that of Jonah's gourd, which withered in a night. He that was the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, as if he had been but a beast of prey; so little account did they make of a person deemed sacred and not to be violated. Note, When we make any creature the breath of our nostrils, and promise ourselves that we shall live by it, it is just with God to stop that breath, and deprive us of the life we expected by it, for God will have the honour of being himself alone our Life, and the Length of our days.

21. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz: the cup also shall pass through unto thee; thou shalt be drunken, and shall make thyself naked. 22. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; he will no more carry thee away into captivity: he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom; he will discover thy sins.

David's psalms of lamentation commonly conclude with some word of comfort, which is as life from the dead, and light shining out of darkness; so does this lamentation here in this chapter. The people of God are now in great distress, their aspects all dolorous, their prospects all frightful, and their ill-disposed neighbours the Edomites insult over them, and do all they can to exasperate their destroyers against them; such was their violence against their brother Jacob, (Obad. 10.) such their spleen at Jerusalem, of which they cried, Raze it, raze it, Ps. cxlvii. 7. Now it is here foretold, for the encouragement of God's people, 1. That an end shall be put to Zion's troubles; (v. 23.) 2. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion; not the fulness of that punishment which it deserves, but of that which God has designed and determined to inflict, and which was necessary to answer the end, the glorifying of God's justice, and the taking away of their sin. The captivity, which is the punishment of thine iniquity, is accomplished, (Isa. xl. 2.) and he will no longer carry thee captive; so it may be rendered, as well, he will no more carry thee into captivity; he will turn again thy captivity; and work a glorious release for thee. Note, The troubles of God's people shall be continued no longer than till they have done their work for which they were sent.
deliver us out of their hand. 9. We gat our bread with the peril of our lives, because of the sword of the wilderness. 10. Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine. 11. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maidis in the cities of Judah. 12. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured. 13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. 14. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music. 15. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. 16. The crown is fallen from our head: we are made as it were sacrifices to the heathen; we are delivered into their hand, to the spoil of our youth. 17. O Lord! Thou art just in all that is brought upon us, for we are a seed of evildoers, children of wrath, and heirs of the curse: we are sinful, and we have it by kind. Note, The sins which God looks back upon in punishing we must look back upon in repenting, and must take notice of all that will help to justify God in correcting us. They refer their reproaches to the sinfulness of God's people, and compare themselves with them. They say, "Lord, our fathers have sinned, and we justly smart for their sins: but they are not, they were taken away from the evil to come, they lived not to see and share in these miseries that are come upon us, and we are left to bear their iniquities; now, though herein God is righteous, yet it must be owned that our case is pitiful, and worthy of compassion." Note, If we be prevented from suffering what we deserve, the sins of our fathers, we may expect that he who punishes will pity, and will soon return in mercy to us. 11. They represent the reproach of trouble which they bear, in divers particulars, which tend much to their disgrace. 1. They are diseseied of that good land which God gave them, and their enemies have got possession of it, (v. 2.) Canaan was their inheritance, it was theirs by promise, God gave it to them and their seed, and they held it by grant from his crown; (Ps. cxxxvi. 21, 22.) but now, "It is turned to strangers, they possess it, who have no right to it, who are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and aliens to the covenants of promise, they dwell in the house that we built, and are our observers." In the hand of the Lord's enemies was the spiritual inheritance of God's people, but the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that they cannot be dispossessed of, that shall never be turned to strangers. 2. Their state and nation are brought into a condition like that of widows and orphans; (v. 3.) "We are fatherless, helpless, we have none to protect us, to provide for us, to take any care of us, whether we are the father of the country, is cut off; nay, God our Father seems to have forsaken us and cast us off; our mothers, our cities, that were as fruitful mothers in Israel, are now as widows, are as wives whose husbands are dead, destitute of comfort, and exposed to wrong and injury, and this is our reproach; for we who made a figure, are now locked on with contempt." The common rejection and contempt of them put hard to it to provide necessaries for themselves and their families, whereas once they lived in abundance, and had plenty of every thing. Water used to be free and easily come by, but now, (v. 4.) We have drunk our water for money, and the saying is no longer true, Uxus commans aquarum—Water is free to all. So hardly did their oppressors use them, that they could not have a draught of fair water but they must purchase it either with money or with work! Formerly they had had too for the fetching; but now, "Our wood is sold to us, and we pay dear for every faggot." Now were they punished for employing their children to gather wood for fire, with which to bake cakes for the queen of heaven, Jer. vii. 18. They were condemned to labour for another; forbidden the use both of fire and water, according to the ancient form, Interdice tibi aqua et igni—I forbid thee the use of water and fire. But what must they do for bread? Truly that was as hard to come by as any thing, for, (1.) Some of them sold their liberty for it; (v. 5.) We have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, have made the utmost for we could, we would have given them, that we might be satisfied with bread. We were glad to submit to the meanest employment, upon the hardest terms, to get a sorry livelihood; we have yielded ourselves to be their vassals, have parted with all to them, as the Egyptians did to Pharaoh in the years of famine, that we might have something
LAMENTATIONS, v.

6. All sorts of people, even they whose persons and characters were most inviolable, were abused and dishonoured. (1.) The women were ravished, even the women in Zion, that holy mountain, v. 11. The committing of such abominable wickedness is very prejudicial to all society, and most deplorable. (2.) The great magnificence were not only put to open shame, but also to ignominious deaths; Princes were hanged., if they were not themselves hanged, when they were slain with the sword, were hung up, as the bodies of Saul's sons, in disgrace to them, and as it were to extol the misery of their captivity, and show it to the world. They were shorn of their beauty, showed to magistrates, and those in authority; The faces of elders; elders in age, elders in office, were not honoured; this will be particularly remembered against the Chaldeans another day; (Isa. xlvi. 6.) Upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. (4.) The tenderness of youth was no more considered than the gravity of old age; (v. 13.) They took the young men to grind at the hand-mills, may; perhaps, to grind the flour: and old men have carried the grist; so some; have carried the mill, or mill-stones, so others. They loaded them as if they had been beasts of burden, and so broke their backs when they were young, and made the rest of their lives the more miserable. Nay, they made the little children carry their wood home for fuel, and laid such burdens upon them, that they fell down under them. So very inhuman were these cruel taskmasters.

7. An end was put to all their gladness, and their joy was quite extinguished; (v. 14.) The young men, who used to be disposed to mirth, have ceased from their mirth, have hung their harps upon the willow-trees. It does indeed well become old men to cease from their music, it is time to lay it by with a gracious contempt, when all the daughters of music are brought low; but it speaks some great calamity upon a people, when their young men are made to cease from it. It was so with the body of the people; (v. 15.) The joy of their heart was ceased, they never knew what joy was since the enemy came in upon them like a flood, for ever since deep called unto deep, and one wave flowed in upon the neck of another, so that they were quite overspread; and this we have seen in our days; and this is the case of many in our days, and the time is come, it is the case of the whole church, the time is come when the Lord's vine was trodden under the feet of his enemies, and the Gospel, which once lay in all the world, was brought to nothing, and the time is come when we must be taken away from the earth, and the like things are happening in our times. But this was to be the doom of Judah; A servant of servants shall be he. They would not be ruled by their God, and by his servants the prophets, whose rule was gentle and gracious, and therefore justly are they ruled with rigour by their enemies and their servants. (3.) That they saw no probable way for the redress of their grievances; There is none that doth deliver us out of our captivity, but none to rescue us out of our captivity, but none to check and restrain the insolence of the servants that abuse us, and trample upon us; which one would think their masters should have done, because it was an usurpation of their authority; but, it should seem, they connived at it, and encouraged it, and as if they were not worthy of the correction of gentlemen, they are turned out of the factions to be spurned by them. Well might they pray, Lord, consider, and behold our reproach.

5. They who used to be feasted, are now famished; (v. 10.) Our skin was black like an oven, dried and parched too, because of the terrible famine, the storms of famine; (so the word is;) for though famine comes gradually upon a people, yet it comes very fast, and before all before it, and there is no resisting of it; and this very fasting, and hence we read of the reproach of famine, which in captivity they received among the heathen, Ezek. xxxvi. 30.

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is righteous, for we have sinned." Note, All our ways are owing to our own sin and folly. If the crown of our head be fallen, (for so the words run,) if we lose our excellency, and become mean, we may thank ourselves, we have by our own iniquity profaned our crown, and laid our honour in the dust. 17. For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim, 18. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it. 19. Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation. 20. Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time? 21. Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old. 22. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

Here, 1. The people of God express the deep concern they had for the ruins of the temple, more than for any other of their calamities; the interests of God's house lay nearer their hearts than those of their own; (v. 17. 18.) For this our heart is faint, and sinks under the load of its own heaviness; for these things our eyes are dim, and our sight is gone, as is usual in a dejection, or fainting fit; "It is because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the holiest mountain, and the temple built upon that mountain. For other desolations our hearts grieve, and our eyes weep; but for this our hearts faint, and our eyes are dim." Note, Nothing lies so heavy upon the spirits of good people as that which threatens the ruin of religion, or weakens its interests; and it is a comfort if we can appeal to God, that that afflicts us more than any temporal affliction. 2. They comfort themselves with the doctrine of God's eternity, and his perpetual government; (v. 19.) But thou, O Lord, remainest for ever. This they are taught to do by that Psalm which is entitled, A Prayer of the afflicted, Ps. cii. 27, 28. When all our creature-contents are removed from us, and our hearts fail us, we may then encourage ourselves with the belief, (1.) Of God's eternity; Thou remainest for ever. What shakes the world gives no disturbance to him; and all the revolutions there are on earth, there is no change in the Eternal Mind; God is still the same, and remains for ever infinitely wise and holy, just and good; with him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. (2.) Of the never-falling continuation of his dominion; Thy throne is from generation to generation; the throne of glory, the throne of grace, and the throne of government, are all unchanged and unchangeable; and this is matter of comfort to us when the crown is fallen from our head. When the thrones of princes, that should be our protectors, are brought to the dust, and buried in it, God's throne continues still; he still rules the world, and rules it for the good of his church. The Lord reigns, reigns for ever, even thy God, O Lord; and this is a matter of comfort to us when the crown is fallen from our head.

3. They humbly expostulate with God concerning the low condition they were now in, and the frowns of heaven they were now under; (v. 20.) "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, as if we were quite cast out of mind? Wherefore dost thou forsake us so long time, as if we were quite deprived of the tokens of thy presence? Wherefore dost thou defer our deliverance, as if thou hadst utterly abandoned us? Thou art the same, and, though the throne of thy sanctuary is demolished, thy throne in heaven is unshaken. But witt thou not be the same to us?" Not as if they thought God had forgotten and forsaken them, much less feared his formidable forsaking them for ever; but thus they express the value they had for his favour and presence, which they thought it long that they were deprived of the evidence and comfort of. The last verse may be read as such an expostulation, and so the margin reads it; "For wilt thou utterly reject us? Will thou be perpetually wrath with us; not only not smile upon us, and remember us in mercy, but not think upon us, and bring us any token of thy presence; not only not draw nigh to us, but cast us out of thy presence, and forbid us to draw nigh unto thee? How will this be reconciled with thy goodness and faithfulness, and the stability of thy covenant?" We read it, "But thou hast rejected us; thou hast given us cause to fear that thou hast, Lord, for how long shall we be in this temptation?" Note, Though we may not quarrel with God, yet we may plead with him; and though we may not conclude that he has cast us off, yet we may (with the prophet, Jer. xii. 1.) humbly reason with him concerning his judgments, especially the continuance of the desolations of his sanctuary.

4. They earnestly pray to God for mercy and grace; "Lord, do not reject us for ever, but turn us again to thee. O Lord, do not turn us away for ever, but turn us again to thee." If these words are not put last, yet the Rabbins, because they would not have the book to conclude with these melancholy words, (v. 22.) repeat this prayer again, that the sun may not set under a cloud, and so make these the last words, both in writing and reading this chapter. They here pray, (1.) For converting grace, to prepare and qualify them for mercy; and (2.) For mercy itself. They complained that God had forsaken and forgotten them, and then their prayer is not, Turn thou to us, but, Turn us to thee; which implies an acknowledgment that the cause of the distance was in themselves. God never leaves any till they first leave him, nor stands afar off any longer than while they stand afar from him; if therefore he turn away from them, it is because they have not come to him. If we have not thus been quick to return to him in a way of mercy. This agrees with that repeated prayer, (Ps. lxxx. 3, 17.) Turn us again, and then cause thy face to shine. Turn us from our idols to thyself, by a sincere repentance and reformation, and then we shall be turned. This implies a further acknowledgment of their own weakness and inability to turn themselves. There is in our nature a bent to backslide from God, but no disposition to return to him till his grace works in us both to will and to do. So necessary is that grace, that we may truly say, Turn us, or we shall not be turned, but shall wander endlessly; and so powerful and effectual is that grace, that we may as truly say, Turn us, and we shall be turned; for it is a day of power, almighty power, in which God's people are made a nation, Ps. cx. 3. (2.) For restoring mercy; Turn us to thee, and then renew our days as of old, put us into the same happy state that our ancestors were in long ago, and that they continued long in; let it be with us as it was at the first, and at the beginning, Isa. l. 26. Note, If God by his grace renew our hearts, he will be the same that made them; so he shall renew our youth as the eagle, Ps. cxvii. 5. They that repent, and do their first works, shall rejoice, and recover their first comforts. God's mercies to his people have been ever of old; (Ps. xxv. 6.) and therefore they may hope, even then when he seems to have forsaken and forgotten them, that the mercy which was from everlasting will be to everlasting.
AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

When we entered upon the writings of the Prophets, which speak of the things that should be hereafter, we seemed to have the same call that St. John had, (Rev. iv. 1.) Come up hither; but when we enter upon the prophecy of this book, it is as if the voice said, Come up higher, as we go forward in time; for Ezekiel prophesied in the captivity, as Jeremiah prophesied just before it; so we soar upward in discoveries yet more sublime of the divine glory. These waters of the sanctuary still grow deeper; so far are they from being fordable, that in some places they are scarcely fathomable; yet, deep as they are, out of them flow streams which make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. As to this prophecy now before us, we may inquire,

I. Concerning the penman of it—it was Ezekiel; his name signifies, The strength of God; or one girt or strengthened of God. He girded up the loins of his mind to the service, and God put strength into him. Whom God calls to any service he will himself enable for it; if he gives commission, he will give power to execute it. Ezekiel's name was answered when God said, (and no doubt did as he said,) I have made thy face strong against their faces. The learned Selden, in his book De Dis Syris, says, that it was the opinion of some of the ancients, that the prophet Ezekiel was the same with that Nazerus Assyrian, whom Pythagoras (as himself relates) had for his tutor for some time, and whose lectures he attended; and it is agreed that they lived much about the same time. We have reason to think that many of the Greek philosophers were acquainted with the sacred writings, and borrowed some of the best of their notions from them. If we may credit the tradition of the Jews, he was put to death by the captives in Babylon, for his faithfulness and boldness in reproving them; it is stated that they dragged him upon the stones till his brains were dashed out. An Arabic historian says that he was put to death, and was buried in the sepulchre of Shem the son of Noah. So Hottinger relates, Thesaur. Philol. lib. ii. cap. 1.

II. Concerning the date of it—the place whence it is dated, and the time when. The scene is laid in Babylon, when it was a house of bondage to the Israel of God; there the prophecies of this book were preached, there they were written, when the prophet himself, and the people to whom he prophesied, were captives there. Ezekiel and Daniel are the only writing prophets of the Old Testament who lived and prophesied anywhere but in the land of Israel, except we add Jonah, who was sent to Nineveh to prophesy. Ezekiel prophesied in the beginning of the captivity, Daniel in the latter end of it; it was an indication of God's good will to them, and his gracious designs concerning them in their affliction, that he raised up prophets among them, both to convince them, when, in the beginning of their troubles, they were secure and unhumbled, which was Ezekiel's business, and to comfort them, when, in the latter end of their troubles, they were dejected and discouraged. If the Lord had been pleased to kill them, he would not have used such apt and proper means to cure them.

III. Concerning the matter and scope of it: 1. There is much in it that is very mysterious, dark, and hard to be understood; especially in the beginning and the latter end of it; which therefore the Jewish rabbins forbade the reading of to their young men, till they came to be thirty years of age, lest by the difficulties they met with there they should be prejudiced against the scriptures; but if we read these difficult parts of scripture with humility and reverence, and search them diligently, though we may not be able to unite all the knots we meet with, no more than we can solve all the phenomena in the book of nature, yet we may form, as from the book of nature, gather a great deal for the confirming of our faith, and the encouraging of our hope, in the God we worship. 2. Though the visions here be intricate, such as an elephant may swim in, yet the sermons are mostly plain, such as a lamb may wade in; and the chief design of them is to show God's people their transgressions, that in their captivity they might be repenting, and not repining. It should seem, he was constantly attended, for we read of their sitting before him as God's people sat to hear his words; (ch. xxxiii. 31.) and that he was occasionally consulted, for we read of the elders of Israel who came to inquire of the Lord by him, (ch. xiv. 1, 3.) And as it was of great use to the oppressed captives themselves to have a prophet with them, so it was a testimony to their holy religion against their oppressors, who ridiculed it and them. 3. Though the reproves and the threatening here be very sharp and bold, yet toward the close of the book very comfortable assurances are given of great mercy God had in store for them; and there, at length, we shall meet with something that has reference to gospel-times, and which was to have its accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah, of whom indeed this prophet speaks less than almost any of the prophets. But by opening the terrors of the Lord he prepares Christ's way; by the law is the knowledge of sin, and so it becomes our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The visions, which were
the prophet's credentials, we have, ch. i.—iii. the reproaches and threatenings, ch. iv. —xxiv. and between the comforts we have in the latter part of the book we have messages sent to the nations that bordered upon the land of Israel, whose destruction is foretold, (ch. xxxv. —xxxv.) to make way for the restoration of God's Israel, and the re-establishment of their city and temple, which are foretold, ch. xxxvi. to the end. Those who would apply the comforts to themselves, must apply the convictions to themselves.

The Book of the Prophet EZEKIEL.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, we have, 1. The common circumstances of the prophecy: new to be delivered, the time when it was delivered, (v. 1.) the place where, (v. 2.) and the person by whom, v. 3. 2. The uncommon introduction to it by a vision of the glory of God; 1. In his attendance and retinae in the upper world, where his throne is surrounded with angels, here called living creatures, v. 4.—14. 2. In his providences concerning the lower world, represented by the wheels and their motions, v. 15. —26. 3. In the face of Jesus Christ sitting upon the throne, v. 26. —28. And the more we are acquainted, and the more intimately we converse, with the glory of God in these three branches of it, the more commanding influence will divine revelation have upon us, and the more ready shall we be to submit to it, what the thing be. The whole of this in a résumé of this book with these visions. When such a God of glory speaks, it concerns us to hear with attention and reverence; it is at our peril if we do not.

1. Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. 2. In the fifth day of the month, (which was the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity,) 3. The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.

The circumstances of the vision which Ezekiel saw, and in which he received his commission and instructions, are here very briefly related. But, as it is not done, that the narrative may appear to be authentic, and not romantic. It may be of use to keep an account when and where God has been pleased to manifest himself to our souls in a peculiar manner, that the return of the day, and our return to the place of the altar, (Gen. xiii. 4.) may revive the pleasing, grateful remembrance of God's favour to us. "Remember, O my soul, and never forget what communications of divine love thou didst receive at such a time, at such a place; tell others what God did for thee."

1. The time when Ezekiel had this vision, is here recorded. It was in the thirtieth year, v. 1. Some make it the thirtieth year of the prophet's age; being a priest, he was about that age; or the full execution of the priestly office, but being debarred from that by the iniquity and calamity of the times, now that they had neither temple nor altar, God at that age called him to the dignity of a prophet. Others make it to be the thirtieth year from the beginning of the reign of Nabophasser, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, from which the Chaldeans began a computation of time, as is also done from Nabonassar one hundred and twenty-three years before. Nabophasser reigned nineteen years, and this was the eleventh of his son, which makes the thirty. And it was proper enough for Ezekiel, when he was in Babylon, to use the computation they there used; as we in foreign countries date by the new style; and he afterwards uses the melancholy computation of his own country, observing, (v. 2.) that it was the fifth year of Jehoiachin's captivity. But the Chaldean Paraphrase fixes upon another era, and says that this was the thirtieth year after Nebuchadnezzar found the book of the law in the house of the sanctuary, at midnight after the setting of the moon, in the days of Josiah the king. And it is true, that this was just thirty years from that time; and that was an event so remarkable, (as it put the Jewish state upon a new trial,) that it was proper enough to date from it; and perhaps therefore the prophet speaks indefinitely of thirty years, as having an eye both to that event, and to the Chaldean computation, which were coincident.

It was in the fourth month, answering to our June, and in the fifth day of the month, that Ezekiel had this vision, v. 2. It is probable that it was on the sabbath day, because we read (ch. iii. 16.) that at the end of seven days, which we may well suppose to be the next sabbath, the word of the Lord came to him again. Thus John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when he saw the visions of the Almighty, Rev. i. 10. God would hereby put an honour upon his sabbaths, then when the enemies mocked at them, Lam. i. 7. And he would here thus encourage his people to keep up their attendance on the ministry of his prophets every sabbath-day, by these extraordinary manifestations of himself on some sabbath-days.

II. The melancholy circumstances he was in when God honoured him, and thereby favoured his people, with this vision. He was in the land of the Chaldeans, among the captives, by the river Chebar, and it was in the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity. Observe,

1. The place of this vision it is now, some of them, captives in the land of the Chaldeins. The body of the Jewish nation yet remained in their own land, but these were the first-fruits of the captivity, and they were some of the best: for in Jeremiah's vision these were the good figs, whom God had sent into the land of the Chaldeans for their good; (Jer. xxiv. 5.) and that it might be for their good, God miss'd a prophet among them, to teach them out of the law, then when he chastened them, Ps. xcv. 12. Note, It is a great mercy to have the word of God brought us, and a great duty to attend to it diligently when we are in affliction. The word of instruction and the rod of correction may be of great service to us, in concert and concurrence with each other: the word to explain the rod, and the rod to enforce the word; both together give wisdom. It is happy for a man, when he is sick and in pain, to have a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, if he have but his ear open to discourse, Job. xxxiii. 23. One of the quarrels God had with the Jews, when he sent them into captivity, was for mistaking his messenger and misusing his prophets; and yet when they were suffering for this sin, he favoured them with this for his mercy. It were ill with us if God did not sometimes graciously thrust upon us those means of grace and salvation which we have foolishly thrust from us. In their captivity they wanted ordinary helps for their souls, and therefore God raised them up these extraordinary ones; for God's children, if they be
hindered in their education one way, shall have it made up another way. But observe, It was in the fifth year of the captivity, that Ezekiel was raised up among them, and not before. So long God left them without any prophet, till they began to lament after the Lord, and to complain that they saw not their signs, and there was none to tell them how long; (Ps. lxxiv. 9.) and then they would know how to value a prophet, and God's discoveries of himself to them by him would be the more acceptable and comfortable. The Jews were pleased that he said there was a land and had Jeremiah with them, those that were gone into captivity had Ezekiel with them; for wherever the children of God are scattered abroad he will find out tutors for them. 1. The prophet was himself among the captives, those of them that were posted by the river Chebar; for it was by the rivers of Babylon that they sat down and wept over their captivity. Note, Among the captives by that river Ezekiel was, and himself a captive. 2. He heard the voice of God; (v. 1.) The word of the Lord came expressly to him, and what he saw was designed to prepare him for what he was to hear. The expression is emphatical, Esendo fuit verbum Dei—The word of the Lord was really as it was to him; there was no mistake in it; it came to him in the fulness of its light and power, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; it came close to him, may, it came into him, took possession of him, and dwelt in him richly: it came expressly, or accurately, to him; he did himself clearly understand what he said, and was abundantly satisfied of the truth of it. The essential Word, (so we may take it,) the Word who is, who what he is, came to Ezekiel, to send him on his errand. 3. He felt the power of God opening his eyes to see the visions, opening his ear to hear the voice, and opening his heart to receive both; The hand of the Lord was there upon him. Note, The hand of the Lord goes along with the word of the Lord, and so it becomes effectual; these only understand and believe the report, to whom the arm of the Lord is revealed. The hand of God was upon him, as upon Moses to cover him, that he should not be overcome by the dazzling light and lustre of the visions he saw, Exod. xxxiii. 22. It was upon him, (as upon St. John, Rev. i. 17.) to revive and support him, that he might bear up, and not faint, under these discoveries. That he might neither be lifted up nor cast down with the abundance of the revelations, God's grace is sufficient for him, and, in token of that, his hand is upon him. 4. And I looked, and behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof, as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. 5. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. 6. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. 7. And their feet were straight feet, and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass. 8. And they had the hands of a man under their wings, on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. 9. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not
where they went; they went every one straight forward. 10. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. 11. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. 12. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. 13. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. 14. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. 

The visions of God which Ezekiel here saw, were very glorious, and had more particulars than those which other prophets saw. It is the scope and intention of these visions, to show the prophet's mind with very great and high and honourable thoughts of that God by whom he was commissioned, and for whom he was employed. It is the likeness of the glory of the Lord that he sees, (v. 28.) and from hence he may infer that it is his honour to serve him, for he is one among angels serve: he may serve him with safety, for he has power sufficient to bear him out in his work; it is at his peril to draw back from his service, for he has power to pursue him, as he did Jona; so great a God as this must be served with reverence and godly fear; and with assurance may Ezekiel foretell what this God will do, for he is able to make his words good.

2. To strike a terror upon the sinners who remained in Zion, and those who were already come to Babylon, who were secure, and bid defiance to the threatenings of Jerusalem's ruin, as we have found in Jeremiah's prophecy, and shall find in this, many did; “Let those who said, We shall have peace, though we go on, know that our God is a consuming Fire, whom they cannot stand before.”

That this vision had a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, seems plain from ch. xlvii. 3. where he says that it was the vision which he saw when he came to destroy the city, to prophesy the destruction of it.

3. To speak comfort to those that feared God, and trembled at his word, and humbled themselves under his mighty hand: “Let them know that though they are captives in Babylon, yet they have God nigh unto them; though they have not the glory of the sanctuary to be the bliss he saw when he came to destroy the city, to prophesy the destruction of it.” Dr. Lightfoot observes, “Now that the church is to be planted for a long time in another country, the Lord shows a glory in the midst of them, as he had done at their first constituting into a church in the wilderness, and out of a cloud and fire, as he had done there, he showed himself, and from between living creatures, as from between the cherubims, he gives his oracles.” This put an honour upon them, by which they might value themselves when the Chaldeans insulted over them; and this might encourage their hopes of deliverance in due time.

Now, to answer these ends, we have in these verses the first part of the vision, which represents God as attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, who are all his messengers, his ministers, doing his commandments, and hearkening to the voice of his word; this denotes his grandeur; as it magnifies an earthly prince to have a splendid retinue, and numerous armies at his command: thus they are led to trust in him, and his enemies to fear him.

I. The introduction to this vision of the angels is very magnificent and awakening, v. 4. The prophet, observing the heavens to open, looked, looked up, (as it was time,) to see what discoveries God would make to him. Note, When the heavens are opened, it concerns us to have our eyes open. To clear the way, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, which would drive away the intermists of this lower region; fair weather comes out of the north, and then the wind comes that drives away rain. God can by a whirlwind clear the sky and air, and produce that serenity of mind which is necessary to our communion with Heaven. Yet this whirlwind was attended with a great cloud; when we think that the clouds which arise from this earth are dark and sordid, and we can see beyond them, yet still there is a cloud which heavenly things are wrapped in, a cloud from above, so that we cannot order our speech concerning them by reason of darkness. Christ here descended, as he ascended, in a cloud. Some by this whirlwind and cloud understand the Chaldean army coming out of the north against the land of Judah, bearing down all before them; but this is a type of the greater strength, that which was signified by one of the first of Jeremiah's visions, (Jer. i. 14.) Out of the north an evil shall break forth; but I take it here as an introduction rather to the vision than to the sermons. This whirlwind came to Ezekiel, as that to Elijah, (1 Kings xix. 11.) to prepare the way of the Lord, and to demand attention, He that has eyes, that has ears, let him see, let him hear.

II. The vision itself. A great cloud was the vehicle of this vision, in which it was conveyed to the prophet; for God's pavilion in which he rests, is darkness and thick clouds; (Ps. xviii. 11.—iv. 3.) thus he holds back the face of his throne, lest its dazzling light and lustre should overpower us, by spreading a cloud upon us.

1. The cloud is accompanied with a fire, as upon mount Sinai, where God resided in a thick cloud; but the sight of his glory was like devouring fire, (Exod. xxiv. 16, 17.) and his first appearance to Moses was in a flame of fire in the bush; for our God is a consuming Fire. This was a fire infolding itself, of his own self, being his own Consi, his own Rule, and his own End, if he be as a fire, he is as a fire infolding itself, or as some read it, kindled by itself. The fire of God's glory shines forth, but it quickly infolds itself, for he lets us know but part of his ways; the fire of God's wrath breaks forth, but it also quickly infolds itself, for the divine patience suffers not all his wrath to be stirred up. Wherefore is a fire thus infolding itself, O Lord, who shall stand?

2. The fire is surrounded with a glory; A brightness was about it, in which it infolded itself, yet it made some discovery of itself. Though we cannot see into the fire, cannot by searching find out God to perfection, yet we see the brightness that is round about it, the reflection of this fire from the thick cloud. Moses might see God's back parts, but not his face; we have some light concerning the nature of God, from the brightness which encompasses it, though we have not an insight into it, by reason of the cloud spread upon it. Nothing is more easy
EZEKIEL, I

390

than to determine that God is; nothing more difficult than to describe what he is. When God displays his wrath as fire, yet there is a brightness about it; for his holiness and justice appear very illustrious in the punishment of sin and sinners: even about himself he exhibits a brightness of his unsearchable light, which glorified saints will forever admire.

3. Out of this fire there shines the colour of amber; we are not told who or what it was that had this colour of amber, and therefore I take it to be the whole frame of the following vision, which came into Ezekiel's view out of the midst of the fire and brightness; and the first thing he took notice of before he viewed the pillar, but for the brightness of the colour of amber, or the eye of amber, it looked as amber does to the eye, of a bright flaming fiery colour, the colour of a burning coal; so some think it should be read. The living creatures which he saw coming out of the midst of the fire, were seraphims—burners, for he maketh his angels spirits, his ministers a flaming fire.

That which comes out of the fire, of a fiery amber colour, when it comes to be distinctly viewed, is the likeness of four living creatures: not the living creatures themselves, (angels are spirits, and cannot be seen,) but the likeness of them, such as a hieroglyphic, or representation, as God saw fit to make use of for the leading of the prophet, and us with him, into some acquaintance with the world of angels, (a matter purely of divine revelation,) so far as we are requisite to possess us with an awful sense of the greatness of that God who has angels for his attendants, and the goodness of that God who has appointed them to be attendants on his people; The likeness of these living creatures came out of the midst of the fire; for angels derive their being and power from God, they are in themselves, and to us, what he is pleased to make them, their glory is a ray of his. The prophet himself explains this vision. (ch. x. 20.) I know that the living creatures were the cherubims, which is one of the names by which the angels are known in scripture. To Daniel was made known their numbers, ten thousand times ten thousand, Dan. vii. 10. But though they are many, yet they are one, and that is made known to Ezekiel here; they are one in nature and operation, as sons of a living God, and set in a holy of holies to be a body of men. We have here an account of,

(1.) Their nature; they are living creatures, they are the creatures of God, the work of his hands, their being is derived, they have not life in and of themselves, but receive it from him who is the Fountain of life. As much as the living creatures of this lower world exceed the vegetable that are the ornaments of the earth, so much do the angels, the living creatures of the upper world, exceed the sun, moon, and stars, the ornaments of the heavens. The sun, say some, is a flame of fire inflowing itself, but it is not a living creature, as angels, those flames of fire, are. Angels are living creatures, living beings, emphatically so; men on earth are dying creatures, dying daily, (in the midst of life we are in danger,) to which end their likeness is given them, that they live indeed, live to good purpose, and when saints come to be equal unto the angels, they shall not die any more, Luke xx. 36.

(2.) Their number; they are four, so they appear here, though they are innumerable; not as if these were four particular angels set up above the rest, as some have fondly imagined, Michael and Gabriel, and Uriel and Raphael; for it is certain, by what they say in Ps. lxxxiv. 5., that there are four faces they put on, and to intimate their being sent forth toward the four winds of heaven; (Matth. xxvii. 31.) Zechariah saw them as four chariots going forth, east, west, north, and south, Zech. vi. 1. God has messengers to send each way; for his Kingdom is universal, and reaches to all parts of the world.

3. Their qualifications, by which they are fitted for the service of their Maker and Master. These are set forth figuratively and by similitude, as is proper in visions, which are parables to the eye. Their description here is such, and so expressed, that I think, the prophet does not want an exact idea of them in our fancies, or with the pencil, for that would be a temptation to worship them; but the several instances of their fitness for the work they are employed in, are intended in the several parts of this description. Note, It is the greatest honour of God's creatures to be in a capacity of answering the end of their creation; and the more ready we are to every good work, the nearer we approach to the dignity of angels.

These living creatures are described here,

[1.] By their general appearance; They had the likeness of a man, they appeared, for the main, in a human shape. First, To signify that these living creatures are reasonable creatures, intelligent beings, who have that spirit of a man, which is the essence of the Lord. Secondly, To put an honour upon the nature of men, which, though they are but a little lower than the angels, in the very next rank of beings below them; when the invisible intelligences of the upper world would make themselves visible, it is in the likeness of man. Thirdly, To intimate that their delights are with the sons of men, as their Master's are, (Prov. viii. 31.) that they do service to men, and may have spiritual communion with them by faith, hope, and by love. Fourthly, The angels of God appear in the likeness of man, because in the fulness of time the Son of God was not only to appear in that likeness, but to assume that nature; they therefore show this love to it.

[2.] By their faces; every one had four faces, looking four several ways. In St. John's vision, which has a near affinity with this, each of the four living creatures has one of these faces here mentioned; (Rev. iv. 7.) here each of them has all four, to intimate that they have all the same qualifications for service, though, perhaps, among the angels of heaven, as among the angels of the churches, some excel in one gift, and others in another, but all for the common service. Let us contemplate their faces till we learn how we may form some image, that we may do the will of God as the angels do it in heaven. They all four had the face of a man; (for in that likeness they appeared, v. 5.) but, beside that, they had the face of a lion, an ox, and an eagle, each masterly in his kind; the lion among wild beasts, the ox among tame ones, and the eagle among fowls, v. 16. Does God make use of them for the executing of judgments upon his enemies? They are fierce and strong as the lion and the eagle in tracing their prey. Does he make use of them for the good of his people? They are as oxen, strong for labour and inclined to serve. And in both they have the understanding of a man.

The scattered perfections of the living creatures on earth meet in the angels in heaven. They have the same excellency, and the same likeness of one another, as Christians have, one to another, in some things in which man is excelled even by the inferior creatures, they are therefore compared to some of them; they have the understanding of a man, and such as far exceeds it; they also resemble man in tenderness and humanity; but, First, A lion excels man in strength and boldness, and is much more formidable; therefore the angel has the face of a lion. Secondly, An ox excels man in diligence and patience, and painstaking, and an unwearied discharge of the work he has to do; therefore the angels, who are constantly employed in the service of God and the church, put on the face of an ox. Thirdly, An eagle excels man in quickness and piercing-sight of all, and it
soaring high; and therefore the angels, who seek things above, and see far into divine mysteries, put on the face of a flying eagle.

[3.] By their wings: Every one had four wings, v. 6. In the vision Isaiah had of them, they appeared with six, now with four; for they appeared above the throne, and had occasion for two to cover their faces with them, as the angels and elders with God's throne. Whatever business God sends them upon, they lose no time. Faith and hope are the soul's wings, upon which it soars upward; pious and devout affections are its wings on which it is carried forward, with vigour and alacrity. The prophet observes here, concerning their wings, First, That they were joined one to another, (v. 9.) and again, v. 11. m. because use of their wings for flying, as some birds do, there is no contest among the angels, God makes peace, perfect peace, in his high places; but their wings were joined in token of their perfect unity and unanimity, and the universal agreement there is among them. Secondly, That they were stretched upward, extended and ready for use, not folded up or flagging. Let an angel receive the least intimation of the hand, he has nothing to seek, but is upon the wing immediately; while our poor, dull souls are like the ostrich, that with much difficulty lifts up herself on high. Thirdly, That two of their wings were made use of in covering their bodies, the spiritual bodies they assumed. The clothes that cover us, are our hinderance in work; angels need no other covering than their own wings. They cover their bodies from us, so forbidding us needless inquiries concerning them; ask not after them, for they are wonderful, Judg. xiii. 18. They cover them before God, so directing us, when we approach to God, to see to it that we be so clothed with Christ's righteousness, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear.

[4.] By their feet, including their legs and thighs; They were straight feet; (v. 7.) they stood straight, and firm, and steady, no barrier of service could make their legs to bend under them. The spouse makes this part of the description of her beloved, that his legs were as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold; ( Cant. v. 13.) such are the angels in this their heavenly line; (Isa. xlv. 1.) the calf's foot, which divides the hoof, and is therefore clean; as it were the sole of a round foot, (as the Chaldee words it,) they were ready for motion any way. Their feet were winged; (so the Seventy;) they went so swiftly, that it was as if they flew. And their very feet sparkle like the colour of burnished brass; not only their faces, but the very feet, of every creature, as that of their feet is lovely, (Ezek. xxxi.) every step the angels take is glorious. In the vision John had of Christ, it is said, His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, Rev. i. 15.

[5.] By their hands; (v. 8.) They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; an arm and a hand under every wing. They had not only wings for motion, but hands for action on his eye are quick, who are not active; they hurry about a great deal, but do nothing to purpose, bring nothing to pass; they have wings, but no hands; whereas God's servants, the angels, not only go when he sends them, and come when he calls them, but do what he bids them. They are the hands of a man, which are wonderfully made, and fitted for service; which are guided by reason and understanding; for what angels do, they do intelligently and with judgment. They have calves' feet; this denotes the swiftness of their motion; (the cedars of Lebanon are said to skip like a calf, Ps. xxxix. 6.) but they have a man's hand; this denotes the niceness and exactness of their performances; as the heavens are said to be the work of God's fingers. Their hands were under their wings, which concealed them as they did the rest of their bodies. Note, The agency of angels is a secret thing, and their work is carried on in an invisible way. In working for God, though we must not, with the sluggard, hide our hand in our bosom, and let our hand go out to seek after what is dead and lost, yet we are left to know what our right hand doeth. We may observe, that where these wings were, their hands were under their wings; wherever their wings carried them, they carried hands along with them, to be still doing something suitable, something that the duty of the place requires.

[4.] Their motions. The living creatures are moving beings, and though their happiness is fixed, yet their happiness sits still, and do nothing, but to be always well employed, and we must reckon ourselves then best, when we are doing good; doing as the angels do it, of whom it is here observed.

[1.] That whatever service they went about, they went every one straight forward, (v. 9, 12.) which intimates, First, That they sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and had a single eye to that, in all they did; their going straight forward supposes that they looked straight forward, and never had any sinister intentions in what they did. And if thus our eye be single, our whole body will be full of light; the singleness of the eye is the sincerity of the heart. Secondly, That they were intent upon the service they were employed in, and did it with seriousness and zeal. They used not their work, for what their hand found to do, they did it with all their might, and did not loiter in it. Thirdly, That they were unanimous in it; they went straight forward, every one about his own work, they did not thwart or justle one another, did not stand in one another's light, in one another's way. Fourthly, That they perfectly understood their business, and were thoroughly well of it, so that they needed not to stand still to pause or hesitate, but they pursued their work with readiness, as those that knew what they had to do, and how to do it. Fiftihly, They were steady and constant in their work; they did not fluctuate, did not tire, did not vary, but were of a piece with themselves; they moved in a direct line, and so went the nearer, and the more successful were they in their work. When we go straight, we go forward, when we serve God with one heart, we rid ground, we rid work.

[2.] They turned not when they went, v. 9, 12. First, They made no hudders or mistakes, which would give them occasion to turn back to rectify them; their work needed no correction, and therefore they needed not to be gone over again. Secondly, They minded no diversions; as they turned not back, so they turned not aside, to trifle away with anything that was foreign to their business.

[3.] They went whither the Spirit was to go; (v. 12.) either, First, Whither their own spirit was disposed to go; thieth their own spirit was disposed to go; that thieth their spirit was disposed to go; thieth their spirit was disposed to go; yet the flesh is weak, and cannot keep pace with it, so that the good which we would do, we do it not; but angels and glorified saints labour under no such impotency, whatever they incline or intend to do, they do it, and never come short of it. Or, rather, Secondly, Whithersoever the Spirit of God would have them go; thieth they went; though they had so much wisdom of their own, yet in all their motions and actions they subjected themselves to the conduct and government of the divine will; whithersoever the divine providence was to go, they went, to serve its purposes, and to execute its orders. The Spirit of God (says Mr. Greenhill) is the great
Agent that sets angels to work, and it is their honour that they are led, they are easily led, by the Spirit. See how quickly and universally they were disposed to work. Whosoever the Spirit is to go, they go immediately, with all possible alacrity. Note, Those that walk after the Spirit, do the will of God as the angels do it.

[4.] They ran and returned like a flash of lightning, v. 14. This intimates, First, That they made haste; they were quick in their motions, as quick as lightning; whatever business they went about, they despatched it immediately, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. Happy they that have no bodies to retard their motion in holy exercises! And happy shall we be when we come to have spiritual bodies for spiritual work! Satan falls like lightning into his own ruin, Luke x. 18. Angels fly like lightning in their Master's work, the angel Gabriel flew swiftly. Secondly, That they made haste back; they ran, and returned; ran to do their work, and execute their orders, and then returned to give an account of what they had done, and receive new instructions, that they might be always doing. They ran into the lower world, to do what was to be done there; but when they had done it, they returned like a flash of lightning to the upper world again, to the beatific vision of their God, which they could not live to enjoy, if they were longer from than their service did require. Thus we should be in the affairs of this world as out of our element; though we run into them, we must not repose in them, but ourselves must quickly return like lightning to God their Rest and Centre.

Lastly, We have an account of the light by which the prophet saw these living creatures, or the looking-glass in which he saw them, v. 13. [1.] He saw them by their own light, for their appearance was like burning coals of fire; they are seraphim-burners; denoting the ardour of their love to God, their fervent zeal in his service, their splendour and brightness, and their terror against God's enemies. When God employs them to fight his battles, they are as coals of fire, (Ps. xlviii. 12.) to devour the adversaries as lightnings shot out to disco'ert them. [2.] He saw them by the light of some lamps, which went up and down among them, the shining whereof was very bright. Satan's works are works of darkness, he is the ruler of the darkness of this world; but the angels of light are in the light, and though they conceal their working, they show their work, for it will bear the light. But we see them and their works only by candle-light by the dark light of the lamps, that go up and down among them, when the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, we shall see them clearly. Some make the appearance of these burning coals, and of the lightning, that issues out of the fire, to signify the wrath of God, and his judgments, that were now to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, in which angels were to be employed: and see how often we find after this the scattering upon the city, or its determination, which were fetched from between the cherubins, ch. x. 2. But by the appearance of the lamps then, we may understand the light of comfort which shone forth to the people of God in the darkness of this present trouble. If the ministry of the angels is to be a consuming fire to God's enemies, it is as a rejoicing light to his own children. To this our soul is a rejoicing and refreshing; to the other, out of the fire comes fresh lightning to destroy them. Note, Good angels are our friends or enemies, according as God is.

The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl; and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. 17. When they went, they went upon their four sides; and they turned not when they went. 18. As for their rings, they were so high, that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. 19. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. 20. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. 21. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. 22. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. 23. And under the firmament were their wings straight, one toward the other; every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. 24. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of a host: when they stood, they let down their wings. 25. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads; when they stood, and had let down their wings.

The prophet is very exact in making and recording his observations concerning this vision. And here we have,

1. The notice he took of the wheels, v. 15.—21. The glory of God appears not only in the splendour of his retina in the upper world, but in the steadiness of his government here in this lower world. Having seen how God doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, let us now see how he doth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth; for there, on the earth, the prophet saw the wheels, v. 15. As he beheld the living creatures, and was contemplating the glory of that vision, and receiving instruction from it, as the prophet saw it, he preventative view. Note, Those who make a good use of the discoveries God has favoured them with, may expect further discoveries; for to him that hath shall be given. We are sometimes tempted to think there is nothing glorious but what is in the upper world, whereas, could we with an eye of faith discern the beauty of Providence, and the wisdom, power, and goodness, which shine in the administration of that kingdom, we should see, and say, Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth, and acts like himself. There are many things in
this vision which gives us some light concerning the Divine Providence.

1. The dispensations of Providence are compared to wheels, either the wheels of a chariot, in which the conqueror rides in triumph, or, rather, the wheels of a clock or watch, which all contribute to the regular motion of the machine. We read of the wheels, in Job xxvi. 6, which are here set before us as under the direction of the God of nature. Wheels, though they move not of themselves, as the living creatures do, are yet made moveable, and are almost continually kept in action. Providence, represented by these wheels, produces changes; sometimes one spoke of the wheel is uppermost, and sometimes another; but the motion of the wheel, however changed, that of the wheel above, is very regular and steady. The motion of the wheels is circular; by the revolutions of providence things are brought to the same posture and pass which they were in formerly; for the thing that is, is that which has been, and there is no new thing under the sun, Eccl. i. 9, 10.

2. The wheel is said to be by the living creatures, which extended it to direct its motion; for the angels are employed as the ministers of God's providence, and have a greater hand in directing the motions of second causes to serve the divine purpose than we think they have. Such a close connexion is there between the living creatures and the wheels, that they moved and rested together. Were angels busily employed? Men were busily employed, as instructor, ready to surrount in their own nature, and although they themselves were not aware of it. Or, Are men active to compass their designs? Angels at the same time are acting to control and overrule them. This is much insisted on here: (v. 19.) When the living creatures went, to bring about any business, the wheels went by them; when God has work to do by the ministry of angels, second causes are all found, or main, ready to concur in it; and (v. 21.) when those stood, these stood; when the angels had done their work, the second causes had done theirs. If the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, were elevated to any service above the common course of nature, and out of the ordinary road, as supposed in the working of miracles, the dividing of the water, the standing still of the sun, the angels, contrary to their own nature, or course, which is toward the earth, move in concert with them, and are lifted up over against them; this is thrice mentioned, v. 19.—21. Note, All inferior creatures are, and move, and act, as the Creator, by the ministration of angels, directs and influences them. Visible effects are managed and governed by invisible causes.

3. The reason given of this, is, because the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels; the same wisdom, power, and holiness of God, the same will and counsel of his, that guides and governs the angels, and all their performances, does, by them, order and dispose of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, and the events and issues of them. God is the Soul of the world, and animates the whole, both that above, and that beneath, so that they move in perfect harmony, as the upper and lower parts of the natural body do; so that whithersoever the Spirit is to go, whatever God wills and purposes to be done and brought to pass, thither their spirit is to go; the angels, knowingly and designedly, set themselves to bring it about, and the Spirit is in the wheels, which are therefore lifted up over against them; both the powers of nature and the wills of men, are all made to serve the intention, which they infallibly and irresistibly effect, though perhaps they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so, Isa. x. 7. Mic. iv. 11, 12. Thus, though the will of God's precept be not done on earth, as it is done in heaven, yet the will of his purpose and counsel is, and shall be.

4. Their appearance and their work are said to be like the colour of a beryl, (v. 16.) the colour of Tarshish, (so the word is,) that is, of the sea; the beryl is of that colour, sea-green; blue Neptune we call it. The nature of things in this world is like that of the sea; its creatures are amazing, there is a constant coherence and succession of its parts. There is a chain of events which is always drawing one way or other. The sea ebbs and flows, so does providence in its dispositions, but always to the stated, appointed times and measures. The sea looks blue, as the air does, because of the shortness and fineness of our sight, which can see but a little way of either; to that colour therefore are the appearance and work of Providence fitly compared, because we cannot find out that which God does from the beginning to the end, Eccl. iii. 11. We see but parts of his ways, (Jeb xxvi. 14.) and all beyond looks blue, which gives us to understand no more concerning it, but that in truth we know it not, it is far above out of our sight.

5. Their wheels and their work are likewise said to be as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. Observe here again, Their appearance to the prophet is designed to set forth what their work really is; men's appearance and their work often differ, but the appearance of God's providence and its work agree; if they seem to differ, it is through our ignorance and mistake. Now both were as a wheel in a wheel, a lesser wheel moved by a greater; we pretend not to give a mathematical description of it; the meaning is, that the dispositions of Providence seems to us intricate, perplexed, and unaccountable, and yet that they will appear in the issue to have been all wisely ordered for the best; so that though what God does we know not now, yet we shall know hereafter, John xiii. 7.

The motion of these wheels, like that of the living creatures, was steady, regular, and constant; They returned not when they went, (v. 17.) because they never went amiss, nor otherwise than they should do. God, in his providence, takes his work before him, and he will have it forward; and it is going on even then when it seems to us to be going backward. They went as the Spirit directed them, and therefore returned not. We should not have occasion to return back as we have, and to undo that by repentance which we have done amiss, and to do it over again, if we were but led by the Spirit, and followed his conduct. The Spirit of life (so some...
read it) was in the wheels, which carried them on with ease and evenness, and then they returned not when they went.

7. The rings, or rims, of the wheels were so high, that they were dreadful, v. 13. They were of a vast circumference, so that when they were reared, and put in motion, the prophet was even afraid to look up upon them. Note, The vast compass of God's thought, and the vast reach of his design, are really astonishing; when we go about to describe the circle of Providence, we are struck with amazement, and are even swallowed up. O the height and depth of God's counsels! The consideration of them should strike an awe upon us.

8. They were full of eyes round about. This circumstance is a mysterious symbol of actual and yet most significant, plainly denoting that the motions of Providence are all directed by infinite wisdom. The issues of things are not determined by a blind fortune, but by those eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the earth, and are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

Note. It is a great satisfaction to us, and ought to be so, that, though we cannot account for the springs and causes of events, yet they are all under the cognizance and conduct of an all-wise, all-seeing God.

If the notice he took of the firmament above, the heads of the living creatures. When he saw the living creatures moving, and the wheels by them, he looked up, as it is proper for us to do when we observe the various motions of providence in this lower world; looking up, he saw the firmament strecked forth over the heads of the living creatures, v. 22. What is done on earth is done under the heaven, (as the scripture often speaks,) under its inspection and influence.

Observe. 1. What he saw; The firmament was as the colour of the terrible crystal, truly glorious, but terribly so; the vastness and brightness of it put the prophet into an amazement, and struck him with an awful reverence. The terrible ice, or frost, (so it may be read;) the colour of snow congealed, or as mountains of ice in the northern seas, which are very frightful. Daring sinners ask, Can God judge through the dark cloud? Job xxi. 13. But that which we take to be a dark cloud, is to him transparent as crystal, through which, from the place of his habitation, he looks upon all the in habitants of the earth, Ps. xxxiii. 14. Under the firmament, the head of the living creature is erect; (v. 23.) when they pleased, they used them either for flight or for covering, or two for flight, and two for covering. God is on high, above the firmament, the angels are under the firmament, which denotes their subjection to God's dominion, and their readiness to fly on his errands in the open firmament of heaven, and to serve him unanimously.

2. What he heard. (1.) He heard the noise of the angels wings, v. 24. Bees and other insects make a great noise with the vibration of their wings; here angels do so, to awaken the attention of the prophet to that which God was about to say to him from the firmament, v. 25. Angels, by the providences they are employed in, sound God's alarms to the children of men, and stir them up to hear his voice; for that is that is true in the church, and is heard and understood by the men of wisdom. The noise of their wings was loud and terrible as the noise of great waters, like the roar or roaring of the sea; and as the noise of a host, the noise of war; but it was articulate and intelligible, and did not give an uncertain sound; for it was the voice of speech; nay it was as the voice of the Almighty; for God, by his providences, speaks once, yea twice; if we could but perceive it; (Job xxxii. 14.) the Lord's voice cries, Mic. vi. 9.

(2.) He heard a voice from the firmament, from him that sits upon the throne there, v. 25. When the angels moved, they made a noise with their wings; but when with that they had roused a careless world, they stood still, and let down their wings, that there might be a profound silence, and so God's voice might be the better heard. The voice of Providence is designed to open men's ears to the voice of the gospel, and to draw the ear, who with a loud voice charges silence while the voice passes sentence, He that has ears to hear, let him hear. Note. Noises on earth should awaken our attention to the voice from the firmament; for how shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven?

26. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire-stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. 27. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it; from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw it as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. 28. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

All the other parts of this vision were but a preface and introduction to this. God in them had made himself known as Lord of angels, and supreme Director of all his affairs of this lower world, whence it is easy to infer that whatever God by his prophets either promises or threatens to do, he is able to effect it; angels are his servants, men are his tools. But now that a divine revelation is to be given to a prophet, and by him to the church, we must look higher than the living creatures of the wheels, and must expect that from the eternal Word, of whom we have an account in these verses. Ezekiel, hearing a voice from the firmament, looked up, as John did, to see the voice that spake with him, and he saw one like unto the Son of man, Rev. i. 12, 13. The second Person sometimes tried the fashion of a man, occasionally, before he clothed himself with it for good and all; and the spirit of prophecy is called the Spirit of Christ, (1 Pet. i. 11.) and the Testimony of Jesus, Rev. xix. 10.

1. This glory of Christ that the prophet saw, was above the firmament that was over the heads of the living creatures, v. 26. Note. The heads of angels themselves are under the feet of the Lord Jesus; for the firmament that is over their heads, is under his feet; angels, principalities, and powers, are made subject to him, 1 Pet. iii. 22. This dignity and dominion of the angels by their incarnation magnify his condescension in his incarnation, when he was made a little lower than the angels, Heb. ii. 9.

2. The first thing he observed, was a throne; for divine revelations come backed and supported with a royal authority: we must have an eye of faith to God and Christ as upon a throne. The first thing that John discovered in his visions was a throne set in heaven, (Rev. iv. 2.) which commands reverence
and subjection. It is a throne of glory, a throne of grace, a throne of triumph, a throne of government, a throne of judgment. The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, has prepared it for his Son, whom he has set King on his holy hill of Zion.

3. On the throne he saw the appearance of a man.

This is good news to the children of men, that the throne above the firmament is filled with one that is not ashamed to appear, even there, in the likeness of man. Daniel, in vision, saw the kingdom and dominion given to one like the Son of man, who therefore has authority given him to execute judgment, that he might rend the nations (John v. 27.) so appearing in these visions.

4. The prophet sees him as a Prince and Judge upon this throne; though he appear in fashion as a man, yet he appears in more than human glory, v. 27.

(1.) Is God a shining Light? So is he: when the prophet saw him, he saw as the colour of amber; that is, a brightness round about; for God dwells in light, and covers himself with light as with a garment. How low did the Redeemer stoop for us, when, to bring about our salvation, he suffered his glory to be eclipsed by the veil of his humanity!

(2.) Is God a consuming Fire? So is he: from his loins, both upward and downward there was the appearance of fire. The fire above the loins was round about within the amber, it was inward and inward; that below the loins was more outward and open, and yet that also had brightness also round about. Some make the former to signify Christ's divine nature, the glory and virtue of which are hidden within the colour of amber; it is what no man has seen, or can see; the latter they suppose to be his human nature, the glory of which there were those who saw; the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, John i. 14.

He had raiment and girdle about him, and he stood before the throne of his power, Hab. iii. 4.

4. The fire in which the Son of man appeared here, might be intended to signify the judgments that were ready to be executed upon Judah and Jerusalem, coming from that fiery indignation of the Almighty, which devours the adversaries. Nothing is more dreadful to the most daring sinners than the wrath of God.

5. The throne is surrounded with a rainbow; (v. 28.) it is so in St. John's vision; (Rev. iv. 3.) the brightness about it was of divers colours, as the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain; which, as it is a display of majesty, and looks very great, so is a pledge of mercy, and looks very kind; for it is a confirmation of the gracious promise God has made, that he will not drown the world again; and he has said, I will look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, Gen. ix. 16. This intimates that he who sits upon the throne, is the Mediator of the covenant; and he, in particular, is for that reason the object of our destruction; that he interposes between us and the judgments our sins have deserved; and that all the promises of God are in him yea and amen. Now that the fire of God's wrath was breaking out against Jerusalem, bounds should be set to it, and he would not make an utter destruction of it, for he would look upon the bow, and remember the covenant, as he did then, Ps. cvi. 9, 10. Ezek. v. 15. 

Lastly, We have the conclusion of this vision:

(1.) What notion the prophet himself had of it; This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. Here, as all along, he is careful to guard against all gross, corporeal thoughts of God, which might derogate from the transcendent purity of his nature. He does not say, This was the Lord, (for he is invisible,) but, This was the glory of the Lord, in which he was pleased to manifest himself a glorious Being; yet it is not the glory of the Lord, but the likeness of that glory, some faint resemblance of it; nor is it any adequate likeness of the glory, but only the appearance of that likeness, a shadow of it, and not the very image of the thing.

Heb. x. 1.

(2.) What impressions it made upon him; Where I saw it, I fell upon my face. [1.] He was overpowered by it, the dazzling lustre of it conquered him, and threw him upon his face; for who is able to stand before this holy Lord? Or, rather, [2.] He prostrated himself, in an humble sense of his own unworthiness of the honour now done him, and of the infinite distance which he now, more than ever, perceived to be between him and God; he fell upon his face, in token of that holy awe and reverence of God which his mind was possessed and filled with. Note, The more God is pleased to make known of himself to us, the more low should we be before him. He fell upon his face, to adore the majesty of God, to implore his mercy, and to deprecate the wrath he saw ready to break out against the children of his people.

(3.) What instructions he had from it; all he saw was only to prepare him for that which he was to hear, for faith comes by hearing: he therefore heard a voice upon one that spake; for we are taught by words, not merely by hieroglyphics. When he fell on his face, ready to receive the word, then he heard the voice of one that spake; for God delights to teach the humble.

CHAP. II.

What our Lord Jesus said to St. Paul, (Acts xxvi. 16.) may fitly be applied to the prophet Ezekiel, to whom the same Jesus is here speaking, Rise, and stand upon thy feet, for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister. We have here Ezekiel's ordination to his office which the vision was designed to fit him for; not to entertain his curiosity with uncommon speculations, but to put him into business. Now here, I. He is commissioned to go as a prophet to the house of Israel, now captives in Babylon, and to deliver God's messages to them from time to time, v. 1-5. II. He is cautioned not to be afraid of them, v. 6. III. He is instructed what to say to them, and has words put into his mouth, signified by the vision of a roll, which he was ordered to eat, (v. 7-10.) and which, in the next chapter, we find he did eat.

1. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. 2. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. 4. For they are impudent children, and stiff-hearted: I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. 5. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. The title here given to Ezekiel, as often afterwards, is very observable; God, when he speaks to him, calls him, Son of man, (v. 1, 5.) Son of Adam, Son of the earth, Daniel is once called so, (Dan. viii. 17.) and but once; the compulsion is used to
no other of the prophets, but to Ezekiel all along. We may take it, 1. As an humble, diminishing title; lest Ezekiel should be lifted up with the abundance of the revelations, he is put in mind of this, that still he is a son of man, a mean, weak, mortal creature. Among other things made known to him, it was necessary he should be made to know this, that he was a son of man, and not God. And therefore he was made to know that it was the counsel of God, that he was to be put forth, thus to manifest himself to him. Now he is among the living creatures, the angels; yet he must remember that he is himself a man, a dying creature. What is man, or the son of man, that he should be thus visited, thus dignified? Though God had here a splendid retinue of holy angels about his throne, who were ready to go on his errands, yet he passes them all by, and pitches on himself, to be his messenger to the house of Israel; for we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and God's messages sent us by men like ourselves, whose terror shall not make us afraid, nor their hand be heavy upon us. Ezekiel was a priest, but the priesthood was brought low, and the honour of it laid in the dust: it therefore became him, and all of his order, to humble themselves, and to lie low, as some men, called ministers, are employed as a prophet, God's ambassador, and a ruler over the kingdoms, (Jer. i. 10,) a post of great honour, but he must remember that he is a son of man, and whatever good he did, it was not by any might of his own, for he was a son of man, but in the strength of divine grace, which must therefore have all the glory. Or, 2. We may take it as an honourable, dignifying title; for it is one of the titles of the Messiah in the Old Testament; (Dan. vii. 13.) I saw one like the Son of man come with the clouds of heaven, from whence Christ borrows the title he often calls himself by, The Son of man. The prophets were types of him, as they had near access to God, and great authority among men; and therefore as David the king is called the Lord's anointed, or Christ, so Ezekiel the prophet is called son of man.

1. Ezekiel is here set up, and made to stand, that he might receive his commission, v. 1, 2. He is set up,

1. By a divine command; Son of man, stand upon thy feet. His lying prostrate was a posture of great reverence, but his standing up would be a posture of greater readiness and fitness for business. Our adorings of God must shut us up more than the quaking angels, to the expressings of God. He fell on his face in a holy fear and awe of God, but he was quickly raised up again; for they that humble themselves shall be exalted. God delights not in the dejections of his servants, but the same that brings them low, will raise them up; the same that is a Spirit of bondage will be a Spirit of adoption. Stand, and I will speak to thee. Note, God is graciously pleased to work that in us which he requires of us. He will raise us from the dust. We must stir up ourselves, and then God will put strength into us; we must work out our salvation, and then God will work in us. He observed that the Spirit entered into him then when Christ spake to him; for Christ conveys his Spirit by his word as the ordinary means, and makes the word effectual by the Spirit. The Spirit set the prophet upon his feet, to raise him up from his dejections, for he is the Comforter. Thus, in the like case, Daniel was strengthened by a divine touch, (Dan. x. 18.) and John was raised by the right hand of Christ laid upon him, Rev. i. 17. The Spirit set him upon his feet, made him willing and forward to do as he was bidden, and then he heard him that spake to him. He heard the voice before, (ch. i. 28.) but now he heard it more distinctly and clearly, heard it, and submitted to the message, by inclining our will to our duty, and thereby dispose the understanding to receive the knowledge of it.

II. Ezekiel is here sent, and made to go, with a message to the children of Israel; (v. 3.) I send thee to the children of Israel. God had for many ages been sending to them his servants the prophets, rising up betimes, and sending them, to make them acquainted with captivity for abusing God's messengers: and yet even there God sends this prophet among them, to try if their ears were open to discipline, now that they were held in the cords of affliction. As the supports of life, so the means of grace, are continued to us after they have been a thousand times forfeited. Now observe,

The rebellion of the people to whom this ambassador is sent; he is sent to reduce them to their allegiance, to bring back the children of Israel to the Lord their God; let the prophet know that there is occasion for his going on this errand, for they are a rebellious nation, (v. 3.) a rebellious house, v. 5. They are called children of Israel: they retain the name of their pious ancestors, but they are wickedly degenerated, they are become a rebellious nation. Note, the word rebellious is commonly used for the Gentiles; the children of Israel are become as the children of the Ethiopians, (Amos ix. 7.) for they are rebellious; and rebels at home are much more provoking to a prince than enemies abroad. Their idolatries and false worshipes were sins which, more than any other, denominated them a rebellious nation; for thereby they set up another prince in opposition to their rightful Sovereign, and did homage and paid tribute to the usurper, which is the highest degree of rebellion that can be.

1. They had been all along a rebellious generation, and had persisted in their rebellion; They and their fathers have transgressed against me. Note, Those are not always in the right, that have antiquity and the fathers on their side; for there are crimes of old standing, which are to be rejected. They had fallen far from being an excuse for walking in a bad way, that our fathers walked in it, that it is really an aggravation, for it is justifying the sin of these that have gone before us. They have continued in their rebellion even unto this very day; notwithstanding the various means and methods that have been made use of to reclaim them, to this day, when they are under divine rebukes for their rebellion, when they continue rebellious; many among them, like Ahab, even in their distress, trea^shet yet more; they are not the better for all the changes that have befal/en them, but still remain unchanged.

2. They were now hardened in their rebellion. They are impudent children, brazen-faced, and cannot blush; they are stiff-hearted, self-willed, and cannot bend, cannot stoop; neither can God, by their sins, they will not be wrought upon by the sense either of honour or duty. We are willing to hope this was not the character of all, but of many, and those perhaps the leading men. Observe, [1.] God knew this concerning them, how infeasible, how incorrigible, they were. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with every man's true character, whatever his pretensions and professions may be. [2.] He told the prophet this, that he might know how better to deal with them, and what handle to take them by. He must rebuke such men as those
sharpely, cuttingly; must deal plainly with them, though they call it dealing roughly. God tells him this, that it might be no surprise or stumbling-block to him, if he found that his preaching should not make that impression upon them, which he had reason to think it would.

2. The dominion of the Prince by whom this ambassador is sent. (1.) He has authority to command him whom he sends; "I do send thee unto them, and therefore thou shalt say thus and thus unto them," v. 4. Note, It is the prerogative of Christ to send prophets to the ministry, and to enjoin them to declare his sayings. (2.) He has authority to command those to whom he sends him; Thou shalt say unto them, The word of the Lord; this must be spoken in God's name, enforced by his authority, and delivered as from him. Christ delivered his doctrines as a Son; Verily, verily, I say unto you; the prophets, as servants. Thus saith the Lord God, our Master and yours. Note, The writings of the prophets are the word of God, and so are to be regarded by every one of us. (3.) He has authority to command him whom he sends his ambassadors. Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, whether they will attend to the word, or turn their backs upon it, they shall know that there has been a prophet among them, shall know by experience. [1.] If they hear and obey, they will know by comfortable experience, that the word which did good was brought by one that had a commission from God, and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching, are said to be seals of his apostleship, 1 Cor. ix. 2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and hear the witness in themselves, that it is not the word of men, but of God. [2.] If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, (as it is to be feared they will,) for they are a rebellious house, yet they shall be made to know that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own consciences, and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him; they shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a people they were that would not hearken unto the word of God, and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching, are said to be seals of his apostleship, 1 Cor. ix. 2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and hear the witness in themselves, that it is not the word of men, but of God. [3.] If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, (as it is to be feared they will,) for they are a rebellious house, yet they shall be made to know that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own consciences, and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him; they shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a people they were that would not hearken unto the word of God, and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching, are said to be seals of his apostleship, 1 Cor. ix. 2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and hear the witness in themselves, that it is not the word of men, but of God. [4.] If they forbear, if they turn a deaf ear to the word, (as it is to be feared they will,) for they are a rebellious house, yet they shall be made to know that he whom they slighted was indeed a prophet, by the reproaches of their own consciences, and the just judgments of God upon them for refusing him; they shall know it to their cost, know it to their confusion, know it by sad experience, what a people they were that would not hearken unto the word of God, and a divine power going along with him in the execution of it. Thus they who were converted by St. Paul's preaching, are said to be seals of his apostleship, 1 Cor. ix. 2. When men's hearts are made to burn under the word, and their wills to bow to it, then they know and hear the witness in themselves, that it is not the word of men, but of God.

6. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 7. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; for they are most rebellious. 8. But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house; open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. 9. And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; 10. And he spread before me: and it was written within and without; and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and wo.

The prophet, having received his commission, here receives a charge with it. It is a post of honour to which he is advanced, but withal it is a post of service and work, and it is here required of him, I. That he be bold. He must act in the discharge of this trust with an undaunted courage and resolution, and not be either driven off from his work, or made to droop on heavily, by the difficulties and oppositions that he would be likely to meet with in it; Son of man, be not afraid of them, v. 6. Note, Those that will do any thing to purpose in the service of God, must not be afraid of the face of man; for the fear of men will bring a snare, which will be very entangling to us in the work of God. I. God tells the prophet what was the character of the message he should deliver, and to whom he should deliver it. They are briers and thorns, scratching, and tearing, vexing a man, which way soever he turns. They are continually teasing God's prophets, and entangling them in their talk; (Matth. xxii. 15.) they are prickling briers and grieveing thorns. The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright sharper than a thorn-hedge, Mic. vii. 4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse, and opposite to all peace; They are briers and thorns, scratching, and tearing, vexing a man, which way soever he turns. They are continually teasing God's prophets, and entangling them in their talk; (Matth. xxii. 15.) they are prickling briers and grieveing thorns. The best of them is as a brier, and the most upright sharper than a thorn-hedge, Mic. vii. 4. Thorns and briers are the fruit of sin and the curse, and opposite to all peace; and the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Note, Wicked men, especially the persecutors of God's prophets and people, are as briers and thorns, which are hurtful to the ground, choke the good seed, hinder God's husbandry, are vexatious to his husbandmen; but they are nigh unto cursing, and their end is to be burned; yet God makes use of them sometimes for the correction and instruction of his people, as Gideon taught the men of Succoth with thorns and briers, Judg. vili. 16. Yet this is not the worst of their character, they are scorpions, venomous and malignant; the sting of a scorpion is a thousand times more hurtful than the scratch of a brier. Persecutors are a generation of vipers, are of the serpent's house, the children of the same mother; they are the venomous thorns of the thicket; and they are more subtle than any beast of the field. And, which makes the prophet's case the more grievous, he dwells among these scorpions; they are continually about him, so that he cannot be safe or quiet in his own house; these bad men are his bad neighbours, who thereby have many opportunities, and will let slip none to do him a mischief. God takes this matter with him in the case, he names the angel of one of the churches; (Rev. ii. 13.) I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is. Ezekiel had been in vision, conversing with angels, but when he comes down from this mount, he finds he dwelleth with scorpions. He tells him what would be their conduct towards him, that they would do what they could to frighten him with their looks and their words; they
would hector him and threaten him, would look scornfully and spitefully at him, and do their utmost to face him down, and put him out of countenance, that they might drive him off from being a prophet, or at least prevent them from their factions, and then attempt to use the judgments of God; or, if they could not prevail in this, that they might vex and perplex him, and disturb the repose of his mind. They were now themselves in subjection, divested of all power, that they had not other way of persecuting the prophet than with their looks and their words; and so they did persecute him. Behold, thou hast spoken with men: are not evil things even spoken in vain? If they had had more power they would have done more mischief. They were now in captivity, smarting for their rebellion, and particularly their misusing of God's prophets; and yet they are as bad as ever. Though thou say a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him: no provisones will of themselves humble and reform men, unless the grace of God work with them. But, how malicious soever they were, Ezekiel must not be afraid of them, nor dismayed, he must not be deterred from his work, or any part of it, nor be disheartened or dispirited in it by all their menaces, but go on in it with resolution and cheerfulness, assuring himself of safety under the divine protection.

II. It is required that he be faithful, v. 7. 1. He must be faithful to Christ who sent him; Thou shalt speak my words unto them. Note, As it is the honour of prophets, that they are intrusted to speak God's words, so it is their duty to cleave closely to them, and speak nothing but what is agreeable to the words of God; ministers must always speak according to that rule. 2. He must be faithful to the souls of those to whom he was sent: whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, he must deliver his message to them, and he shall receive it. He must bring them to comply with the word, and not study to accommodate the word to their humours. "It is true, they are most rebellions, they are rebellion itself; but, however, speak my words to them, whether they are pleasing or unpleasing." Note, The untractableness and unpredectableness of people under the word, are no good reasons why ministers should leave the plain and evident word of God, to incorporate and conduce to the way by which good may be done, though we have a great deal of reason to think no good will be done.

III. It is required that he be obedient to his instructions.

1. Here is a general intimation what the instructions were, that were given him, in the contents of the book which was spread before him. His instructions were large, for the roll was written within and without, on the inside and on the outside of the roll; it was as a sheet of paper written on all the four sides. One side contained their sins, the other side contained the judgments of God coming upon them for those sins. Note, God has a great deal to say to his people when they are degenerate and become rebellious. (2.) His instructions were merely, he was sent to a sad errand; the matter contained in the book was, lamentations, and mourning, and woe. The idea of his message is taken from the impression it would make upon the minds of those that carefully attended to it; it would set them a weeping and crying out, Woe, and Alas! Both the discoveries of sin and the denunciations of wrath would be matter of lamentation. What could be more lamentable, more mournful, than to see a holy, happy people sunk into such a state of sin and misery, as it appears by the prophecy of this book the Jews were at this time? Ezekiel echoes to Jeremiah's lamentations. Note, Though God is rich in mercy, yet iniminent sinners will find there are even among his words lamentations and woe.

2. Here is an express charge: given the prophet to observe his instructions, both in receiving his message and delivering it. He is now to receive it, and is here commanded.

(1.) To attend diligently to it; Son of man, hear what I say unto thee, v. 8. Note, Those that speak from God to others, must be sure to hear from God themselves, and be obedient to his voice; "Be not thou rebellious; do not refuse to go on this errand, or to deliver it; do not fly off, as Jonah did, for fear of disobliging the counsel of God. They call a rebellious hand among whom thou livest; but be not thou like them, do not comply with any thing that is evil. If ministers, who are reprovers by office, comine at sin, and indulge sinners, either show them not their wickedness, or show them not the fatal consequences of it, for fear of displeasing them, and getting their ill-will, they hereby make themselves partners of their guilt, and are rebellious like them. If people will not do their duty in reforming, yet let ministers do theirs in reproving, and they will have the comfort of it in the reflection, whatever the success be, as that prophet had; (Isa. i. 5.) The Lord God has opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious. Even the best men, when their lot is cast in bad times and places, have need to be cautioned against the worst crimes.

(2.) To take it in his own hand, and by an experience of the favour and power of it; "Do not only hear what I say unto thee, but often thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. Prepare to eat it, and eat it willingly, and with an appetite." All God's children are content to be at their heavenly Father's finding, and to eat whatever he gives them. That which God's hand reached out to Ezekiel, was, a roll of a book, or the volume of a book, or scroll of paper or parchment full written, and rolled up. Divine revelation comes to us from the hand of Christ, he gave it the prophets, Rev. i. 1. When we look at the roll of the book, we must have an eye to the hand by which it is sent to us. He that brought it to the prophet, spread it before him, that he might not swallow it with an implicit faith, but might fully understand the contents of it, and receive it; but he, Be not rebellious, says Christ, but eat what I give thee. If we receive not what Christ in his ordinances and provissions allots for us, if we submit not to his word and rod, and reconcile not ourselves to both, we shall be accounted rebellions.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter we have the further preparation of the prophet for the work to which God called him. 1. His calling of the roll that was presented to him in the close of the foregoing chapter, v. 1. 2. His further instructions and encouragements given him to the same purport with those in the foregoing chapter, v. 3. to 11. III. The mighty impulse he was under, with which he was carried to those that were to be his hearers, v. 12. 15. IV. A further explication of his office and business as a prophet, under the similitude of a roll of a book, and of the restraining work resting of the prophet's liberty of speech, as God pleased, v. 22. 27.

1. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. 2. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.
be said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. 5. For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel: 6. Not to many people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand: surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee. 7. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hard-hearted. 8. Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. 9. As an adamant, harder than flint, have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. 10. Moreover, he said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thy heart, and hear with thine ears. 11. And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto thy people, and speak unto them, and tell them, Thus saith the Lord God, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. 12. Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place. 13. I heard also the noise of the wings of the living creatures that touched one another, and the noise of the wheels over against them, and a noise of a great rushing. 14. So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me. 15. Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, that dwelt by the river of Chebar, and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

These verses are fully joined by some translators to the foregoing chapter, as being of a piece with it, and a continuation of the same vision. The prophets received the words from God, that they might deliver them to the people of God; furnished themselves, that they might furnish them, with the knowledge of the mind and will of God. Now here the prophet is taught,

1. How he must receive divine revelation himself; v. 1. Christ (whom he saw upon the throne, ch. i. 26.) said to him, "Son of man, eat this roll; admit this revelation into thine understanding, take it, take the meaning of it, understand it aright, admit it into thy heart, apply it, and be affected with it; imprint it in thy mind, ruminate and chew the cud upon it; take it as it is entire, and make no difficulty of it, may, take a pleasure in it: as thou dost in thy meat, and let thy soul be nourished and strengthened by it; let it be meat and drink to thee, and as thy necessary food; be full of it, as thou art of the meat thou hast eaten." Thus ministers should in their studies and meditations take in that word of God, which they are to preach to others: Thy words were found, and I did eat them, Jer. xv. 16. They must be both well acquainted and much affected with the things of God, that they may speak of them both clearly and warmly, with a great deal of divine light and heat. Now observe,

1. How this command is inculcated upon the prophet. In the chapter before, Eat what I give thee, and hear the word of the Lord; and here, (v. 1.) Eat that thou finerst, that which is presented to thee by the hand of Christ. Note, Whatever we find to be the word of God, whatever is brought to us by him who is the Word of God, we must receive without disputing. What we find set before us in the scripture, that we must eat. And again, (v. 3.) Cause thy belly to be emptied, and fill thy bowels with this roll; do not eat it and say nothing of it again, as that which is nauseous, but eat it, and retain it, as that which is wholesome and grateful to the stomach. Feast upon this vision till thou be full of matter, (as Elisha was, Job xxxii. 18.) Let the word have a place in thee, the innermost place. We must take pains with our own hearts, that we may cause them duly to receive and entertain the word of God, that every faculty may partake of it, in order to the due digesting of the word of God. 2. As thou dost eat of the sanguineum into blood and spirits. We must empty ourselves of worldly things, that we may fill our bowels with this roll.

2. How this command is explained; (v. 10.) All my words that I shall speak unto thee, to be spoken unto the people, thou must receive in thine heart, as well as hear with thine ears, receive them in the love of them. Let them sink into your ears, Luke ix. 44. Christ demands the prophet's attention not only to what he now says, but to all that he shall at any time hereafter speak; Receive it all in thine heart, meditate on these things, and give thyself wholly to them, 1 Tim. iv. 15.

3. How this command was obeyed in vision. He opened his mouth, and Christ caused him to eat the roll, v. 2. If we be truly willing to receive the word into our hearts, Christ will by his Spirit bring it into them, and cause it to dwell in us richly. If he that opens the roll, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of revelation, spreads it before us, did not also open our understanding, and by his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom, give us the knowledge of it, and cause us to eat it, we should be for ever strangers to it. The prophet had it to fear that the roll would be an unpleasant morsel and a sorry dish to make a meal of, but it proved to be in his mouth as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, Rev. x. 9. 10. He took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was, as thus here, in his mouth sweet as honey; but it was bitter in the mouth, Mark viii. 19; and yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, Rev. x. 9. 10. He took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was, as thus here, in his mouth sweet as honey; but it was bitter in the mouth, Mark viii. 19; and yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people. We find St. John let into some part of the revelation by such a sign as this, Rev. x. 9. 10. He took the book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and it was, as thus here, in his mouth sweet as honey; but it was bitter in the mouth, Mark viii. 19; and yet it was to the prophet as honey for sweetness. Note, Gracious souls can receive those truths of God with great delight, which speak most terror to wicked people.
conceal the words of the Holy One, (Job vi. 10.) for that is burying a talent which was given us to trade with. He must go, and speak to the house of Israel, for it is their privilege to have God's statutes and judgments made known to them; as the giving of the law, (the lively oracles,) so prophecy, (the living oracle,) pertains to them. He is not sent to the Chaldeans to represent them for their sins, but to the house of Israel, to represent them for theirs; for the father corrects his own child if he do amiss, not the child of a stranger.

The instructions given him in speaking to them are much the same with those in the foregoing chapter.

(1.) He must speak to them all that, and that only, which God spake to him. He had said before, (v. 11.) Thou shalt speak my words to them; here he says, (v. 4.) Thou shalt speak with my words unto them; or, in my words. He must not only say that which for substance is the same that God had said to him, but as near as may be in the same language and expressions. Blessed Paul, though a man of a very happy invention, yet speaks of the things of God in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, (1 Cor. ii. 7.) and his interpreter, the house of Israel, and in Scripture-language, their native dress; and how can we better speak God's mind than with his words?

(2.) He must remember that they are the house of Israel, whom he is sent to speak to; God's house, and his own; and therefore such as he ought to have a particular concern for, and to deal faithfully and tenderly with; they were such as he loved time enough to take to be among his own countrymen, their companion in tribulation; they and he were fellow-sufferers, and had lately been fellow-travellers, in very melancholy circumstances, from Judea to Babylon, and had often mingled their tears, which could not but knit their affections to each other. It was well for the people that they had a prophet who knew experimentally how to sympathize with them, and could not but be touched with the feeling of their infirmities; it was well for the prophet that he had to do with those of his own nation, not with a people of strange speech and a hard language; deep of lip, so that they could not fathom their meaning, and heavy of tongue, whom it is intolerable and impossible to converse with. Every strange language seems to us to be deep and heavy. Thou art not sent to many such people, whom thou couldst neither speak to nor hear from, neither understand nor be understood amongst, but by an interpreter. The apostles indeed were sent to many people of a strange speech, but they could not have done any good among them if they had not had the gift of tongues; but Ezekiel was sent only to one people, those but a few, and his own, whom, having acquaintance with, he might hope to find acquaintance with.

(3.) He must remember what God had already told him of the bad character of those to whom he was sent, that if he met with discouragement and disappointment in them, he might not be offended. They are impudent and hard-hearted; (v. 7.) no convictions of sin would make them blush, no demurrings of wrath would make them tremble. Two things retarded their obstinacy; [1.] They were more obstinate than their neighbours would have been, if the prophet had been sent to them. Had God sent him to any other people, though of a strange speech, surely they would have hearkened to him, they would at least have given him a patient hearing, and showed him that respect which he could not obtain of his own countrymen. The Ninivites were wrought upon by Jonah's preaching, when the house of Israel, that was compa,rd, but with so great a cloud of prophets, was unhumbled and unreformed. But what shall we say to these things? The means of grace are given to those that will not improve them, and withheld from those that would have improved them. We must resolve this into the divine sovereignty, and say, Lord, thy judgments are a great deep. [2] That they were obstinate against God himself; They will not hear my words unto thee, and no marvel, for they will not hear when we regard the word of the prophet, for they will not regard the rod of God, by which the Lord's voice cries in the city. If they believe not God speaking to them by a minister, neither would they believe though he should speak to them by a voice from heaven; may, therefore they reject what the prophet says, because it comes from God, whom the carnal mind is enmified against. They are accused against the law of God, and for that reason turn a deaf ear to his prophets, whose business it is to enforce his law.

(4.) He must resolve to put on courage, and Christ promises to sted him with it, v. 8, 9. He is sent to such as are impudent and hard-hearted, who will receive no impressions, nor be wrought upon in the manner by which the prophet, who will take a pride in affecting God's messengers and confounding the message. It will be a hard task to know how to deal with them; but [1.] God will enable him to put a good face on it; I have made thy face strong against their faces, ended thee with all the firmness and boldness that the case calls for. Perhaps Ezekiel was naturally bashful and timorous, but if God did not find him fit, yet by his grace he made him fit, to accomplish the great and glorious work. The more impudent wicked people are in their opposition to religion, the more openly and resolutely should God's people appear in the practice and defence of it. Let the innocent stir up himself against the hypocrite, Job xvii. 8. When vice is daring, let not virtue be sneaking. And when God has work to do, he will spirit men for it, and give them strength according to the day. If there be occasion, God can and will by his grace make the foreheads of faithful ministers as an adamant, so that the most threatening powers shall not dash them out of countenance. The Lord God will help me, therefore have I set my face like a flint, Isa. I. 7. [2.] He is therefore commanded to have a good heart on it, and to go on in his work with a holy security, not valuing himself too much." Fear not, neither be dismayed at their threats, let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee, or a stumbling-block before thee." Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttingly, (Tit. i. 12, 13.) must be saved with fear, Jude 23. Those that keep close to the service of God, may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the anguish and countenance that drives away a backbiting tongue, give any check to a reproving tongue.

(5.) He must continue instant with them in his preaching, whatever the success was, v. 11. He must go to them of the captivity, who, being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive instruction; he must look upon them as the children of his love, that he might not slight them for their obstinacy. "Fear not, neither be dismayed at their threats, let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee, or a stumbling-block before thee." Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttingly, (Tit. i. 12, 13.) must be saved with fear, Jude 23. Those that keep close to the service of God, may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the anguish and countenance that drives away a backbiting tongue, give any check to a reproving tongue. He must go to them of the captivity, who, being in affliction, it was to be hoped would receive instruction; he must look upon them as the children of his love, that he might not slight them for their obstinacy. "Fear not, neither be dismayed at their threats, let not the menaces of their impotent malice cast either a damp upon thee, or a stumbling-block before thee." Bold sinners must have bold reprovers; evil beasts must be rebuked cuttingly, (Tit. i. 12, 13.) must be saved with fear, Jude 23. Those that keep close to the service of God, may be sure of the favour of God, and then they need not be dismayed at the proud looks of men. Let not the anguish and countenance that drives away a backbiting tongue, give any check to a reproving tongue.
are some so good, that we do not need to speak to them, or, "Here are others so bad, that it is no purpose to speak to them;" but, however it be, deliver thy message faithfully, tell them, the Lord God saith so and so, and let them reject it at their peril.

Full instructions being thus given to the prophet, pursuant to his commission, we are here told,

[1.] With what satisfaction this mission of his was applauded by the holy angels, who were very well pleased to see one, of a nature inferior to their own, thus honourably employed and intrusted. He heard a voice of a great rushing, (v. 12.) as if the angels were arranged and crowning him with their presentation of a prophet; for to them is known by the church, that is, by reflection from the church, the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. They seemed to strive who should get nearest to this great sight. He heard the noise of their wings that touched, or, as the word is, kissed, one another; denoting the mutual affections and assistances of the angels. He heard also the noise of the wheels of Providence moving over against the angels, and in concert with them. All this was to engage his attention, and to convince him that the God who sent him, having such a glorious train of attendants, no doubt had power sufficient to bear him out in his work. But all this noise ended in the voice of praise; he heard them saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord from heaven, and the glory of the Lord upon earth; whence his glory was now in vision descending, or whether perhaps it was now returning. Let the innumerable company of angels above join with these employed in this vision, in saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens. Praise him, all angels, Ps. cxlvii. 1, 2. Secondly, From the temple, his place on earth, wherein he appeared, or from the place where they departed, at the departure of the glory, but adore the righteousness of God in it: however it be, yet God is blessed and glorious, and ever will be so. The prophet said, he heard God thus praised when he received his commission; (Isa. vi. 3.) and a comfort it is to all the faithful servants of God, when they see how much God is praised in his lower world, to think that so much he is admired and glorified in the upper world. The glory of the Lord has many snares from our place, but many praises from his place.

[2.] With what reluctance of his own spirit, and yet with what a mighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, the prophet was himself brought to the execution of his office. The grace given to him was not in vain; for

First. The Spirit led him with a strong hand. God bid him go, but he stirred not till the Spirit took him up. The Spirit of the living creatures that was in the wheels, now was in the prophet too, and took him up; first to hear more distinctly the acclamations of the angels, (v. 12.) but afterward, (v. 14.) first Lord up, strong. God had to break him, which he was backward to, being very loth either to bring trouble upon himself, or foretell it to his people. He would gladly have been excused, but must own, as another prophet does, (Jer. xx. 7.) Thou wast stronger than I, and hast prevailed. Ezekiel would willingly have kept all he heard and saw to himself, that it might go no further, but the hand of the Lord was heavy upon him, and God overpowered him; he was carried on contrary to his own inclinations by the prophetic impulse, so that he could not but speak the things which he had heard and seen, as the apostles, Acts iv. 20. Note, Those whom God calls to the ministry, as he furnishes their heads for it, so he bows their hearts to it.

Secondly. He followed with a sad heart; The Spirit took me away, says he, and then I went, but it was in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit. He had perhaps seen what a hard task Jeremiah had at Jerusalem when he appeared as a prophet, what pit of he took, what opposition he met with, how he was abused by hand and tongue, and what ill treatment he met with, and all to no purpose: "And" (thinks Ezekiel) "must I be set up for a mark like him?" The life of a captive was bad enough; but what would the life of a prophet in captivity be? Therefore he went in this fight, and under this discomposure. Note, There may in some cases be a great reluctance of corruption even there where there is a manifest herd of sin before us. I mourn, not disobedient to the heavenly vision, or shrinking from the work, as Nahum, but I went in bitterness, not at all pleased with it. When he received the divine revelation himself, it was to him sweet as honey, (v. 3.) he could with abundance of pleasure have spent all his days in meditating upon it; but when he is to preach it to others, he, who foresees, will be hardened and exasperated by it, and have their condemnation aggravated, than he goes in bitterness. Note, It is a great grief to faithful ministers, and makes them go on in their work with a heavy heart, when they find people untractable, and hating to be reformed. He went in the heat of his spirit, because of the discouragements he foresaw he should meet with; but the hand of the Lord was upon him, and the Spirit urged his way, but to fit him for it, to carry him through it, and animate him against the difficulties he would meet with; (so we may understand it,) and when he found it so, he was better reconciled to his business, and applied himself to it; Then he came to them of the captivity, (v. 15.) to some place where there were many of them, together, and there the Spirit was, to quicken them, to say, and continued among them seven days, to hear what they said, and observe what they did; and all that time he was waiting for the word of the Lord to come to him. Note, Those that would speak suitably and profitably to people about their souls, must acquaint themselves with them, and with their case; must do as Ezekiel did here, must sit where they sit, and speak familiarly to them of the things of God, and put themselves into their condition, yea, though they sit by the rivers of Babylon. But observe, He was there astonished, overwhelmed with grief for the sins and miseries of his people, and overpowered by the pump of the vision he had seen; he was there desolate; (so some read it;) God showed him no visions men made him no visitation, but he was left to digest his grief, and come to a better temper, before the word of the Lord should come to him. Note, These whom God designs to exalt and enlarge, he first humbles and straitens for a time.

16. And it came to pass, at the end of seven days, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. 18. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will I require at thy hand. 19. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but
thou hast delivered thy soul. 20. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die: because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 21. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned: also thou hast delivered thy soul.

These further instructions God gave to the prophet at the end of seven days, that is, on the seventh day after the vision he had; and it is very probable, that both that and this were on the sabbath-day, which the house of Israel, even in their captivity, observed as well as they could in those circumstances: we do not find that their conquerors and oppressors tied them to any constant service, as their Egyptian taskmasters had formerly done, but that they might observe the sabbath-rest, for a sign to distinguish between them and their neighbours; but for the sabbath-work, they had not the convenience of temple or synagogue, only it should seem they had a river side, where prayer was wont to be made (as Acts xvi. 13.) there they met on the sabbath-day, there their enemies upbraided them with the songs of Zion; (Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 3.) there Ezekiel met them, and the word of the Lord then and there came to him. He that had been musing and meditating on the things of God all the week, was fit to speak to the people in God’s name on the sabbath-day, and disposed to hear God speak to him.

This sabbath-day Ezekiel was not so honoured with visions of the glory of God as he had been the sabbath before; but is plainly, and by a very common similitude, told his duty, which he is to communicate to the people. Note, Raptures and transports of joy are not the daily bread of God’s children, but the mystery and secret of a few upon special occasions, and may be expected to be scarce with them. We must not deny that we have truly communion with God, (1 John i. 3.) though we have it not always so sensibly as at some times. And though the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven may sometimes be looked into, yet ordinarily, it is plain preaching that is most for edification.

God here tells the prophet what his office was, and what the duty of that office; and this (we may suppose) he was to tell the people, that they might attend to what he said, and improve it accordingly. Note, It is good for people to know and consider what a charge their ministers have of them, and what an account they must shortly give of that charge. Observe,

What the office is to which the prophet is called; Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel, v. 17. The vision he saw astonished him, he knew not what to make of that, and therefore God used this plain comparison, which served better to lead him to the understanding of his work, and so to reconcile it to him. He sat among the captives, and said little, but God comes to him, and tells him that will not do, he is a watchman, and has something to say to them; he is appointed to be as a watchman in the city, to guard against fire, robbers, and disturbances of the peace; as a watchman over the flock, to guard against thieves and beasts of prey; but especially as a watchman in the camp, in an invaded country or a besieged town, that is to watch the motions of the enemy, and to sound an alarm upon the approach, now, upon the first appearance, of danger. This supposes the house of Israel to be in a military state, and exposed to enemies, who are subtle and restless in their attempts upon; yes, and each of the particular members of that house to be in danger, and concerned to stand upon their guard. Note, Ministers are watchmen upon the church’s walls, (Isa. xiii. 6.) watchmen that go about the city, Cant. iii. 3. It is a toilsome office; watchmen must keep awake, be they ever so sleepy, and keep abroad, be it ever so cold; they must stand all weathers upon the watch-tower, (Isa. xxi. 8. Gen. xxvi. 40.) it is a dangerous office; sometimes they cannot keep their post, but are in peril of death from the enemy, who gain their point if they kill the sentinels; and yet they dare not quit their post upon pain of death from their general; such a dilemma are the church’s watchmen in; men will curse them if they be faithful, and God will curse them if they be false. But it is a needful office; the house of Israel cannot be safe without watchmen, and yet, except the Lord keep it, the watchman watcheth but in vain, Ps. cxxxvii. 1, 2.

11. What is the duty of this office. The work of a watchman is to take notice, and to give notice. 1. The prophet, as a watchman, must take notice of what God said concerning this people, not only concerning the body of the people, to which the prophecies of Jeremiah and other prophets had most reference, but concerning the thoughts and sentiments of the people, according as their character was; he must notice, as other watchmen, look round to spy danger, and gain intelligence, but he must look up to God, and further he need not look; Hear the word at my mouth, v. 17. Note, Those that are to preach, must first hear; for how can they teach others, who have not first learned themselves.

2. He must give them notice of what he heard: as a watchman must have eyes in his head, so he must have a tongue in his head: if he be dumb, it is as bad as if he were blind, Isa. lvi. 10. Thou shalt give them warning from me, sound an alarm in the holy mountain; not in his own name, or as from himself, but in God’s name, and from him. Ministers are God’s mouth to the children of men. The use of their offices is to give forth God’s word; By them is thy servant warned, Ps. xix. 11. But because that which is delivered verum vere—by the living voice, commonly makes the deepest impression, God is pleased, by men like ourselves, who are equally concerned, to enforce upon us the warnings of the written word.

Now the prophet, in his preaching, must distinguish between the wicked and the righteous, the precious and the vile, and in his applications must suit his alarms to each, giving every one his portion; if he did this, he should have the comfort of it, whatever the success was, but if not, he was accountable.

(1.) Some of those he had to do with, were wicked, and he must warn them not to go on in their wickedness, but to turn from it, v. 18, 19. We may observe here,

[1.] That the God of heaven has said, and does say, to every wicked man, that if he go on still in his trespasses, he shall surely die; his iniquity shall undoubtedly be his ruin, it tends to ruin, and will end in ruin. Dying thou shalt die, thou shalt die so great a death, shall die eternally, be a Corruption, and never die. The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, shall die under the guilt of it, die under the dominion of it.

[2.] That if a wicked man turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way, he shall live, and the ruin he is threatened with shall be prevented; and that he may do so, he is warned of the danger
he is in. The wicked man shall die if he go on, but shall live if he repent. Observe, He is to turn from his wickedness, and from his wicked way. It is not enough for a man to turn from his wicked way by an outward reformation, which may be the effect of his sins leaving him, rather than of his leaving his sins, but he must turn from his wickedness, from the love of it, and the inclination to it, by an inward regeneration; if he do not so much as turn from his wicked way, there is little hope that he will turn from his wickedness.

[5.] That it is the duty of ministers both to warn sinners of the danger of sin, and to assure them of the consequence of repentance; to set before them how miserable they are if they go on in sin, and how happy they may be if they will but repent and reform. Note, The ministry of the word is concerning matters of life and death, for those are the things it sets before us, the blessing and the curse, that we may escape the curse, and inherit the blessing.

[4.] That though ministers do not warn wicked people as they ought of their misery and danger, yet that shall not be admitted as an excuse for those that go on still in their trespasses; for though the watchman did not give them warning, yet they shall die in their iniquity; for they had sufficient warning given them by the providence of God and their own consciences; if they would have taken it, they might have saved their lives.

[5.] That ministers are to be faithful to their trust. If they do not warn sinners of the fatal consequences of sin, but suffer them to go on unreproved, the blood of those that perish through their carelessness, will be required at their hand; it shall be charged upon them in the day of account, that it was owing to their unfaithfulness that such and such persons or families perished; many suppose, if they had had fair warning given them, they might have fled in time from the wrath to come. And if it contract so heinous a guilt as it does to be accessory to the murder of a dying body, what is it to be accessory to the ruin of an immortal soul?

[6.] That if ministers do their duty in giving warning to sinners, though the warning be not taken, yet they may have this satisfaction, that they are clear from their blood, and have delivered their own souls, though they cannot prevail to deliver theirs. Those that are faithful, shall have their reward, though they be not successful.

[2.] Some of those he had to deal with were righteous, at least he had reason to think, in a judgment of charity, that they were so; and he must warn them not to apostatize and turn away from their righteousness, ver. 20, 21. We may observe here,

[1.] That the best men in the world have need to be warned against apostasy, and to be told of the danger they are in of it, and the danger they are in by it. God's servants must be warned, (Ps. xix. 7.) but the wicked will not hearken to God's service. One good means to keep us from falling is, to keep up a holy fear of falling, Heb. iv. 1. Let us therefore fear; and (Rom. xi. 20.) even those that stand by faith, must not be high-minded, but fear, and must therefore be warned.

[2.] There is a righteousness which a man may turn from, a seeming righteousness; from which if men are turned by those who appear to be true apologists for it, it appears that it was never sincere, how passable, may how plausible soever, it was; for if they had been of us, they would have doubt have continued with us, 1 John ii. 19. There are many that begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh; that set their faces heavenward, but look back; that had a first love, but have lost it, and turned from the right way.

[3.] When men turn from their righteousness, they soon learn to commit iniquity. When they grow careless and remiss in the duties of God's worship, neglect them, or are negligent in them, they become an easy prey to the tempter. Omissions make way for commissions.

[5.] When men turn from their righteousness, and commit iniquity, it is just with God to day stumbling-blocks before them, that they may grow worse and worse, till they are ripened for destruction. When Pharaoh hardened his heart, God hardened it. When sinners turn their back upon God, desert his service, and so cast a reproach upon it, he does, in a way of righteous judgment, not only withdraw his restraining grace, and give them up to their own hearts' last, but order them by his providence into such circumstances, and offer them such occasions, as will bring them to ruin on their ruin. There are those to whom Christ himself is a Stone of stumbling and a Rock of offence, 1 Pet. ii. 8.

[5.] The righteousness which men relinquish, shall never be remembered to their honour and comfort; it will stand them in no stead in this world or the other. Apostates lose all that they have wrought, their services and sufferings are all in vain, and shall never be brought to an account, because not continued in. It is a rule in the law, Factum non dictur, quod non perseveravit.—We do that, and that only, which we do perseveringly, Gal. iii. 3, 4.

[6.] If ministers do not give fair warning, as they ought, of the weakness of the best, their aptness to apostasy, their passable danger, the possibility of their being taken in, and the fatal consequences of apostasy, the ruin of those that do apostatize will be laid at their door, and they shall answer for it. Not but that there are those who are warned against it, and yet turn from their righteousness; but that case is not put here, as was concerning the wicked man; but, on the contrary, that a righteous man, being warned, takes that warning, and does not turn aside from it, (ver. 21.) for if you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. We must not only not flatter the wicked, but not even flatter the righteous, as if they were perfectly safe anywhere on this side heaven.

[7.] If ministers give warning, and people take it, it is well for both; nothing is more beautiful than a wise reversion upon an obedient ear; the one shall live because he is warned, and the other has delivered his soul. What can a good minister desire more than to save himself, and those that hear him? 1 Tim. iv. 16.

22. And the hand of the Lord was there upon me; and he said unto me, Arise, go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee. 23. Then I arose, and went forth into the plain; and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar; and I fell on my face. 24. Then the spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and spake with me, and said unto me, Go, shut thyself within thy house. 25. But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee, and shall bind thee with them, and thou shalt not go out among them: 26. And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprover; for they are a rebellious house. 27. But when I speak with thee, I will open thy mouth, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, He that heareth, let him hear;
and he that forbeareth, let him forbear: for they are a rebellious house.

After all this large and magnificent discovery, which had filled his heart with alarm of himself to the prophet, and the full importations he had given him how to deal with those to whom he sent him with an ample commission, we should have expected presently to see him preaching the word of God to a great congregation of Israel; but here we find it quite otherwise. His work here, at first, seems not at all proportionable to the pomp of his call.

I. We have him here required for further learning. By his unwillingness to go, it should seem as if he were not so thoroughly convinced as he might have been of the ability of him that sent him to bear him out; and therefore, to hearten him against the difficulties he foresaw, God will favour him with another vision of his glory, which (if any thing) would put life into him, and animate him for his work. In order to this, God calls him out to the plain, (v. 22.) and there he will have some talk with him. See and admire the condescension of a God in conversing thus familiarly with a man, a son of man, a poor captive, nay, with a sinful man, who, when God sent him, went in bitterness of spirit, and was at this time out of humour with his work! And let us own ourselves for ever indebted to the mediation of Christ for this blessed intercourse and communion between God and man, between heaven and earth.

See here the benefit of solitude, and how much it befriends contemplation! It is very comfortable to be alone with God, withdrawn from the world for converse with him; to hear from him, to speak to him; and a good man will say, I am never less alone, than when thus alone.

Ezekiel went forth into the plain more willingly than he went among them of the captivity; (v. 15.) for he knew that he was to converse with God, with God, cannot but prefer that before any converse with this world, especially such as is commonly met with. He went out into the plain, and there he saw the same vision that he had seen by the river of Chebar; for God is not tied to places. Note, Those who follow God shall meet with his consolations, wherever they go. God called him out to this plain, and he did see something in it that showed him his glory, v. 23. We are not now to expect such visions, but we must own that we have a favour done us no way inferior, if we so by faith behold the glory of the Lord, as to be changed into the same image, by the Spirit of the Lord; and this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

II. We have him here restrained from further teaching for the present. When he saw the glory of the Lord, he fell on his face, being struck with an awe of God’s majesty, and a dread of his displeasure; but the Spirit entered into him to raise him up, and then he recovered himself, and got upon his feet, and heard what the Spirit whispered to him, which is very surprising. One would have expected that God should send him directly to the chief place of concourse, should give him favour in the eyes of his brethren, and make him and his message acceptable to them; that he should have a wider door of opportunity opened to him, and that God should give him a door of utterance to open his mouth boldly; but what is here said to him is the reverse of all this.

But instead of sending him to a public assembly, he orders him to confine himself to his own lodgings. Go, shut thyself within thy house, v. 24. He was not willing to appear in public, and when he did, the people did not regard him, nor show him the respect he deserved, and, as a just rebuke both to him and them, to him for his shyness of them, and to them for their coldness toward him, God forbids him to appear in public. Note, Our choice is often made our punishment; and it is a righteous thing with God to remove teachers into corners, when they, or their people, or both, grow indifferent to solemn assemblies. Ezekiel might have thought, if he might give signs of the besieging of Jerusalem, in which the people should be closely shut up as he was in his house, and which he speaks of in the next chapter. He must shut himself within his house, that he might receive further discoveries of the mind of God, and might abundantly furnish himself with something to say to the people when he sent abroad. Ezekiel finds that the claims of Judah visited him, and sat before him, sometimes in his house, (ch. vii. I.) to be witnesses of his ecstasies; but it was not till ch. xi. 25, that he spoke to them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had showed him. Note, Those that are called to preach must find time to study, and a great deal of time too; must often shut themselves up in their houses, that they may give attendance to reading and meditation, and so their profiting may appear to all.

2. Instead of securing him an interest in the esteem and affections of those to whom he sent him, he tells him that they shall put bands upon him, and bind him, (v. 25.) either, (1.) As a criminal; they shall bind him in order to the further punishing of him as a disturber of the peace; though they were themselves sent into bondage in Babylon for persecuting the prophetic people, yet they might persecute them; or, rather, (2.) As a distracted man; they would go about to bind him one beside himself; for to that they imputed his violent motions in his raptures. The captains asked John, Wherefore came this mad fellow into thee? Festus said to Paul, Thou art beside thyself; and so they said of our Lord Jesus, Mark iii. 21. Perhaps this was the reason why they might keep within doors, that otherwise they would bind him, under pretence of his being mad, and therefore he must not go out among them. Justly are prophets forbidden to go to those that will abuse them.

3. Instead of opening his lips, that his mouth might show forth God’s praise, God silenced him, made his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth, and gave him no power to speak. The priests captives in Babylon used this imprecation upon themselves, that if they should forget Jerusalem, their tongue might cleave to the roof of their mouth, Ps. cxxxvii. 6. Ezekiel remembers Jerusalem more than any of them, and yet his tongue cleaves to the roof his mouth; and he that can speak best is forbidden to speak at all; and the reason given is, because they are a rebellious house to whom he is sent, and they are not worthy to have him for a reprover. He shall not give them instructions and admonitions, for they are lost and thrown away upon them. He is before commanded to speak boldly to them, because they are most rebellious; (ch. vi. 7.) but since that proves to no purpose, he is now for that reason enjoined silence, and shall not speak at all to them. Note, Those whose hearts are hardened against conviction, are justly deprived of the means of conviction. Why should not the reprovers be dumb, if, after long trials, it be found that the reproved resolve to be deaf? If Ephraim be joined to idols, let him alone. Thou shalt be dumb, and not be a reprover; implying, that unless he were dumb, he would be reproving; if he could speak at all, he would witness against the wickedness of the wicked.

But when God speaks with him, and designs to speak by him, he will open his mouth, v. 27. Note, Though God’s prophets may be silenced awhile, there will come a time when God will give them the opening of the mouth again. And when God
speaks to his ministers, he not only opens their ears to hear what he says, but opens their mouth to return an answer. Moses, who had a veil on his face when he went down to the people, took it off when he went up again to God, Exod. xix. 12.

4. Instead of giving him assurance of success when he should at any time speak to the people, he here leaves the matter very doubtful, and Ezekiel must not perplex and disquiet himself about it, but let it be as it will: He that heareth, let him hear, and he is welcome to the comfort of it; let him hear, and his soul shall live; but he that forbears, let him forbear; and take care with himself; for if thou sayest, thou shalt not hear it, neither God nor his prophet shall be any losers by it; but the prophet shall be rewarded for his faithfulness in proving the sinner, and God will have the glory of his justice in condemning him for not taking the reproof.

CHAP. IV.

Ezekiel was now among the captives in Babylon, but they there had Jerusalem still upon their hearts; the pious captives looked toward it with an eye of faith, (as Daniel, ch. vi. 10.) the presumptuous ones looked towards it with an eye of pride, and flattened themselves with a conceit that they should shortly return thither again; they that remained corresponded with the captives, and, it is said, Babylon is and with hopes that all would well yet, as long as Jerusalem was standing in its strength; and perhaps upbraided those with their folly who had surrendered at first; therefore, to take down this pride, he lays before them the prophet's signs, a very clear and affecting foresight of the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army, and the calamities which would attend that siege. Two things are here represented to him in vision. 1. The fortifications that should be raised against the city; this is signified by the prophet's laying siege to the portraiture of Jerusalem, (v. 1-3.) and lying first on one side, and then on the other side, before God, (v. 4, 5.) that should rage within the city; this is signified by his casting very coarse fare, and confining himself to a little of it, so long as this typical representation lasted, v. 9-17.

1. Thou also, son of man, take thee a tile, and lay it before thee, and pourray upon it the city, even Jerusalem:

2. And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battlements around it round about. Moreover, take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city, and set thy face against it, and it shall be besieged, and thou shalt lay siege against it. This shall be a sign to the house of Israel.

4. Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel. And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year. Therefore thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and thyine arm shall be uncovered, and thou shalt prophesy against it.
understand to mean the close besieging of that city, and people would be flocking in daily, some for curiosity, and some for conscience, at the hour appointed, to see it, and to make their different remarks upon it.

His being found constantly on the same side, as if bands were laid upon him, (as indeed they were by the divine command,) so that he could not turn himself from one side to another till he had ended the days of the siege, did plainly represent the close and constant constancy of the besiegers about the city during that number of days, till they had gained their point.

IV. He was ordered to prosecute the siege with vigour; (v. 7.) Thou shalt set thy face toward the siege of Jerusalem, as wholly intent upon it, and resolved to carry it; so the Chaldeans would be, and neither bribed nor forced to withdraw from it. Nebuchadnezzar's remonstrances of Zedekiah's treachery, breaking his league with him, made him very furious in pushing on this siege, that he might chastise the insolence of that faithless prince and people, and this army promised themselves a rich booty of that pompous city, so that both set their faces against it, for they were very resolute. Nor were they less active and industrious, exerting themselves to the utmost in all the operations of the siege, which the prophet was to represent by the uncovering of his arm, or, as some read it, the stretching out of his arm: for such an instance he gives of Zedekiah's unfaithfulness, that he might be made a type of the faithless, etc. When God is about to do some great work, he is said to make bare his arm, Isa. lii. 10. In short, the Chaldeans will go about their business, and go on in it, as men in earnest, who resolve to go through with it.

Now, I. This is intended to be a sign to the house of Israel, (v. 2.) both to them in Babylon, who were there, and to those also who remained in their own land, who would hear the report of it. The prophet was dumb, and could not speak; (ch. iii. 26.) but as his silence had a voice, and upbraided the people with their deafness, so even God then left not himself without witness, but ordered him to make signs, as dumb men used to do, and as Zacharias did when he was dumb, and by them to make known his mind, that, is, the mind of God, to the people. And thus likewise the people were upbraided with their stupidity and dulness, that they were not capable of being taught as men of sense are, by words, but must be taught as children are, by pictures, or as deaf men are, by signs. Or, perhaps, they are hereby upbraided with their malice against the prophet: had he spoken in words at length what was signified by these figures, they would have entangled him in a web of words, and that work, the talk, would have indicted him for treasonable expressions, for they knew how to make a man an offender for a word; (Isa. xxix. 21.) to avoid which he is ordered to make use of signs. Or, the prophet made use of signs for the same reason that Christ made use of parables, that bearing they might hear, and not understand, and seeing they might see, and not perceive; (Matt. x. 16.) for we cannot understand what is plain, and therefore shall be taught by that which is difficult; and herein the Lord was righteous.

2. Thus the prophet prophesies against Jerusalem; (v. 7.) and there were those who not only understood it so, but were the more affected with it by its being thus represented; for images to the eye commonly make deeper impressions upon the mind than words can; and for this reason sacraments are instituted to represent divine things, that we might see and believe, might see and be affected with those things; and we may expect this benefit by them, and a blessing to go along with them, while (as the prophet here) we make use only of such signs as God himself has expressly appointed, which, we must conclude, are the fittest. Note, The power of imagination, if it be rightly used, and kept under the direction of reason and faith, may be of good use to kindle and excite the affections, as it was here to Ezekiel and his attendants.

3. This whole transaction has that in it which the prophet represented as if with a good colour of reason, have hesitated at, and excepted against, and yet, in obedience to God's command, and in execution of his office, he did it according to order. (1.) It seemed childish and ludicrous, and beneath his gravity, and there were those that would ridicule him for it; but he knew the divine appointment put honour enough upon that which otherwise seemed mean, to save his reputation in the doing of it. (2.) It was tedious and tiresome to do as he did; but our ease and credit must be sacrificed to our duty, and we must never call God's service in any instance of it a hard service. (3.) It could not but be very much against the grain with him to appear thus against Jerusalem, the city of God, the holy city, to act as an enemy against a place to which he was so good a friend; but he is a prophet, and must follow his instructions, not his affections, and must bluntly preach the ruin of a sinful place, though its welfare is what he passionately desires, and earnestly prays for.

4. All this that the prophet sets before the children of his people concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, is designed to bring them to repentance, by showing them sin, the provoking cause of this destruction, sin, the ruin of that once flourishing city, and those all that may be affected to make them hate sin, and turn from it; while he thus in lively colours describes the calamity with a great deal of pain and unseasonableness to himself, he is bearing the indignity of Israel and Judah; "Look here," (says he,) "and see what work sin makes, what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God; this comes of sin, your sin and the sin of your mother; let that therefore be the daily matter of your sorrow and shame now in your captivity, that you may make your peace with God, and he may return in mercy to you." But observe, It is a day of punishment for a year of sin; I have appointed thee each day for a year. The siege is a calamity of three hundred and ninety days, in which God reckons for the indignity of three hundred and ninety years; justly therefore do they acknowledge that God had punished them less than their indignity deserved, Ezra ix. 13. But let insufficient sinners know that though now God is long-suffering toward them, in the other world there is an everlasting punishment. When God laid bands upon the prophet, it was to show them how they were bound with the cords of their own transgression, (Lam. i. 14.) and therefore they were never made more like the children of a most rebellious. But we may well think of the prophet's case with compassion, when God laid upon him the bands of duty, as he does on all his ministers, 1 Cor. ix. 16. Necessity is laid upon me, and we unto me if I preach not the gospel; and yet men laid upon him bands of restraint; (ch. iii. 25.) but under both it is satisfaction enough that they are serving the interests of God's kingdom among men.

9. Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof according to the
number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side; three hundred and ninety days, shalt thou eat thereof. 10. And thy meat which thou shalt eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a-day: from time to time shalt thou eat it. 11. Thou shalt drink also water by measure, the sixth part of a hin: from time to time shalt thou drink. 12. And thou shalt eat it as barley-cakes, and thou shalt bake it with dung that cometh out of man, in their sight. 13. And the Lord said, Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, whither I will drive them. 14. Then said I, Ah Lord God! behold, my soul hath not been polluted; for from my youth up, even till now, have I not eaten of that which dieth of itself, or is torn in pieces; neither came there abominable flesh into my mouth. 15. Then he said unto me, Lo, I have given thee cow's dung for man's dung, and thou shalt prepare thy bread therewith. 16. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem; and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: 17. That they may want bread and water, and be astonishèd one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.

The best exposition of this part of Ezekiel's prediction of Jerusalem's desolation is Jeremiah's lamentation of it, Liii. 4, 5, 8c. and ch. v. 10. where he pathetically describes the terrible famine that was in Jerusalem during the siege, and the sad effects of it. The prophet here, to affect the people with the foresight of it, must confine himself for 390 days to coarse fare and short commons, and that ill-dressed, for they should want both food and fuel.

I. His meat, for the quality of it, was to be of the worst bread, made of but little wheat and barley, and the rest of beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, such as we feed horses or faint hogs with, and this is mixed, as millock, or as that in the beggar's bag, that has a dish full of one sort of corn at one house, and of another at another's house; of such corn as this must the prophet's bread be made, while he underwent the fatigue of lying on his side, and needed something better to support him, ver. 9. Note, It is our wisdom not to be too fond of dainties and pleasant bread, because we know not what hard meat we may be tied to, nay, and may be glad of, because it is more wholesome, than what we desire, and therefore must not be despised or wasted, nor must those that use it be looked upon with disdain, because we know not what may be our own lot.

II. For the quantity of it, it was to be of the least that a man could keep alive with; to signify that the burden should be reduced to short commons and want, and should hold out till all the bread in the city was spent, Jer. xxxvii. 21. The prophet must eat but twenty shekels weight of bread a day, (ver. 10.) that was about one ounces; and he must drink but the sixth part of a hin of water, that was half a pint, about eight ounces, ver. 11. The sinit of the Egyptian diet is fourteen ounces of meat, and sixteen of drink. The prophet in Babylon had bread enough and to spare, and was by the river-side, where there was plenty of water; and yet, that he might confirm his own prediction, and be a sign to the children of Israel, God obliges him to live thus sparingly, and he submits to it. Note, God's servants must learn to endure hardness, and to deny themselves the use of lawful delights, when they may thereby serve the glory of God, evidence the sincerity of their faith, and express their sympathy with their brethren in affliction. The body must be kept under, and brought into subjection; nature is content with a little, grace with less, but lust with nothing. It is good to stint ourselves of choice, that we may the better enjoy it if we have it. It would be well were we thus learns necessity. And in times of public distress and calamity, it ill becomes us to make much of ourselves, as those that drank wine in bowls, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, Amos vi. 4-6.

III. For the dressing of it, he must bake it with man's dung, (ver. 12.) that must be dried, and serve for fuel to heat his oven with; the thought of it would almost turn one's stomach; yet the coarse bread, thus baked, he must eat as barley-cakes, as freely as if it were the same bread he had been used to. This nauseous piece of cookery he must exercise publicly in their sight, that they might be the more affected with the calamity approaching, which was signified by it; that in the extremity of the famine they should not only have coarse, but ill-dressed, and battered, and defiled, and beastly food to eat, but that of the loathsome kind; for he was a large and honourable man, and must be covered with earth, that God might see no unclean thing in their camp, Deut. xxviii. 13, 14. And must he go gather a thing so offensive, and use it in the dressing of his meat in the sight of the people? "Ah Lord God," says he, "behold, my soul hath not been polluted, and I am afraid lest by this it be polluted." Note, The pollution of the soul by sin is what good people dread more than any thing else; and yet sometimes tender consciences fear it without cause, and perplex themselves with scruples about lawful things, as the prophet here, who had not yet learned that it is not that which goes into the mouth that defiles the man, Matt. xv. 11. But observe, He does not plead, "Lord, from my youth I have been brought up delicately, and never used to any thing but what was clean and nice;" (and there were those who were so brought up, who in the siege of Jerusalem did embrace dunghills, Lam. iv. 5.) but that he had been brought up conscientiously, and had never eaten any thing that was forbidden by the law, that died of itself, or was torn in pieces; "And therefore, Lord, do not put this upon me now." Thus Peter pleaded, (Acts xiv. 13.) Lord, I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. Note, It will be comfortable to us, when we are reduced to hardships, if our hearts can witness for us that we have always been careful to abstain from sin, even from little sins, and the appearances of evil. Whatever God commands us, we may be sure is good; but if we be put upon any thing that he approved not, and are forced to do it against our will, from this consideration, that heither we have preserved our purity—and shall we lose it now? Now, because Ezekiel with a manifest tenderness of conscience made this scruple, God dispensed with him in this manner. Note, Those who have power in their hands, should not be rigorous in pressing their commands upon those that are dissatisfied concerning them, yea, though their dissatisfactions be
groundless, or arising from education and long usage, but should recurce from them rather than give or offend the weak, or put a stumbling-block before them; in conformity to the example of God's condescension to Ezekiel, though we are sure his authority is incomprehensible, and all his commands wise and good. God allowed Ezekiel to use care's dunge instead of man's dung, v. 15. This is an implied reflection upon man, as intimating that, he being polluted with sin, his filthiness is more nauseous and odious than that of any other creature. How much more abominable and filthy is man! Job xv. 16.

Now this sign is particularly explained here; it signifies:

1. That those who remained in Jerusalem should be brought to extreme misery for want of necessary food; all supplies being cut off by the besiegers, the city would soon find a want of the country, for the king himself is served of the field, and thus the staff of bread would be broken in Jerusalem, v. 16. God would not only take away from the bread its power to nourish, so that they should eat, and not be satisfied, (Lev. xxvi. 26.) but would take away the bread itself, Isa. iii. 1. So that what little remained should be eaten by weight, so much a-day, so much a-head, that they might have no equal share, and might make it last as long as possible. But to what purpose when they could not make it last always: and the besieged must be tired out before the besiegers? They shall eat and drink with care, to make it go as far as might be, and with astonishment, which is more than hunger, they shall be afraid, so it may not last, and be a way to look for a recruit. They shall be astonished one with another; whereas it was to be some alleviation of a calamity to have others share with us in it, (Solamen miseris socias habuisse doloris,) and some case to the spirit to complain of the burden, it should be an aggravation of the misery, that it was universal, and their complaining to one another should but make them all the more uneasy, and increase the astonishments; and the event shall be as bad as their fears; they cannot make it worse than it is, for they shall consume away for their iniquity; multitudes of them shall die of famine, a lingering death, worse than that by the sword; (Lam. iv. 9.) they shall die so as to feel themselves die, and it is sin that brings all this misery upon them; They shall consume away for their iniquity; and shall die by the sword. They shall continue hardened and impenitent, and shall die in their sins, which is more miserable than to die on a dunghill.

Now, (1.) Let us see here what woful work sin makes with a people, and acknowledge the righteous-ness of God herein. Time was when Jerusalem was filled with the finest of the wheat; (Ps. cxlvii. 14.) but now it would be glad of the corner, and could have it, in abundance for bread, as it was one of Jerusalem's mercies, so it became one of her sins, Ezek. xvi. 49. The plenty was abused to luxury and excess, which was therefore thus justly punished with famine. It is a righteous thing with God to deprive us of those enjoyments which we have made the food and fuel of our lusts.

(2.) Let us see what reason we have to bless God for the fruits of the earth, but for the freedom of commerce, that the husbandman can have money for his bread, and the tradesman bread for his money; that there is abundance not only in the field, but in the market, that those who live in cities and great towns, though they sow not, neither do they reap, are yet fed from day to day with bread.

2. It signifies, that those who were carried into captivity should be forced to eat their defiled bread among the Gentiles, (v. 13.) to eat meat made up by Gentile hands, otherwise than according to the law of the Jewish church, which they were always taught to call defiled, and which they would eat as great an aversion to as a man would have to bread prepared with dung, that is, (as perhaps it may be understood,) kneaded and moulded with dung. Daniel and his fellows confined themselves to pulse and water, rather than they would eat the portion of the king's meat assigned them, because they opposed it; (Dan. i. 8.) or, they should be forced to eat defiled meat, such as their oppressors would allow them in their slavery, and such as formerly they would have scorned to touch. Because they served not God with cheerful-ness in the abundance of all things, God will make them serve their enemies in the want of all things.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have a further, and no less terrible, denunciation of the judgments of God, which were coming with all speed and force upon the Jewish nation, which would utterly ruin it; for when God judges he will overcome. This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem is here, 1. Represented by a sign, the cutting, and burning, and scattering of hair, v. 1-5. II. That sign is expounded, and applied to Jerusalem. 1. Sin is charged upon Jerusalem as the cause of this destruction; contempt of God's law, (v. 5-7.) and profanation of his sanctuary, v. 11. 2. Wrath is threatened, great wrath, (v. 1-6.) a variety of miseries, (v. 12, 16, 17.) such as should be their reproach and ruin, v. 13, 15.

1. And thou, son of man, take thee a sharp knife, take thee a barber's razor, and cause it to pass upon thy head, and upon thy beard; then take thee balances to weigh, and divide the hair. 2. Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled; and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife; and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind: and I will draw out a sword after them. 3. Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. 4. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire: for thereof shall a fire come forth into all the house of Israel.

We have here the sign by which the utter destruc- tion of Jerusalem is set forth; and here, as before, the prophet is himself the sign, that the people might see how much he affected himself with, and interested himself in, the case of Jerusalem, and how near it lay to his heart, even then when he foresaw the desolation as the judgment of God, and about it as to take what was done to it as done to himself, so far was he from desiring the woful day.

1. He must shave off the hair of his head and beard, (v. 1.) which signified God's utter rejecting and abandoning of that people, as a useless, worthless generation, such as could well be spared, nay, such as it would be his honour to part with; and yet, in a sense, it was confessed that it was in the hands of those who cut them off, were this sharp knife; and this razor, that were proper to be made use of, and would do execution. Jerusalem had been the head, but, being degenerated, was become as the hair, which, when it grows thick and long, is but a burden which a man wishes to get clean of, as God did the sinners in Zion; And I will make me of mine own ad-

2. Ezekiel must not cut off that hair only which was superfluous, but cut it all off, denoting the full end that God would make of Jerusalem. The hair that would not be trimmed and kept neat and clean by the admonitions of the pro-
phets, must be all shaven off by an utter destruction. Those will be ruined that will not be reformed.

2. He must weigh the hair, and divide it into three parts. This intimates the very exact directing of God's judgments according to equity, (by him men and their actions are weighed in the unerring balance of truth and righteousness,) and the proportion which divine justice observes in punishing some by one judgment and others by another; one way or other, they shall all be met with. Some make the shaving of the hair to denote the loss of their liberty and of their honour: it was looked upon as a mark of ignominy, as in the disgrace Haman put on David's ambassadors; he denotes also the loss of their name, for they shall carry their heads upon occasion of great mourning; I may add the loss of their Nazarite, for the shaving of the head was a period to that vow, (Num. vi. 18.) and Jerusalem was now no longer looked upon as a holy city.

3. He must dispose of the hair so that it might all be destroyed or dispersed, v. 2. (1.) One third part must be burnt in the midst of the city, denoting the multitudes that should perish by famine and pestilence, and perhaps many in the congregation of the city, when the days of the siege were fulfilled; or the laying of that glorious city in ashes might well be looked upon as a third part of the destruction threatened. (2.) Another third part was to be cut in pieces with a knife, representing the scattering of some one way and some another, like loose hairs in the wind. But lest they should think that this dispersion would be their escape, God adds, I will draw out a sword after them, so that, wherever they go, evil shall pursue them. Note, God has variety of judgments wherewith to accomplish the destruction of a sinful people, and to make an end when begins.

4. He must preserve a small quantity of the third sort that were to be scattered in the wind, and bind them in his skirts, as one would bind that which he is very mindful and careful of, v. 3. This signified perhaps that little handful of people which were left under the government of Gedaliah, who, it was hoped, would keep possession of the land where the body of the people was carried into captivity. Thus God would have done well for them if they would have done well for themselves. But these few that were reserved, must be taken, and cast into the fire, v. 4. When Gedaliah and his friends were slain, the people that put themselves under his protection were scattered, some gone into Egypt, others carried off by the Chaldeans, and in short the land was totally cleared of them; then this was fulfilled, for out of those combustions a fire came forth into all the house of Israel, who, as soon as the fire, kindled and consumed one another. Note, It is ill with a people when those are taken away in wrath that seemed to be marked for monuments of mercy, for then there is no remnant or escaping, none shut up or left.

5. Thus saith the Lord God, This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her. And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and my statutes more than the countries that are round about her; for they have refused my judgments and my statutes, they have not walked in them. They therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye multiplied more than the nations that are round about you, and have not walked in my statutes, neither have kept my judgments, neither have done according to the judgments of the nations that are round about you; 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I, even I, saith the Lord, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, in the sight of the nations. And I will do in thee that which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like; because of all thine abominations. Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments in thee, and the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds. 11. Wherefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, Surely, because thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, and with all thine abominations, therefore will I also diminish thee; neither shalt thou have eye spare, neither will I have any pity. 12. A third part of thee shall die with the pestilence, and with famine shall they be consumed in the midst of thee; and a third part shall fall by the sword round about thee; and I will scatter a third part into all the winds; and I will draw out a sword after them. 13. Thus shall mine anger be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted: and they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it in my zeal, when I have accomplished my fury in them. 14. Moreover, I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. 15. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment, unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee, in anger and in fury, and in furious rebukes. I the Lord have spoken it. 16. When I shall send upon them the evil arrows of famine, which shall be for their destruction, and which I will send to destroy you: and I will increase the famine upon you, and will break your staff of bread. 17. So will I send upon you famine, and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it.

We have here the explanation of the foregoing similitude: This is Jerusalem. Thus it is used in
scripture-language to give the name of the thing signified to the sign; as when Christ said, This is my body. The prophet's head was not to be shaved, signified Jerusalem, which by the judgments of God was now to be stripped of all its ornaments, to be emptied of all its inhabitants, and to be naked and bare to be invaded with strange nations, says Isa. xlii. 2. The head of one that was a priest, a prophet, a holy person, was fittest to represent Jerusalem the holy city. Now the contents of these verses are much the same with what we have often met with, and still shall, in the writings of the prophets. Here we have,

1. The privileges Jerusalem was honoured with, (v. 3.) I have set it in the midst of the nations one country, and over it; and shall have dominion over her, and those, famous nations, and very considerable. Jerusalem was not situated in a remote, obscure corner of the world, far from neighbours, but in the midst of kingdoms that were populous, polite, and civilized, famed for learning, arts, and sciences, and which then made the greatest figure in the world. But there seems to be more in it than this. 1. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, and of all the nations around her; it was set in the midst of them as excelling them all; this holy mountain was exalted above all the hills, Isa. ii. 2. Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in. Ps. lxxxvii. 16. Jerusalem was a city upon a hill, conspicuous and illustrious, and which all the neighbouring nations had an eye upon, so the prophet describes it, Jer. ii. 1. Jerusalem was designed to have a good influence upon the nations and countries round about, as it was set in the midst of them as a candle upon a candlestick, to spread the light of divine revelation, which she was blessed with, to all the dark corners of the neighbouring nations, that from them it might diffuse itself further, even to the ends of the earth. Jerusalem was set in the midst of the nations, to be as the heart in the body to invigorate this dead world with a divine life, as well as to enlighten this dark world with a divine light, to be an example of every thing that was good. The nations that observed what excellent statutes and judgments they had, concluded them to be a wise and understanding people, (Deut. iv. 6.) fit to be consulted as an oracle, as they were in Solomon's time, 1 Kings iv. 34. And Solomon described this city, as it was built for a light of the Gentiles to shine upon and to be a right use of it, what a blessing had Jerusalem been to all the nations about! But, failing to be so, the accomplishment of this intention was reserved for its latter days, when out of Zion went forth the gospel-law, and the word of the Lord Jesus from Jerusalem, and there repentance and remission began to be preached, and thence the preachers of the same went forth into all the world. And when that was done, Jerusalem was levelled with the ground. Note. When places and persons are made great, it is with design that they may do good, and that those about them may be the better for them; that their light may shine before men.

II. The provocations Jerusalem was guilty of. A very high charge is here drawn up against that city, and proved beyond contradiction sufficient to justify God in taking away its privileges, and putting it under military execution.

1. She had not walked in God's statutes, nor kept his judgments; (v. 7.) may, they had refused his judgments and his statutes, (v. 6.) they did not do their duty, may they would not; they sinned that they would not; those statutes and judgments which their neighbours admired, they despised; with their faces, which were turned before their faces, they cast behind their back. Note. A contempt of the word and law of God opens a door to all manner of iniquity. God's statutes are the terms on which he deals with men; they that refuse his terms, cannot expect his favours.

2. She had changed God's judgments into wickedness, (v. 6.) a very high expression of their profaneness, that they had not only broken God's laws, but had so perverted and abused them, that they had made them the excusals and colour of their wickedness; they introduced those inapplicable customs and usages of the heathen, instead of God's institutions; this was changing the truth of God into a lie, (Rom. i. 25.) and the glory of God into shame, Ps. iv. 2. Note. Those that have been well educated, if they live ill, put the highest affront imaginable upon God, as if he were the Patron of sin, and his judgments are mereturned into wickedness.

3. She had been worse than the surrounding nations, to whom she should have set a good example; She has changed my judgments, by idolatries and false worship, more than the nations, (v. 6.) and she has multiplied idols and altars, gods and temples, multiplied those things the unity of which was their praise, more than the nations that were round about. Israel's God is one, and his name one, his altar one; but they, not content with this one God, multiplied their gods to that degree, that according to the number of their cities so were their gods, and their altars as heaps in the furrows of the field, so that they exceeded all their neighbours in having gods many and lords many. They corrupted revealed religion more than the Gentiles had corrupted natural religion. Note. If those who have made a profession of religion, and have had a particular education, apostatize from it, they are commonly more profane and vicious than those who never made any profession; they have seven other spirits more wicked.

4. She had not done according to the judgments of the nations; (v. 7.) they had not acted toward their God, though he is the only true God, as the pros and idlers toward their gods, who were false gods; they were not so observant of him, nor so constant to him. Has a nation changed their gods, or slighted them, so as they have? Jer. ii. 11. Or, it may refer to their morals; instead of reforming their neighbours, they came short of them; and many who were of the uncircumcision kept the righteousness of the law better than those who were circumcised, Rom. iv. 25. Those who had the light of nature, and did not act according to the judgments of many who had only the light of nature. Note. Those are who are called Christians, who in the great day be condemned by the better tempers and better lives of sober heathens.

5. The particular crime charged upon Jerusalem is, profaning the holy things, which she had been both intrusted and honoured with; (v. 11.) Thou hast defiled my sanctuary with all thy detestable things, with thine idols and idolatries. The images of their pretended deities, and the groves erected in honour of them, were brought into the temple; and the ceremonies used by idolaters were brought into the worship of God; thus every thing that is sacred was polluted. Note. Idolats are detestable things anywhere, but more especially so in the sanctuary.

III. The punishments that Jerusalem should fall under for these provocations: Shall not God visit for these things? No doubt he shall. The manner of the sentence here passed upon Jerusalem is very dreadful, and the manner of expression makes it yet more so; the judgments are various and the threatenings are successively dilated, so that one may say well, Who is able to stand in God's sight when once he is angry?

1. God will take this work of punishing Jerusalem into his own hands; and who knows the power
of his anger, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands! Observe what a strong emphasis is laid upon it, (v. 8.) I even, I am against thee. God had been for Jerusalem, to defend and save it; but miserable is its case when he is turned to be its Enemy, and fights against it. If God be against us, the whole creation is at war with us, and nothing can be for us so as to stand us in any stead; *you think it is only the Chaldean army that is against you, but they are God's hand, or rather the staff in his hand; it is I, even I, that am against thee; not only to speak against thee by prophets, but to act against thee by providence. I will execute judgments in thee, (v. 10.) in the midst of thee, (v. 11.) and round about thee, even in the heart of the city; not only in the borders, and in the bowels of the country." Note, Those who will not observe the judgments of God's mouth, shall not escape the judgments of his hand; and God's judgments, when they come with commission, will penetrate into the midst of a people, will enter into the soul, into the bowels like water, and like oil into the bones; I will execute judgments. Note, God himself undertakes to execute his own judgments, according to the true and full intent of them; whatever are the instruments, he is the principal Agent.

2. These punishments shall come from his displeasure. As to the body of the people, it shall not be a correction in love, but he will execute judgments in anger, and in fury, and in furious retribution; (v. 13.) and upon the earth, and upon the bowels of the earth, (v. 14.) and upon the daughters of any nation, (v. 15.) and upon the inmost parts of the city; not only in the borders, and in the bowels of the country. Note, (v. 13.) "Mine anger, which has long been withheld, shall now be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them; it shall not only light upon them, but lie upon them, and fill them as vessels of wrath fitted by their own wickedness to destruction; and, justice being hereby glorified, I will be comforted, I will be entirely satisfied in what I have done. As I was exalted with much wrath by the sins of men, he is said to be grieved, (Ps. xev. 10.) so when he is honoured by their destruction, he is said to be comforted. The struggle between mercy and judgment is over, and in this case judgment triumphs, triumphs indeed; for mercy that has been so long abused, is now silent, and gives up the cause, has not a word more to say on the behalf of such an ungrateful, incorrigible people; Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have any pity, v. 11. Divine compassion defers the punishment, or mitigates it, or supports under it, or shortens it, but here is judgment without mercy, wrath without any mixture or alloy of pity. These expressions are thus sharpened and heightened, perhaps with design to look further, to the vengeance of eternal fire, which shall be the destruction we read of in judgment; and that they were fit expressions of the tenor of the punishment were typical of, and particularly that of Jerusalem; for surely it is no where on this side hell that this word has its full accomplishment, Mine eye shall not spare, but I will cause my fury to rest. Note, Those who live and die impenitent, will perish for ever unpitied; there is a day coming when the Lion will not spare.

3. For the judgment shall be public and open; I will execute these judgments in the sight of the nations; (v. 8.) the judgments themselves shall be so remarkable, that all the nations far and near shall take notice of them; they shall be all the talk of that part of the world, and more for the conspicuosity of place and people, so far as they are inflicted. Note, Public sins, as they call for public reproofs, (Them that sin rebuke before all,) so, if these prevail not, they call for public judgments. He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others, (Joh. xxxiv. 26.) that he may maintain and vindicate the honour of his government, for (as Grotius descants upon it here) would he suffer it to be said, see what wicked things they lead one another into, but that be the worshippers of the only true God! And as the publicity of the judgments will redound to the honour of God, so it will serve, (1.) To aggravate the punishment, and to make it lie the more heavy, Jerusalem, being made waste, becomes a reproach among the nations, in the sight of all that passes by, (v. 18.) They are a reproach to the nations, and the more peculiar any have been in the destruction of Jerusalem, the greater disgrace attends their fall; and that was Jerusalem's case. The more Jerusalem had been a praise in the earth, the more it is now a reproach and a taunt, v. 15. This she was warned of as much as any thing when her glory commenced, (1 Kings ix. 8.) and this was lamented as much as any thing when it was laid in the dust, Lam. ii. 15. (2.) To teach the nations to fear before the God of Israel, when they saw what a jealous God he is, and how severely he punishes sin, even in those that are nearest to him. It shall be an instruction to the nations, v. 15. Jerusalem should have taught her neighbours the fear of God by her piety and virtue, but she not doing that, God will teach it them by her ruin; for they have reason to say, If this be done by the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? when judgment begin at the house of God, where will it end? If they be thus punished, who only had some idolaters among them, what will become of us who are all idolaters? Note, The destruction of some is designed for the instruction of others. Malefactors are publicly punished, in terrorem—that others may take warning.

4. These punishments, in the kind of them, shall be very severe and grievous. (1.) They shall be such as have no precedent or parallel. Their sins being more provoking than those of others, the judgments executed upon them should be uncommon, (v. 9.) "I will do in thee that which I have not done in thee before, though thou hast long since deserved it; any, that which I have not done in any other city. Note, God's judgments are always to be greater than that of Sodom, (Lam. iv. 6.) which was the severest of all that went before it; any, it is such as I will not do any more the like, all the circumstances taken in, to any other city, till the like come to be done again to this city, in its final overthrow by the Romans. This is a rhetorical expression of the most grievous judgments, like that character of Hezkiah, that there was none like him, before or after him. (2.) They shall be such as will force them to break the strongest bonds of natural affection to one another, which will be a just punishment of them for their wilful breaking of the bonds of their duty to God; (v. 10.) The fathers shall eat the sons, and the sons shall eat the fathers, and all the other members of the family, or all those whom they thought to be greater than that of Sodom, (Lam. iv. 6.) shall be destroyed by them, and shall be cut off by their barbarous conquerors. (3.) There shall be a complication of judgments, any one of them terrible enough, and desolating; but what then would they be when they came all together, and in perfection? Some shall be taken away by the plague; (v. 12.) the pestilence shall pass through thee, (v. 17.) sweeping all before it, as the destroying angel; others shall be consumed with famine, or shall gradually waste away as men in a consumption; (v. 12.) this is again insisted on; (v. 16.) I will send upon them the evil arrows of famine; hunger shall make them pine, and shall pierce them to the heart, as if arrows, evil arrows, poisoned darts were shot into them; God has many arrows, evil arrows, in
his quiver; when some are discharged, he has still more in reserve. I will increase the famine upon you; a famine in a bereaved country may decrease, as fruits spring forth; but a famine in a besieged city will increase of course; yet God speaks of it as his act; * I will increase it, and will break your staff of bread; will take away the necessary supports of life, will disappoint all of you that which you depend upon, so that there is no remedy, but you must die of hunger. Life is fixed, it is sequestered, is thinned, so that, if it have not daily bread for its staff to lean upon, it cannot but sink, and is on gone if that staff be broken. Others shall fall by the sword round about Jerusalem, when they escape from the besiegers; it is a sword, which God will bring, v. 17. The sword of the Lord, that was used to be drawn for Jerusalem’s defence, is changed for destruction. Others are devoured by evil beasts, which will make a prey of those that fly for shelter to the deserts and mountains; they shall meet their ruin where they expected refuge, for there is no escaping the judgments of God, v. 17. And lastly, those who escape shall be scattered into all parts of the world, into all the winds, (so it is expressed, v. 10, 12.) Intimating that they should not only be dispersed, but hunted, and tossed, and driven from place to place, until they are last of mankind, and as chaff before the wind. Nay, and Cain’s curse (to be fugitives and vagabonds) is not the worst of it neither, their restless life shall be cut off by a bloody death; I will draw out a sword after them, which shall follow them wherever they go. Evil pursues sinners; and the curse shall come upon them, and overtake them.

3. The punishments will prove their ruin by degrees; they shall be diminished, (v. 11.) their strength and glory shall grow less and less; they shall be bereaved, (v. 17.) emptied of all that was their joy and confidence. God sends these judgments on purpose to destroy them, v. 16. The arrows are not sent (as those which Jonathan shot) for their direction, but for their destruction. For God will accomplish his fury upon them, (v. 13.) the day of God’s patience is over, and the ruin is remediless. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment now quickly, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, yet the executioners not being named here, but the criminal only, (This is Jerusalem,) we may well suppose that it looks further, to the final destruction of that greatness by the Romans, when God made a fall out of the Jewish nation, and caused his fury to rest upon them.

6. All this is ratified by the divine authority and veracity; I the Lord have spoken it, (v. 15.) and again, v. 17. The sentence is passed by him that is Judge of heaven and earth, whose judgment is according to truth, and the judgments of his own according to the judgments of men. If he has spoken it, who can do it, for with him nothing is impossible. He has spoken it, who will do it, for he is not a man that he should lie. He has spoken it, whom we are bound to obey and heed; whose word commands the most serious attention and submissive assent: And they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it, v. 13. There were those who thought it was in the prophet’s power to make it in his delirium; but God will make them know, by the accomplishment of it, that he has spoken it in hisNeal. Note, Sooner or later, God’s word will prove itself.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter, we have, I. A threatening of the destruction of Israel for their idolatry, and the destruction of their idols with them, v. 1-7. II. A promise of the gracious return of a remnant of them to God, by true repentance and reformation v. 8-10. III. Directions given to the prophet and others, the Lord’s servants, to foment both the iniquities and the calamities of Israel, v. 11-14.

1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them. 3 And say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Behold, I, even I will bring a sword upon you, and I will destroy your high places; 4. And your altars shall be desolate, and your images shall be broken; and I will cast down your slain men before your idols. 5. And I will lay the dead carcases of the children of Israel before their idols; and I will scatter your bones round about your altars. 6. In all your dwelling-places the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. 7. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Here, 1. The prophecy is directed to the mountains of Israel, (v. 1, 2.) the prophet must set his face toward them; if he could see so far off as the land of Israel, the mountains of that land would be first and furthest seen; toward them therefore he must look, and look boldly and steadfastly, as the judge looks at the prisoner, and directs his speech to him, when he passes sentence upon him. Though the mountains of Israel be ever so high and ever so strong, he must set his face against them, as having judgments to denominate, that should shake their foundation. The mountains of Israel had been holy mountains, but now that they had polluted them with their high places, God sets his face against them, and therefore the prophet must, as some do in the pulpit, but for the whole land. The mountains are called upon to hear the word of the Lord, to shame the inhabitants that would not hear. The prophets might as soon gain attention from the mountains as from that rebellious and gain-saying people, to whom they all day long stretched out their hands in vain. Hear, O mountains, the Lord’s controversy; (Mic. vii. 1, 2.) for God’s case will have a hearing, whether we hear it or no. But from the mountains the word of the Lord echoes to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys; for to them also the Lord God speaks; intimating that the whole land is concerned in what is now to be delivered, and shall be witnesses against this people, that they had fair warning given them of the judgments coming, but they would not hear it. They are hereby commanded to persecute the messengers, so that God’s prophets might more safely and comfortably speak to the hills and mountains than to them.

2. That which is threatened in this prophecy, is the utter destruction of the idols and the idolaters, and both by the sword of war. God himself is commander in chief of this expedition against the mountains of Israel; it is he that says, Behold, I, even I will bring a sword upon you; (v. 3.) the sword of the
Chaldeans is at God's command, goes where he sends it, comes where he brings it, and lights as he directs. In the desolations of that war,
(1.) The idols and all their appurtenances should be destroyed. The high places, which were on the tops of mountains, (v. 3.) these shall be levelled, and made desolate, (v. 6.) they shall not be beautified, shall not be frequented as they had been; the altars, on which they offered sacrifice and burnt offering to strange gods, shall be broken down; the images and idols shall be defaced, shall be broken and cease, and be cut down, and all the fine costly works about them shall be abolished, v. 4, 6. Observe here, [1.] That war makes woful desolations, which those persons, places, and things, that were esteemed most sacred, cannot escape; for the sword devours one as well as another. [2.] That God sometimes rains idolatries, even by the hands of idolaters, for such the Chaldeans themselves were; but, as if the deity were a local thing, the greatest admirers of the gods of their own country were the greatest despisers of the gods of other countries. [3.] It is just with God to make that a desolation, which we make an idol of; for he is a jealous God, and will not bear a rival. [4.] If men do not, as they ought, destruction is sure to come on them first or last; but they have time to do it. When Josiah had performed the high places, altars, and images, with the sword of justice, they set them up again; but God will now destroy them with the sword of war, and let us see who dares re-establish them.

(2.) The worshippers of idols and all their adherents should be destroyed likewise; as all their high places shall be laid waste, so shall all their dwellers, v. 6. They that profane God's dwelling-place as they had done, can expect no other than that he should abandon theirs, ch. v. 11. If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy, 1 Cor. iii. 17. It is here threatened, that their shame shall fall in the midst of them; (v. 7.) there shall be abundance slain, even in those places which were thought most safe, but it is added as a remarkable circumstance, that they shall fall before their idols, (v. 4.) that their dead carcases shall be laid, and their bones scattered, about their altars, v. 5. [1.] Thus their idols should be polluted, and those places profaned by the dead bodies, which they had had in veneration. If they will not defile the covering of their graven images, God will, Isa. xxix. 22. The throwing of the cast lots among the Jews was, as upon the dung-hill, to make sure that they were but dunghill deities. [2.] Thus it was intimated that they were but dead things, unfit to be rivals with the living God; for the carcases of dead men, that, like them, have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, were the fittest company for them. [3.] Thus the idols were upbraided with their inability to help, and idolaters unshunnable with the folly of trusting in them; for, it should seem, they fell by the sword of the enemy then when they were actually before their idols, imploring their aid, and putting themselves under their protection. Senacharib was slain by his sons then when he was worshiping in the house of his god. [4.] The sin might be read in this circumstance to be unprofitable worship; the souls were before the idols, to show that therefore they are slain, because they worshipped those idols: see Jer. viii. 2. Let the survivors observe it, and take warning not to worship images: let them see it, and know that God is the Lord, that the Lord he is God, and he alone.

8. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries. 9. And they that escape of you shall remember me among the nations, whither they shall be carried captives, because I am broken with their whorish heart, which hath departed from me, and with their eyes, which go a whoring after their idols: and they shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations.

10. And they shall know that I am the Lord, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them.

Judgment had hitherto triumphed, but in these verses mercy rejoices against judgment: a sad end is made of this provoking people, but not a full end; the ruin seems to be universal, and yet will I leave a remnant, a little remnant, distinguished from the body of the people, a few of many; such as are left when the rest perish; and it is God that leaves them. This intimates that they deserved to have been cut off with the rest, and had been cut off if God had not left them. See Isa. i. 9. And it is God who by his grace works that in them which he has an eye to in sparing them.

It is a privilege to this remnant, saved from the ruin which the body of the nation is involved in; (v. 8.) that ye may have some who shall escape the sword. God said, (ch. v. 12.) that he would draw a sword after them who were scattered, that destruction should pursue them in their dispersions; but here is mercy remembered in the midst of that wrath, and a promise that some of the Jews of the dispersion, as they were afterward called, should escape the sword. None of those who were to fall by the sword about Jerusalem, shall escape, for they trust to Jerusalem's walls for security, and shall be made ashamed of that vain confidence; but some of them shall escape the sword among the nations, where, being deprived of all other stays, they stay themselves upon God only. They are said to have these who shall escape; for they shall be the seed of another generation, out of which Jerusalem shall flourish again.

II. It is a penitent remnant; (v. 9.) They who escape of you, shall remember me. Note, To those whom God designs for life, he will give repentance unto life: they are reprieved, and escape the sword, that they may have time to return to him. This gives God's patient, long-suffering heart, an encouragement to sinners to repent, and is an encouragement to sinners to repent. Where God designs grace to repent, he allows space to repent; yet many who have the space want the grace; many who escape the sword, do not forsake the sin, as it is promised that these shall do. This remnant, here marked for salvation, is of a type of the remnant reserved out of the body of mankind, which are made safe in the same way that these were, by being brought to repentance. Now observe here,

1. The occasion of their repentance, and that is a mixture of judgment and mercy; judgment, that they were carried captives; but mercy, that they escaped the sword in the land of their captivity; they were driven out of the land of the living, not chased out of the world, as others were, and they deserved to be. Note, The consideration of the just retributions of Providence we are under, and yet of the mercy mixed with them, should engage us to repent, that we may avail ourselves of God's grace to us in both. And true repentance shall be accepted of God, though we are brought to it by our trouble, sorrow, or suffering; such repentations often prove means of conversion, as to Manasseh.

2. The root and principle of their repentance: They shall remember me among the nations. They
who forgot God in the land of their peace and prosperity, waxed fat and kicked, were brought to remember him in the land of their captivity. The prodigal son never bethought himself of his father's house till he was ready to perish for hunger in the far country. Their remembering of God was the first step they took in returning to him. Note, Those who return to God from whoring, as from an unclean spirit, when they begin to think of him whom they have sinned against, and to inquire, Where is God my Maker? Sin takes rise in forgetting God, Jer. iii. 21. Repentance takes rise from the remembrance of him, and of our obligations to him. God says, They shall remember me, that, "I will give them grace to do so;" otherwise for this they would forever forget him. This grace comes to them wherever they are, and by bringing God to their mind shall bring them to their right mind. The prodigal, when he remembered his father, remembered how he had sinned against heaven, and before him; so do these penitents.

(1.) They remember the base affront they had put upon God by their idolatries, and this is that which an ingenious repentance fastens upon, and made them see how very they were defiled to idols, and given that honour to pretended deities, the creatures of men's fancies, and the work of men's hands, which they should have given to the God of Israel. They departed from God, from his word, which they should have made their rule; from his work, which they should have made his business; their hearts departed from him. The heart, when any thing has taken possession upon it, and it will not be displaced, either bodily exercise profits nothing; the heart, which should be set upon him, and carried out toward him, when that departs from him, is as the treacherous clepeomen of a wife from her husband, or the rebellious revolt of a subject from his sovereign. Their eyes also go after their idols; they doted on them, and had great expectations from them. Their hearts followed their eyes in the choice of their gods; they must have gods that they could see, and then their eyes followed their hearts in the adoration of them. Now the malignity of this sin is, that it is spiritual whoredom; it is a whorish heart that departs from God; and they are eyes that go a whoring after their idols. Note, Idolatry is spiritual whoredom; it is the breach of a marriage contract, and of an alliance, and of the dealings upon that which is a rival with him, and the indulgence of a base lust, which deceives and defiles the soul, and is a great wrong to God in his honour.

(2.) They remember what a grief this was to him, and how he represented it. They shall remember that I am broken with their whorish heart, and their eyes that are full of this spiritual adultery; not only theyحمد at it, but grieved, as a husband is at the lewdness of a wife whom he dearly loved, grieved to that degree, that he is broken with it; it breaks his heart to think that he should be so disingenuously dealt with; he is broken as an aged father is with the unfruitful behaviour of a rebellious and disobedient son, which sinks his spirits, and makes him to stoop. Forty years long he was carried away with his generation. Ps. xcv. 10. God's measures were broken; so some; a stop was put to the current of his favours toward them, and he was even compelled to punish them. This they shall remember in the day of their repentance, and it shall affect and humble them more than any thing; not so much that their peace was broken long, but it was broken, as that God was broken by their sin. Thus they shall look up him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, Zech. xii. 10. Note, Nothing grieves a true penitent so much as to think that his sin has been a grief to God, and to the Spirit of his grace.

3. The product and evidence of their repentance; They shall loathe themselves for the evils which they have committed in all their abominations. Thus God will give them grace to qualify them for pardon and deliverance. Though he had been broken by their whorish heart, yet he would not quite cast them off. See Isa. lxx. 17, 18. Hos. ii. 13, 14. His goodness is better than life itself, and appears in manifold ways to appear the more illustrious. Note, (1.) True penitents are sin to be an abominable thing, that abominable thing which the Lord hates, and which makes sinners, and even their services, odious to him, Jer. xiv. 4. Isa. i. 11. It defiles the sinner's own conscience, and makes him, unless he be past feeling, an abomination to himself. An idol is particularly called an abomination, Isa. xiv. 19. These gratifications which the hearts of sinners were set upon as delectable things, the hearts of penitents are turned against as detestable things. (2.) There are many evils committed in these abominations, many included in them, attendant on them, and flowing from them; many transgressions in one sin, Lev. xvi. 21. In their idolatries they were sometimes guilty of whoredom, as in the worship of Peor; and sometimes spiritual whoredom, as in their abominations; these were evils committed in their abominations. Or, it denotes the great malignity there is in sin; it is an abomination that has abundance of evil in it. (3.) Those that truly loathe sin, cannot but loathe themselves because of sin; self-hating is evermore the companion of true repentance. Penitents quarrel with themselves, and can never be reconciled to their former sins. Many things are brought to acknowledge: both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatenings of the word, and to justify God in them, and in the accomplishment of them.

4. The glory that will redound to God by their repentance; (v. 10.) They shall know that I am the Lord; they shall be convinced of it by experience, and shall be ready to own it, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them, finding that what I have said is made good, and made to work for good, and to answer a good intention, and that it was not without just provocation that they were thus threatened and thus punished. Note, (1.) One way or other, God will make sinners to know and own that he is the Lord, either by their repentance or by their ruin. (2.) All true penitents are brought to acknowledge both the equity and the efficacy of the word of God, particularly the threatenings of the word, and to justify God in them, and in the accomplishment of them.

11. Thus saith the Lord God, Smite with thy hand, and stamp with thy foot, and say, Alas, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. 12. He that is far off shall die of the pestilence; and he that is near shall fall by the sword; and he that remaineth and is besieged shall die by the famine: thus will I accomplish my fury upon them. 13. Then shall ye know that I am the Lord, when their slain men shall be among their idols round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak, the place where they did offer sweet savour to all their idols. 14. So will I stretch out my hand upon them, and make the land desolate, yea, more desolate than
The wilderness toward Diblah, in all their habitations; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The same threatenings which we had before in the foregoing chapter, and in the former part of this, are here repeated, with a direction to the prophet to lament them, that those he prophesied to might be the more affected with the foresight of them.

1. He must by his gestures in preaching express the deep sense he had both of the iniquities and of the calamities of the house of Israel; (v. 1.) Smiteth with thy hand, and stampeth with thy foot. Thus he must make it to appear that he was in earnest in what he said to them, that he firmly believed it, and laid it to heart; thus he must signify the just displeasure he had conceived at their sins, and the just dread he was under of the judgments coming upon them. Some would reject this use of these gestures, and call them auntie and ridiculous; but God bids him use them because they might help to enforce the word upon some, and give it the setting on; and those that know the worth of souls, will be content to be laughed at by the wits, so they may but edify the weak. Two things the prophet must thus lament: (1.) National sins. Also, for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of God's faithful servants, especially the evil abominations of the house of Israel, whose sins are more abominable, and more meet to be the sins of others. Also, What will be in the end hereof? (2.) National judgments. To punish them for these abominations, they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence. Note, It is our duty to be affected not only with our own sins and sufferings, but with the sins and sufferings of others; and to look with compassion upon the miseries that wicked people bring upon themselves, as Christ beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it.

2. He must incalculately what he had said before concerning the destruction that was coming upon them.

(1.) They shall be run down and ruined by a variety of judgments which shall find them out, and follow them wherever they are; (v. 12.) He is fair, and thinketh himself out of danger, because out of the reach of the Chaldeans' arrows, shall find himself not out of the reach of God's arrows, which fly day and night; (Ps. xcii. 5.) he shall die of the pestilence; he that is near a place of strength, which he hopes will be to him a place of safety, shall fall by the sword, before he can retreat; he that is so cautious as not to venture out, but remains in the city, there he shall die by the famine, the saddest death of all. Thus will God accomplish his fury; do all that against them which he had purposed to do.

(2.) They shall read their sin in their punishment; for their slaying shall be among their idols, round about their altars, as was threatened before, v. 5.—7. There, where they had prostituted them out, and humour of their idols, God will lay them dead, to their own reproach, and the reproach of their idols. They lived among them and shall die among them. They had offered sweet odours to their idols, but there shall their dead carcases send forth an offensive smell, as it were to atone for that misplaced incense.

(3.) The country shall be all laid waste, as before the cities; (v. 6.) I will make the land desolate. That fruitful, pleasant, populous country, that has been as the garden of the Lord, the glory of all lands, shall be desolate, more desolate than the wilderness toward Diblah, v. 14. It is called Diblah, lathaim, (Numb. xxxiii. 46.—lviii. 22.) that great and terrible wilderness, which is described, Deut. viii. 15. wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions. The land of Canaan is at this day one of the most barren, desolate countries in the world. City and country are thus depopulated, that the altars may be laid waste, and made desolate, v. 6. Rather than their idolatrous altars shall be left standing, both town and country shall be laid in ruins. Sin is a desolating thing; therefore stand in awe, and sin not.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, the approaching ruin of the land of Israel is most particularly described, affecting expressions often repeated, that if possible they might be awakened by repentance to prevent it. The prophet must tell them, v. 2. That it will be a final ruin, a complete, utter destruction, which would make an end of them, a miserable end, v. 1.—6. II. That it is an approaching ruin, just at the door, v. 7.—10. III. That it is an unavoidable ruin, because they had by sin brought it upon themselves, v. 10.—13. IV. That their strength and wealth should be no fence against it, v. 16.—19. V. That the temple, which they trusted in, should itself be ruined, v. 20.—22. VI. That it should be a universal sin, the sin that brought it having been universal, v. 23.—27.

1. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Also, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, An end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land. 3. Now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all these abominations. 4. And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and these abominations shall be in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 5. Thus saith the Lord God, An evil, an only evil, behold, is come. 6. An end is come, the end is come; it watcheth for thee; behold, it is come. 7. The morning is come unto thee, O thou that dwellest in the land: the time is come, the day of trouble is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains. 8. Now will I shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee; and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all these abominations. 9. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways, and these abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smitest. 10. Behold the day, behold, it is come; the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed; pride hath budded. 11. Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness: none of them shall remain, nor of their multitude, nor of any of theirs; neither shall there be waiting for them. 12. The time is come, the day draweth near: let not the buyer rejoice, nor the seller mourn: for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 13. For the seller shall not return to that which
is sold, although they were yet alive: for the vision is touching the whole multitude thereof, which shall not return; neither shall any strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life. 14. They have blown the trumpet, even to make all ready; but none goeth to the battle: for my wrath is upon all the multitude thereof. 15. The sword is without, and the pestilence in the city; be that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him.

We have here fair warning given of the destruction of the land of Israel, which was now hastening on apace. God, by the prophet, not only sends notice of it, but will have it incarnated in the same expressions, to show that the thing is certain, that it is near, that the prophet is himself affected with it, and desires they should be so too, but finds them deaf, or rather stupidly affected. Where the town is on fire, men do not seek for fine words and quaint expressions, in which to give an account of it, but cry about the streets, with a loud and lamentable voice, "Fire, fire." So the prophet here proclaims, An end, an end, it is come, it is come, behold, it is come. He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

13. An end is come, the end is come, (v. 2.) and again, (v. 3, 6.) Now is the end come upon thee; the end which all their wickedness had a tendency to, and which God had often told them it would come to at last, when by his prophets he had asked them, What will ye do in the end thereof? The end, which all the foregoing judgments had been working toward, as means to bring it about; their ruin shall now be completed; or, the end, that is, the period of their state, the final destruction of their nation, as the deluge was the end of all flesh, Gen. vi. 13. They had flattered themselves with hopes that they should shortly see an end of their troubles; "Yea," says God, "An end is come, but a miserable one, not the expected end," (which is promised to the pious remnant among them, Jer. xxix. 11.) "it is the end, that end which you have so often warned of; that last end, which Michtam prophesied, (Ps. civ. 13.) and which because Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully," Lam. i. 9. This end was long in coming, but now it is come. Though the ruin of sinners comes slowly, it comes surely. "It is come, it watches for thee, ready to receive thee." This perhaps looks further, to the last destruction of that nation by the Romans, which that by the Chaldeans was an earnest of, and still further, to the final destruction of the world of the ungodly. The end of all things is at hand; and Jerusalem's last end was a type of the end of the world, Matt. xxiv. 3. O that we could all see that end of time and days very near, and the end of our own time and days much nearer, that we may secure a happy lot in the end of the days! Dan. xii. 13. This end comes upon us from a far country, and last it shall be full, so shall it be total; no part of the land shall escape; no, not that which lies most remote; such will be the destruction of the world be; all these things shall be dissolved; such will the destruction of sinners be; none can avoid it. O that the wickedness of the wicked might come to an end, before it bring them to an end.

2. An evil, an only evil, behold, is come, v. 5. So is an evil, an only evil, an evil of evil do in it; it is the worst of evils; but this is spoken of the evil of trouble; it is an evil, one evil; and that one shall suffice to effect and complete the ruin of the nation, there needs no more to do its business; this one shall make an utter end, affliction needs not rise up a second time, Nah. i. 9. It is an evil without precedent or parallel, an evil that stands alone, you cannot produce such another instance. It is to the imminent of evil, an only evil, it hardens their hearts, and irritates their corruptions; whereas there were those to whom it was sanctified by the grace of God, and made a means of much good; they were sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5.

The wicked have the dregs of that cup to drink, which to the righteous is full of mixtures of mercy, Ps. lxvi. 8. The same affliction is to us either a means of grace, or an evil, according as we consider ourselves under it, and make use of it. But when an end, the end, is come upon the wicked world, then an evil, an only evil, comes upon it, and not till then. The sorest of temporal judgments have their allays, but the torments of the damned are an evil, an only evil.

3. The time is come, the set time, for the infliction of this only evil, and the making of this full end; for to all God's purposes there is a time, a proper time, and that prefixed, in which the purpose shall have its accomplishment; particularly the time of reckoning with wicked people, and rendering to them according to their deserts, is fixed; the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God; and he sees, whether we see it or no, that his day is coming. To them are here told of a day and time which they had not seen, and whereof it was not written, (v. 10.) Behold, the day, that has lingered so long, is come at last, behold, it is come. The time is come, the day draws near, the day of trouble is near, v. 7, 12. Though threatened judgments may be long deferred, yet they shall not be dropped; the time for executing them will come. Though God's patience may put them off; nothing but man's sincere repentance and reformation will put them by. The morning is come unto thee, (v. 7.) and against the day of trouble dawns, the day of destruction is already begun. The morning discovers that which was hidden; they thought their secret sins would never come to light, but now they will be brought to light. They used to try and execute malefactors in the morning, and such a morning of judgment and execution is now come, in the evening of the world, (Jer. xlix. 29.) and because Jerusalem remembered not, therefore she came down wonderfully. See how stupid these people were, that, though the day of their destruction was already begun, yet they were not aware of it, but must be thus told of it again and again! The day of trouble, real trouble, is near, and not the sounding again of the mountains, not a mere echo or report of troubles, as they were willing to think it was, nothing but a groundless surmise, as if the men that came against them were but the shadow of the mountains, (as Zebul suggested to Gaal, Judg. ix. 36.) and the intelligence they received were but an empty sound, reverberated from the mountains. No, the trouble is not a fancy, and so you will soon find.

4. All this comes from God's wrath, not alloyed, as sometimes it has been, with mixtures of mercy. If it be the judgment of God, which all these calamities flow; and this is the wormwood and the gall, in the affliction and the misery, which makes it bitter indeed; (v. 9.) I will send mine anger upon thee. Observe, God is Lord of his anger; it does not break out but when he pleases, nor fasten upon any but as he directs it, and gives it commission. The expression rises higher, (v. 8.) Aew will I shortly pour mine anger upon them, and dry up mine anger, all the purposes and all the products of it, upon thee. This wrath does not single out here and there one to be made examples, but it is upon all the multitude thereof; (v. 12, 14.) the
1. The body of the nation is become a vessel of wrath, fitted for destruction. God does sometimes in wrath remember mercy, but now he says, Mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity, (v. 4.) and again, (v. 9.) They shall have judgment without mercy, who made light of mercy when it was offered them.

6. All this is the just punishment of their sins, and is what is to be done by their own feet, brought upon themselves. This is much insisted on here, that they might be brought to justify God in all he had brought upon them. God never sends his anger but in wisdom and justice; and therefore it follows, "I will judge thee according to thy ways, v. 3. I will examine what thy ways have been, compare them with the law and then deal with thee according to the merit of them, and recom pense them to thee," v. 4. Now, by the nearest judgments God inflicts upon sinners, he does but recompense their own ways upon them; they are beaten with their own rod. And when God comes to reckon with a sinful people, he will bring every precaution to account; "I will recompense upon thee all thine abominations;" (v. 3.) and now thine iniquity shall be found to be hateful, (v. 4.) and God shall bring upon thee all thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee; (v. 4.) the secret wickedness shall now be brought to light, and that shall appear to have been in the midst of thee, which before was not suspected; and thy sin shall now become an abomination to thyself. So the abomination of iniquity will be, when it comes to be an abomination of desolation, Matt. xxiv. 15. Or, These abominations, the punishments of them, shall be in the midst of thee, they shall reach to thy heart, See Jer. iv. 18. Or, Therefore God will not spare, nor have pity, because even then when he is recompressing their ways upon them, yet in their distress they trespassed yet more; their abominations are still in the midst of them, indulge and harboured in their hearts. It is repeated again, (v. 6, 8.) I will judge thee, I will recompense thee.

Two sins are particularly specified as provoking God to bring these judgments upon them; pride, and oppression. (1.) God will humble them by his judgments, for they have magnified themselves. The rod of affliction has blossomed, but it was pride that budded, v. 10. What buds in sin, will blossom in some judgment or other. The pride of Judah and Jerusalem appeared as high as the degrees of men, as buds upon the tree in spring. (2.) Their enemies shall deal hardly with them, for they have dealt hardly with one another; (v. 11.) Violence is risen up into a rod of wickedness; their injuriousness to one another is protected and patronized by the power of the magistrate. The rod of government was become a rod of wickedness; to such a degree of impudence was violence risen up, saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there, Ezek. iii. 16. Isa. v. 7. Whatever are the fruits of God's judgments, it is certain that our sins is the root of them.

6. There is no escape from these judgments, nor fence against them, for they shall be universal, and shall bear down all before them, without remedy. 1. The earth and the heavens shall be de- scended triumphantly, both in town and in country, both within the city and without it, v. 15. Men shall be safe no where, for he that is in the field shall die by the sword, every field shall be to them a field of battle; and he that is in the city, though it be a holy city, yet it shall not be his protection, but famine and pesti lence shall devour him. Sin had abounded both in city and in country, and therefore the vengeance of God shall abound both in city and country. in the city and the country both, and therefore the vengeance of God shall abound both in city and country. in the city and the country both, and therefore the vengeance of God shall abound both in city and country.

2. None of those that are marked for death shall escape; there shall none of them remain; none of these proud oppressors that did violence to their poor neighbours with the rod of wickedness, none of them shall be left, but they shall be all swept away by the desolation that is coming; (v. 11.) None of their multitude, of the rabble, whom they set on to do mischief, and to confound them in doing it; to see them all destroyed, not only on the destruction of any; none of them shall remain, nor any of their; their families shall all be destroyed, and neither rest nor branch left them; this multitude, this mob, divine vengeance will in a particular manner lasten upon; for wrath is upon all the multitude thereof; (v. 12.) And the vision was touching the whole multitude thereof; (v. 13.) the bulk of the sellemen; the people. The judgments coming shall carry them away by wholesale, and they shall neither secure themselves nor their masters, whose creatures and tools they were. God's judgments, when they come with mission, cannot be overpowered by multitudes. Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wicked go unpunished.

3. Those that fall shall not be lamented; (v. 11.) There shall be no mourning for them, for there shall be none left to bewail them, but such as are hastening pace after them. And the times shall be so bad, that men shall rather congratulate than lament the death of their friends, as reckoning those happy that are taken away from seeing these desolations, and sharing in them, Jer. xvi. 4, 5.

4. (1.) They shall not be able to make any resistance. The decree is gone forth, and the vision concerning them shall not return, v. 13. God will not recall it, and they cannot defeat it; and therefore it shall not return to infect—without having accomplished any thing, but shall accomplish that for which it sends it. God's word will take place, and then, (1.) Particular persons cannot make their part good against God; no man shall strengthen himself in the iniquity of his life; it will be to no purpose for sinners to set God and his judgments at defiance as they used to do; none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered. Those that strengthen themselves in their wickedness, will be found not only to weaken but to ruin themselves, Ps. liii. 7. [2.] The multitude cannot resist the torrent of these judgments, nor make head against them; (v. 14.) These are God's soldiers, they call their soldiers together, and to animate and encourage those whom they have got together, and thus they think to make all ready; but all in vain, none enlist themselves, and those that do have not courage to face the enemy. Note, If God be against us, none can be for us, to do us any service.

5. They shall have no hope of the return of their prosperity, with which to support themselves in their adversity; they shall have given up all for gone; and therefore, "Let not the buyer rejoice that he is increasing his estate, and is become a purchaser; nor let the seller mourn that he is lessening his estate, and is become a bankrupt," v. 12. See the vanity of the things of this world, and how worthless they are—that in a time of trouble, when they have no value at all, they are the means to bring the least account of them. They that have sold are the more easy, having the less to lose; and they that have bought have but increased their own cares and fears. Because the fashion of this world passes away, let those that buy be as though they possessed not, because they know not how soon they may be despoised, 1 Cor. vii. 28. It is added, (v. 13.) They that have sold themselves in the days of jubile, to that which is sold, according to the law, though he should escape the sword and pesti-
lence, and live till that year comes; for no inheritances shall be enjoyed here, till the seventy years be accomplished, and then men shall return to their possessions, shall claim and have their own again." In the belief of which, Jeremiah about this time, bought his uncle's field, yet, according to the charge, the buyer did not re-price, but complain, Jer. xxxvii. 25.

Lastly, God will be glorified in all. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord, (v. 4.) that I am the Lord that smiteth, v. 9. You look at second causes, and think it is Nebuchadnezzar that smites you, but you shall be made to know he is but the staff, it is the hand of the Lord that smiteth you; and who knows the weight of his hand?" Those who would not know it was the Lord that did them good, shall be made to know it is the Lord that smiteth them; for, one way or other, he will be owned.

16. But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. 17. All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak as water. 18. They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them; and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads. 19. They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels; because it is the stumbling-block of their iniquity. 20. As for the beauty of his ornament, he set it in majesty; but they made the images of their abominations, and of their detestable things therein: therefore have I set it far from them. 21. And I will give it into the hands of the strangers for a prey, and to the wicked of the earth for a spoil; and they shall pollute it. 22. My face will I turn also from them, and they shall pollute my secret place: for the robbers shall enter into it, and defile it.

We have attended the fate of those that are cut off, and are now to attend the flight of those that have an opportunity of escaping the danger; some of them shall escape, (v. 16.) but what the better? As good die once, as, in a miserable life, die a thousand deaths, and escape only like Cain, to be fugitives and vagabonds, and afraid of being slain by every one they meet; so shall these be. 1. They shall have no comfort or satisfaction in their own minds, but be in a continual anguish and terror; for, wherever they go, they carry about with them guilty consciences, which make them a burden to themselves. 2. They shall be always solitary, and under presentiments of danger, so they shall not be in the cities, or places of conourse, but all alone upon the mountains, not caring for society, but shy of it, as being ashamed of the low circumstances to which they are reduced. 3. They shall be always sorrowful. Those have reason to be so that are under the token of God's displeasure: and God can make those so, that have been most joyful, and have set sorrow at defiance. They that once thought themselves as the lions of the mountains, so daring were they now become as the doves of the valleys, so timid are they, and dispirited, ready to flee when none pursues, and tremble at the shaking of a leaf. They are all of them mourning, not with a godly sorrow, but with the sorrow of the world, which works death, every one for his iniquity, for those calamities which they now see their iniquity has brought upon them; not only the iniquity of the land, but the iniquity of the house of Israel shall then be brought to acknowledge what they have each of them contributed to the national guilt. Note, Sooner or later sin will have sorrow of one kind or other; and those that will not repent of their iniquity may justly be left to pine away in it; those that will not mourn for it as it is an offence to God, shall be made to mourn for it as it is a shame and ruin to themselves; it is known at last, when the flesh and the body are consumed, and to say, How have I hated instruction! Prov. v. 11.

3. They shall be deprived of all their strength of body and mind; (v. 17.) All hands shall be feeble, so that they shall not be able to fight, or defend themselves, and all knees shall be weak as water, so that they shall not be able to flee, or to stand their ground: they shall feel a universal colliquation; their knees shall be as water, so that they must fall of course. Note, It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength, for God can soon weaken it. 4. They shall be deprived of all their hopes, and shall abandon themselves to despair, (v. 18.) they shall have nothing to hold up their spirits with, their aspect shall show what are their prospects, all dreadful, for they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, as having no expectation ever to wear better clothing; horror shall cover them, and shame, and baldness, all the expressions of a desperate sorrow. Isa. xxvii. 11. Note, Those that will not be kept from sin by fear and shame, shall by fear and shame be punished for it; such is the confusion that sin will end in.

II. They shall have no benefit from their wealth and riches, but shall be perfectly sick of them, v. 19. They that were reduced to this distress, were such as had had abundance of silver and gold, money, and plate, and jewels, and other valuable goods; from which they promised themselves a great deal of advantage in times of public trouble; they thought it would be their strong city, that with it they could bribe enemies and buy friends, that it would be the ransom of their lives, and that they could never be deprived of it; they had money and goods, and that money would answer all things: but see how it proved: 1. It had been a great temptation to them in the day of their prosperity; they set their affections upon it, and put their confidence in it; by their eager pursuit of it they were drawn into sin, and by their plentiful enjoyment of it they were hardened in sin; and thus it was the stumbling-block of their prosperity. 2. It could not help them when they were in the day of their adversity; for, (1.) Their gold and silver could not protect them from the judgments of God; they shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the Lord, they shall not serve to atone his justice, or turn away his wrath, or to screen them from the judgments he is bringing upon them. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath; (Prov. xi. 4.) they neither set them so high, that God's judgments cannot reach them, nor make them so
strong, that they cannot conquer them. There is a
day of wrath coming, when it will appear that
men shall be punisht for their wickedness, and it
will be too late to do them any service. What the better was
the rich man for his full barns, when his soul was re-
quired of him; or that other rich man for his pur-
ple, and scarlet, and sumptuous fare, when in hell
he could not procure a drop of water to cool his
tongue? Money is no defence against the arrest
of death, nor any alleviation to the miseries of the
next world. [5.] Their gods shall not help them, but
not give them any content under their calamities.

1. They could not fill their bowels; when there
was no bread left in the city, none to be had for love
or money, their silver and gold could not satisfy
their hunger, nor serve to make one meacli's meat
for them. Note, We could better be without mines
of gold than fields of corn; the products of the
earth, which may easily be gathered from the sur-
face of it, are much greater blessings to mankind
than its treasures, which are with so much difficulty
and hazard digged out of its bowels. If God give
us daily bread, we have reason to be thankful, and
no reason to complain, though silver and gold we
have none. [2.] Much less could they satisfy
their souls, or yield them any inward comfort. Note,
The wealth of this world does not consist in a gold
that will answer the desires of the soul, or be any satis-
faction to it in a day of distress. He that loves sil-
ver shall not be satisfied with silver, much less he
that loses it. (3.) Their gold and silver shall be
thrown into the streets, either by the hands of the ene-
my, who shall have more spoil that they care for, or
can carry away; silver shall be nothing accounted of,
it shall cast that in the streets, but the gold
which is more valuable, shall be removed, and
brought to Babylon; or, they themselves shall throw
away their silver and gold, either because it would
be an encumbrance to them, and retard their flight,
or because it would expose them, and be a tempta-
tion to the enemy to cut their throats for their mon-
ney; or, in indignation at it, because they found that
after all the care and pains they had taken to scrape
it together and heap it up, they found it would
stand in no stead, but do them a mischief rath-
er. Note, The world passes away, and the lust
thereof, 1 John ii. 17. The time may come when
worldly men will be as weary of their wealth as
now they are wedded to it, when those fare best that
have least.

II. God's temple shall stand in no stead, v. 20.-22.
This they had prided themselves in, and promised themselves security from; (Jer. vii.
4. Mic. iii. 11.) but this confidence of theirs shall fail them. Observe, 1. The great honour God had
done to that people in setting up his sanctuary among them; (v. 20.) For the beauty of his or-
ament, that holy and beautiful house, where they
and their fathers trusted God. (1 Sam. i. 1.)
which was therefore beautiful because holy. It was
called the beauty of holiness, and that is the beauty
of its ornament; it was also adorned with gold and
gifts; as for this, he set it in majesty, everything
was contrived to make it magnificent, that it might
help to make the people of Israel the more illus-
rious among their neighbours. He built his sanc-
tuary, and their fathers prevailed (1 Sam. i. 15.)
He gave a glorious high throne from the beginning, 1 Chr. xvii.
12. But, 2. Here is the great dishonour they had
done to God in profaning his sanctuary; they made
the images of their counterfeit deities, which they
set up in rivalry with God, and which are here
called their abominations, and their detestable things,
(these they were to God, and so they should have
been to them,) and these they set up in God's tem-
ple, than which a greater affront could not be put
upon him. And therefore, 3. It is here threatened
that they shall be deprived of the temple; and it
shall be no succour to them, Therefore have I set
fire from the midst of them, saith the Lord, to burn out
of the reach of their services, and they shall not
reach the reach of its influences. Note, God's ordinances,
and the privileges of a profession of religion, will
justly be taken away from those that despise and
profane them. Nay, they shall not only be kept at
a distance from the temple, but the temple itself
shall be involved in the common desolation; (v. 21.)
the Chaldeans, who are strangers, and for whom they
have no veneration for it, who are the wicked of the
earth, and therefore have an antipathy to it, shall
have it for a prey and for a spoil; all the ornaments
and treasures of it shall fall into their hands, who
will make no difference between that and other
plunder. This was a grief to the saints in Zion, who
complained of nothing so much as of that which
the enemy did wickedly in the sanctuary; (Ps. lxix.
3.) but it was the punishment of the sinners in Zion,
who by profaning the temple with strange gods,
provoked God to suffer it to be profaned by strange
nations, and to turn his face from them that did it,
as if he had not seen them and their crimes; and
from them that deprecated it, as not regarding
them and their prayers. Let the soldiers do as God
commands them, and let them enter into the house of
God, and let them pollute it, its defence is departed, and
then farewell all its glory. Note, These are unworthy
to be honoured with the form of godliness, who will
not be governed by the power of godliness.

23. Make a chain; for the land is full of
bloody crimes, the city is full of violence.
24. Wherefore I will bring the worst of the
heathen, and they shall possess their houses: I
will also make the pomp of the strong to cease,
and their holy places shall be defiled.
25. Destruction cometh; and they shall
seek peace, and there shall be none. 26.
Mischief shall come upon mischief, and rumour
shall be upon rumour; then shall they
seek a vision of the prophet: but the law
shall perish from the priest, and counsel
from the ancients. 27. The king shall
mourn, and the prince shall be clothed with
desolation, and the bands of the people of
the land shall be troubled: I will do unto
them after their way, and according to their
deserts will I judge them; and they shall
know that I am the Lord.

Here is,
The prisoner arraigned; Make a chain, in
which to drag the criminal to the bar, and set him
before the tribunal of Divine Justice; let him stand
in fetters, (as a notorious malefactor,) stand pinioned
or to receive his doom. Note, Those that break the
bands of God's law asunder, and cast away these
cords from them, will find themselves bound and
held by the chains of his judgments, which they
cannot break or cast from them. The chain signi-
fied the siege of Jerusalem, and the chains of the
law that were carried into captivity, or that they were
all bound over to the righteous judgment of God,
reserved in chains.

II. The indictment drawn up against the prison-
er; The land is full of bloody crimes, (full of the
judgments of blood, so the word is,) of the guilt of
blood which they had shed, under the solemnity of a
judgment. The innocent blood which Manasses
shed, probably thus shed, by the judgment of the blood, was the measure-filling sin of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. Or, It is full of such crimes as by the law were to be punished with death, the judgment of blood; idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, sodomy, and the like, were bloody crimes, for which particular sinners were to die; and therefore when they were become national, there was no remedy; but the nation must be cut off. Note, Bloody crimes will be punished with bloody judgments. The city, the city of David, the holy city, that should have been the pattern of righteousness, the protector of it, and the punisher of wrong, is now full of violence; the rulers of that city, having greater power and reputation, are greater oppressors than any others. This was sadly to be lamented. How is the better to warn them of danger! 3. III. Judgment given upon this indictment. God will recompense them not only for the profaning of his sanctuary, but for the perversion of justice between man and man; for as holiness becomes his house, so the righteous Lord loves righteousness, and is the Avenger of unrighteousness. Now the judgment given is, 1. That they had walked in the way of the heathen, and done worse than they; God would bring the worst of the heathen upon them to destroy them and lay them waste, the most barbarous and outrageous, that have the least compassion to mankind, and the greatest antipathy to the Jews. Note, Of the heathen some are worse than other, and God sometimes picks out the worst to be a scourge to his own people, because he intends them for the worst when the work is done. 2. That since they had filled their houses with goods unjustly gotten, and used their pomp and power for the crushing and oppressing of the weak, God would give their houses to be possessed, and all the furniture of them to be enjoyed, by strangers, and make the pomp of the strong to cease, so that their great men should not dazzle the eyes of the weak-sighted with their pomp, nor with their might at any time prevail against right, as they had done. 3. That since they had defiled the holy places with their idolatries, God would defile them with his judgments; since they had set up the images of other gods in the temple, God would remove the tokens of the presence of his own God. When the holy places are desecrated by their God, they will so be defiled by his enemies. 4. Since they had followed one sin with another, God would pursue them with one judgment upon another; Destruction comes, utter destruction, (v. 25.) for there shall come mischief upon mischief to ruin you, and rumour upon rumour to frighten you; like the waves in a storm, one upon the neck of another. Note, Sinners that are marked for ruin shall be prosecuted to it, for God will overcome with juinges. 5. Since they had disappointed God’s expectations from them, he would disappoint their expectations from him. For, (1.) They shall not have the deliverance out of their troubles that they expect. They shall seek peace; but they desire it, and pray for it, they shall endeavour it, and expect it, but there shall be more; their attempts both to court their enemies, and to conquer them, shall be in vain, and their troubles shall grow worse and worse. (2.) They shall not have the direction in the trouble that they expect; (v. 26.) They shall seek a vision of the prophet, shall desire, for their support under their troubles, to be assured of a happy issue out of them; they did not desire a vision to comfort themselves or of danger, but to give them deliverance; such messages they longed to hear; but the law shall perish from the priest, he shall have no words either of counsel or comfort to say to them: they would not hear what God had to say to them by way of conviction, and therefore he has nothing to say to them by way of encouragement. Counsel shall perish from the ancients; the elders of the people that should advise them what to do in this difficult juncture, shall be intimated and at their wits’ end. It is bad with a people when those that should be their counsellors, know not how to consider within themselves, consult with one another, or counsel them. 6. Since they had animated and encouraged one another to sin, God would dispirit and dishearten them all, so that they should not be able to make head against the judgments of God that were breaking in upon them. All orders and degrees of men shall lie down by consent under the load; (v. 27.) the king, that should inspire life into them, and a prince, that should lead them on to attack the enemy, they shall mourn, and be clothed with desolation, their heads and hearts shall fail, their politics and their courage; and then no wonder if the hands of the people of the land, that should fight for them, be troubled; none of the men of might shall find their hands. What can men contrive or do for themselves when God is departed from them, and appears against them? All their heads shall be faint, all in trouble, when God comes to judge them according to their deserts, and so make them know, to their cost, that he is the Lord, the God to whom vengeance belongs.  

CHAP. VIII. 

God, having given the prophet a clear foresight of the people’s miseries that were hastening on, here gives him a clear insight into the people’s wickedness, by which God was provoked to bring those miseries upon them; that he might justify God in all his judgments, might the more perfectly discover his purpose, and with the more satisfaction foretell their ruin. Here God, in vision, brings him to Jerusalem, to show him the sins that were committed there, though God had begun to contend with them; (v. 1...) and there he sees, 1. The image of jealousy set up at the gate of the altar, v. 5, 6. II. The elders of Israel worshipping all manner of images in a secret chamber, v. 7... 12. III. The women weeping for Tamar, v. 13, 14. IV. The men worshipping the sun, v. 15, 16. And then appeals to him whether such a provoking people should have any pity shown them, v. 17, 18. 1. And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. 2. Then I beheld, and, lo, a likeness as the appearance of fire: from the appearance of his loins, even downward, fire; and from his loins, even upward, as the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber. 3. And he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by the lock of my head, and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. 4. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, according to the vision that I saw in the plain. 5. Then said he unto me, Son of man, lift up thine eyes now the way toward the north. So I lifted up mine eyes
the way toward the north, and behold, northward at the gate of the altar, this image of jealousy in the entry. 6. He said furthermore unto me, Son of man, seest thou what they do? even the great abominations that the house of Israel committeth here, that I should go far off from my sanctuary! But turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations.

Ezekiel was now in Babylon; but the messages of wrath he had delivered in the foregoing chapters were concerning Jerusalem, and the people there. But the threat of God was actual, and the trouble thereof the captives looked upon themselves to have peace or trouble; and therefore here he has a vision of what was done at Jerusalem, and this vision is continued to the close of the 11th chapter.

I. Here is the date of this vision. The first vision he had was in the fifth year of the captivity, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month. ch. 1, 2. This was six years after. Perhaps it was after he had lain 390 days on his left side, to bear the iniquity of Israel, and before he began the forty days on his right side, to bear the iniquity of Judah, for now he was sitting in the house, not lying. Note, God keeps a particular account of the messages he sends to us, because we will not only call us to account about them, but he may.

II. The opportunity is taken notice of, as well at the time. 1. The prophet is himself sitting in his house, in a sedate, composed frame, deep in contemplation. Note, The more we retreat from the world, and retire into our own hearts, the better frame we are in for communion with God: they that sit in their house, and are not called to the temple, shall in time be called. Or, he sat in his house, ready to preach to the company that resorted to him, but waiting for instructions what to say. God will communicate more knowledge to those who are communicative of what they do know.

2. The elders of Judah, that were now in captivity, were sitting in his house, and he prophesied. It is probable that it was on the sabbath-day, and that it was usual for them to attend on the prophet every sabbath-day, both to hear the word from him, and to join with him in prayer and praise: and how could they spend the sabbath better, now that they had neither temple nor synagogue, priest nor altar? It was a great mercy that they had opportunity to spend it so well, and the time of it, if it had been any paper. But some think it was on some extraordinary occasion that they attended him, to inquire of the Lord, and sat down at his feet to hear his word. Observe here, (1.) When the law was disestablished in the land, the people were left to chance. (2.) That the elders of Judah were in captivity, they paid more respect to God's prophets, and his word in their mouth, than they did when they lived in peace in their own land. When God brings men into the cords of affliction, then he opens their ears to discipline, Job xxxvi. 8, 10. Ps. cxliv. 6. Those that despised vision in the valley of vision, Ezek. xlviii. 3, 4, had the most of the Lord's grace, and there was then no open vision. (3.) When our teachers are driven into corners, and are forced to preach in private houses, we must diligently attend them there. A minister's house should be a church for all his neighbours. St. Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, and God of old had promised, there is no man forsaken. (4.) The divine influence and impression that the prophet was now under; The hand of the Lord fell there upon me. God's hand took hold of him, and arrested him, as it were, to employ him in this vision, but at the same time supported him to bear it.

IV. The vision that the prophet saw: (v. 2.) he beheld a likeness of a man, we may suppose; for that was the likeness he saw before, but it was all brightness above the girdle, and all fire below; fire and flame. This agrees with the description we had before of the appearance he saw; (ch. i. 27.) it is probable that it was the same Person, the Man Christ Jesus. It is probable that the elders that sat with him, (as the men that journeyed with Paul,) saw a light, and were afraid, and this happy sight they gained by attending the prophet in a private manner, and an instinct of view of him that spoke to him, Acts xxii. 9.

V. The prophet's remove, in vision, to Jerusalem. The appearance he saw, put forth the form of a hand, which took him by a lock of his head, and the Spirit was that hand which was put forth, for the Spirit of God is called the Finger of God. Or, The spirit within him lifted him up, so that he was borne up and carried on by an internal principle, not an external violence. A faithful servant of God will be drawn by a hair, by the least intimation of the divine will, to his duty, for he has that within him which inclines him to a compliance with it, Ps. xxvii. 8. He was miraculously lifted up between heaven and earth, as if he were to fly away upon eagles' wings, as the prophet before supposed, (ch. xiv. 13.) the elders that sat with him saw: they were witnesses of the hand taking him by the lock of hair, and lifting him up, and then perhaps laying him down again in a trance or ecstasy, while he had the following visions, whether in the body or out of the body, we may suppose, he could not tell, any more than Paul in a like case, much less can we. Therefore, The hand lifted up the prophet (for God and the communications of divine light, that by divine grace are raised up above the earth and the things of it, to be out of their attractive force. But being lifted up toward heaven, he was carried in vision to Jerusalem, and to God's sanctuary there; for those that would go to heaven, must take that by their way. The Spirit represented to his mind the city and temple as if he were there in person. O that by faith we could thus enter into the Jerusalem, the holy city above, and see the things that are invisible!

VI. The discoveries that were made to him there. 1. There he saw the glory of God; (v. 4.) Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there, the appearance of the living creatures, and all the wheels, and the throne, that he had seen, ch. i. Note, God's servants, wherever they are, and whithersoever they go, ought to carry about with them a believing regard to the glory of God, and to set that always before them: and those that have seen God's power and glory in the sanctuary, should desire to see it again, so as they have seen it, Ps. cxlv. 2. Pr. 2. But those that have the glory of God, both to give credit to, and to put honour upon, the following discoveries. But it seems to have a further intention here; it was to aggravate this sin of Israel, in changing their own God, the God of Israel, (who is a God of so much glory as here he appears to be,) for dunghill gods, scandalous and abominable. This aggravation of sin seems all the more glorious we see God to be, the more odious we shall see sin to be, especially idolatry, which turns his truth into a lie, his glory into shame. It was also to aggravate their approaching misery, when this glory of the Lord should remove from them, (ch. xi. 23.) and leave the house and city desolate.

2. There he saw the reproach of Israel—and that was the image of jealousy, set northward, at
EZEKIEL, VIII.

The gate of the altar, v. 3, 5. What image this was, is uncertain probably, an image of God, or of the grove, which Manasseh made, and set in the temple, (2 Kings xx. 7. 2 Chron. xxxiii. 14.) Josiah removed it all. If it was a necessary, it seems, religiously, to be placed; nor, probably did they part the chariots of the sun, which he found at the entering in of the house of the Lord; (2 Kings xxii. 11.) and this is here said to be in the entry. But the prophet, instead of telling us what image it was, which might gratify our curiosity, tells us that it was the image of jealousy, to convince our consciences that whatever image it was, it was in the highest degree offensive to God, and provoked him to jealousy; he resented it as a husband would resent the whoredoms of his wife, and would certainly revenge it; for God is jealous, and the Lord revenges, Nah. i. 2.

The very setting up of this image in the house of the Lord was enough to provoke him to jealousy; for it is in the matters of his worship that we are particularly told, The Lord thy God am a jealous God. They that placed this image at the gate of the inner court, where the people assembled, called the gate of the altar, (v. 5.) thereby plainly intended, (1.) To affront God, to provoke him to his face, by advancing an idol to be a rival with him for the adorations of his people, in contempt of his law, and in defiance of his justice. (2.) To debauch the people, and pick them up as they were entering into the courts of the Lord's house, to bring their offerings to him and worship his image, and tempt them to offer them to this image, like the adulteress Sodom describes, that sits at the door of her house, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple, let him turn in the hollow, Prov. ix. 14. With good reason therefore is this called the image of jealousy.

We may well imagine what a surprise, and what a grief it was to Ezekiel, to see this image in the house of God, and his was in hopes that the judgments they were under had, by this time, wrought some reformation among them; but there is more wickedness in the world, in the church, than good men think there is. And now, [1.] God appeals to him whether this was not bad enough, and a sufficient ground for God to go upon in casting off this people, and abandoning them to ruin. Could he or any other than God say that God should go far from his sanctuary, when there were such abominations committed there, in that very place; or, was he not perfectly driven thence? Did they do these things designedly, and on purpose that he should leave his sanctuary, and so shall their doom be; they have herby, in effect, like the Gadarines, desired him to depart out of their country, and therefore he will depart, he will no more dignify and protect his sanctuary, as he had done, but will give it up to reproach and ruin. But, [2.] Though this is bad enough, and serves abundantly to justify God in all that he brings upon them, yet the matter will appear to be much worse; but turn thee yet again, and thou wilt be amazed to see greater abominations than these. When there is one abomination, it will be found there are many more. Sins do not go alone.

7. And he brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 3. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall, and when I had digg’d in the wall, behold, a door. 9. And he said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. 10. So I went in and saw; and, behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. 11. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. 12. Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth.

We have here a further discovery of the abominations that were committed at Jerusalem, and within the confines of the temple too. Now observe, I. How this discovery is made. God, in vision, brought him to the door of the court, the outer court, along the sides of which the priests’ lodgings were. God could have introduced him at first into the chambers of imagery, but he brings him to them by degrees, partly to employ his own industry, in searching out these mysteries of iniquity, and partly to make him sensible with what care and caution those idolaters concealed their idolatries. Before the priests’ apartments they had run up a wall, to make them more private, that they might not be open to the stares of those who professed; by or by, they had wall sights that they did something which they had reason to be ashamed of. He that doeth evil hateth the light. They were not willing that those who saw them in God’s house should see them in their own, lest they should see them contradict themselves, and undo in private what they did in public. But behold, a hole in the wall, (v. 7.) a spy-hole, by which you might see what was there, and give cause to suspect them. When hypocrites screen themselves behind the wall of an external profession, and with it think to conceal their wickedness from the eye of the world, and carry on their designs the more successfully, it is hard for them to manage it with so much art but that there is some hole or other left in the wall, something that betrays them to those who shall diligently search by; and as we have said, these are like to be. The ass’s ears in the fable appeared from under the lion’s skin. This hole in the wall Ezekiel made wider, and, behold, a door, v. 8. This door he goes in by into the treasury, or some of the apartments of the priests, and sees the wicked abominations that they do there, v. 9. Note, Those that would discover the mystery of iniquity in others, or in themselves, must accomplish a diligent search, for Satan has his will, depths, and devices, which we should not be ignorant of, and the heart is deceitful above all things; in the examining of it therefore we are concerned to be very strict.

II. What the discovery is; it is a very melancholy one. 1. He sees a chamber set round with idolatrous pictures; (v. 10.) All the idols of the house of Israel, which they had borrowed from the neighbouring nations, were pourtrayed upon the wall round about, even the vilest of them, the forms of creeping things, which they worshipped, and beasts, even abominable ones, which are poisonous and venomous; at least, they were abominable when they were worshipped. This was a sort of pantheon, a collection of all the idols together, which they paid their devotions to. Though the second commandment, in the letter of it, forbids only graven images, yet painted ones are as bad and as dangerous. 2. He sees this chamber filled with idolatrous
worshippers; (v. 11.) There were seventy men of the elders of Israel offering incense to these painted idols. Here was a great number of idolaters strengthening one another's hands in this wickedness, though it was in a private character; and the indirectness concealed; yet here were seventy men engaged in it. I doubt these elders were many more than those in Babylon that sat before the prophet in his house, v. 1. They were seventy men, the number of the great Sanhedrim, or chief council of the nation, and we have reason to fear, the same men; for they were the ancient of the house of Israel, not only in age, but in office, who were bound, by the duty of their place, to strain and punish idolatry, and to destroy and abolish all superstitious images wherever they found them; yet these were they that did themselves worship them in private, so undermining that religion, which in public they professed to own and promote, only because by it they held their preferments. They had every man his censor in his hand; so bad were they of the idolatrous service, that they would all be their own priest; and very profligal they were of their perfumes in honour of these images, for a thick cloud of incense went up, that filled the room. O that the zeal of these idolaters might shame the worshippers of the true God out of their indifference to his service! The prophet took particular notice of one whom he knew to be of the high priests, or chief among them, being perhaps president of the great council at this time, or most forward in this wickedness. No wonder the people were corrupt, when the elders were so. The sins of leaders are leading sins.

3. What the remark is, that is made up in it; (v. 12.) Son of man, art thou a god? Couldst thou have imagined that there was such wickedness committed?" It is here observed concerning it, (1.) That it was done in the dark; for sinful works are works of darkness. They concealed it, lest they should lose their places, or at least their credit. There is a great deal of secret wickedness in the world, which the day will declare; the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. (2.) That this one idolatrous chapel was but a specimen of many like it; here they met together, to worship their images in concert; but, it should seem, they had every man the chamber of his imagery besides, a room in his own house for this purpose, in which every man gratified his own fancy with such pictures as he liked best. Idolaters have their household gods, and their family-worship of them in private, which is a shame to those who call themselves Christians, and yet have no church in their house, no worship of God in their family. Had they chambers of devotion? (3.) That atheism was at the bottom of their idolatry. They worship images in the dark, the images of the gods of other nations, and they say, "Jehovah, Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom we have worshiped." Jehovah, Jehovah, that forsook the earth, and we worship what God will, we regard us not." [1.] They think themselves out of God's sight; they say, The Lord seeth us not. They imagined, because the matter was carried on so closely, that men could not discover it, nor did any of their neighbours suspect them to be the authors; whereas, it was discovered that we see the face of God: as if there were any darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Note, A practical disbelief of God's omniscience is at the bottom of our treacherous departure from him; but the church argues right, as to this very sin of idolatry, (Ps. xlv. 20.)

If we have forgotten the name of our Lord, and stretched forth our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? No doubt, he shall. [2.] They think themselves out of God's care; "The Lord has forsooken the earth," and looks not after the affairs of it; and thus we may as well worship any other god as him. Or, "He has forsooken our land, and left it to be a prey to its enemies; and therefore it is time for us to look out for some other god, to whom to commit the protection of our land, our one God cannot, or will not, deliver us; and therefore let us have many." This was a blasphemous reflection upon God, as if he had forsoaked them first, else they would not have forsaken him. Note, These are ripe indeed for ruin, who are arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to lay the blame of their sins upon God himself.

13. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations that they do. 14. Then he brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and beheld, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. 15. Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16. And he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. 17. Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger; and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. 18. Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.

Here we have, 1. More and greater abominations discovered to the prophet. He thought that what he had seen was bad enough, and yet, (v. 13.) Turn thee again, and thou shalt see yet greater abominations, and greater still, (v. 15.) as before, v. 6. There are these who live in retirement, who do not think what wickedness there is in this world; and the more we converse with it, and the further we go abroad into the world, the more corrupt we see it to be. It is seen that which is bad, we may have our wonder at it made to cease by the discovery of that which, upon some account or other, is a great deal worse. We shall find it so in examining our own hearts, and searching into them; there is a world of iniquity in them, a great abundance and variety of abominations, and iniquities of which we have hitherto much amiss, still we shall find more; for the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it perfectly?

Now the abominations here discovered were, 1. Women weeping for Tammuz, v. 14. An abominable thing indeed, that any should choose rather to serve an idol in tears than to serve the true God with joyfulness and gladness of heart! Yet such absurdities as these are they guilty of, who
follow after lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies. Some think it was for Adonis, an idol among the Greeks, others for Osiris, an idol of the Egyptians, that they shed these tears. The image, they say, was made to weep, and then the worshippers wept with it. They bewailed the death of this Tammany, and rejoiced in its returning to life again. These mourning women sat at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, and there shed their idolatrous tears, as it were in defiance of God and the sacred rites of his worship; and some think, with their idolatry, protrasting themselves also to corporal whoredom; for these two, commonly, went together; and they that disdained to divine nature and that are thus destitute of all reason and a reprobat sense, to dishonour the human nature, which no where ever sunk so far below itself as in these idolatrous rites.

2. Men worshipping the sun, v. 16. And this was so much the greater an abomination, that it was practised in the inner court of the Lord's house, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar; there, where the most sacred rites of the holy religion were used to be performed, was this abominable wickedness committed; justly might God in jealousy say to those who thus affronted him at his own door, as the king to Haman, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? Here were about twenty-five men giving that honour to the sun which is due to God only; some think they were the king and his princes; it should rather seem, as John xxxi. 2. (2.) They turned their backs toward the temple of the Lord, resolvedly forgetting it, and designly eluding it, and putting contempt upon it. Note, Within men turn their backs upon God's institutions, and despise them, it is no marvel if they wander endlessly after their own inventions. Iniquity is the beginning of idolatry and all iniquity. (2.) They turned their faces toward the east, and worshipped the sun, the rising sun. This was an ancient instance of idolatry; it is mentioned in Job's time, (Job xxxi. 26.) and had been generally practised among the nations, so worshiping the sun upon the high places, and others over another; these priests, finding it had antiquity and general consent and usage on its side, (the two plea which the priests use at this day in defence of their superstitious rites, and particularly this of worshipping toward the east,) practised it in the court of the temple, thinking it an omission that it was not inserted in their ritual. See the folly of idolaters in worshiping that as a god, and to the Lord—a word, which God made to be a servant to the universe; (for such the sun is, and so his name Shemesh signifieth, Deut. iv. 19.) and in adoring the borrowed light, and despising the Father of lights!

II. The inference drawn from these discoveries; (v. 17.) "Hast thou seen this, O son of man, and couldest thou have thought ever to see such things done, as I command thee to do?" Now, 1. He appeals to the prophet himself concerning the heinousness of the crime. Can he think it is a light thing to the house of Judah, who know and profess better things, and are dignified with so many privileges above other nations? Is it an excusable thing in them that have God's oracles and ordinances, that they commit the abominations which they cannot here? Do not the Gentiles, to whom God has given that thus sin? Should not such abominations as these make devolate? Dan. ix. 27. 2. He aggravates it from the fraud and oppression that were to be found in all parts of the nation; They have filled the land with violence. It is not strange if they that wrong God thus, make no conscience of wronging one another, and with all that is sacred trampled likewise upon all that is just. And their wickedness in their conversations made even the worship they paid to their god an abomination; (Isa. l. 11, &c.) "They fill the land with violence, and they return to the temple to provoke me to anger there; for they receive their sacrifices, instead of making an atonement, do but add to their guilt; they return to provoke me, (they repeat the provocation, do it, and do it again,) and lo, they put the branch to their nose;" a proverbial expression, denoting perhaps their scoffing at God, and having him in derision; they smudled at his service, as men do when they put a branch to their nose. Or, it was some custom used by idolaters in honour of the idols they served. We read of garlands used in their idolatrous worship, (Acts xiv. 13.) cut of which every zealot took a branch, which they smelled to as a nosegay. Dr. Lightfoot (Hor. Heb. in Joh. xv. 6.) gives another sense of this place; They put the branch to their mouth, or to his mouth, as the Masorites read it; they are still bringing more fuel (such as the withered branches of the vine) to the fire of divine wrath, which they have already kindled, as if that wrath did not burn hot enough already. Or, putting the branch to the nose may signify the giving of a very great affront and provocation either to God or man; they are an abusive generation of men. 3. He condemned the priests as being among those that they shall be deeply cut off; Therefore because they are so furiously bent upon sin, I will also deal in fury with them, v. 18. They filled the land with their violence, and God will fill it with the violence of their enemies; and he will not lend a favourable ear to the suggestions, either, (1.) Of his own pity; Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; repentance shall be hid from his eyes; or, (2.) Of their prayers; Though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them; for still their sins cry louder for vengeance than their prayers cry for mercy. God will now be as deaf to their prayers as their own idoles were, on whom they cried aloud, but in vain, 1 Kings xviii. 26. Time was when God was ready to have heard even before they cried, and to answer while they were yet speaking; but now they shall have their prayers, and not their due. Prov. 28. It is not the loud voice, but the upright heart, that God will regard.

CHAP. IX.

The prophet had, in vision, seen the wickedness that was committed at Jerusalem, in the foregoing chapter, and we may be sure that it was not represented to him worse than really it was; now here follows, of course, a representation of their ruin approaching; for when sin goes before, it is not long before it comes after. "The Lord made of instruments that were to be employed in the destruction of the city," v. 1, 2. II. The removal of the Shechinah from the cherubim to the threshold of the temple, v. 3. The vials, or vessels given to the priests for the consecration, were employed, who is distinguished from the rest, for the marking of a remnant to be preserved from the common destruction, v. 3, 4. IV. The warrant signed for the execution of those that were not marked, and the execution began accordingly, v. 5 to 7. V. The prophet's intercession for the mitigation of the sentence, and a denial of any mitigation, the decree being now gone forth, v. 8, 9, 11. Thus it was with a view to mark the pious remnant of what he had done in that matter, v. 11. And this shows a usual method of Providence in the government of the world.

1. He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in
his hand. 2. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter-weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's ink-horn by his side; and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. 3. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, wherupon he was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's ink-horn by his side; 4. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

In these verses, we have,

1. The summons given to Jerusalem's destroyers to come forth and give their attendance. He that appeared to the prophet, (ch. viii. 2.) that brought him to Jerusalem, and had shown the wickedness that was done there, he cried, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, (v. 1.) or, as it might better be read, and nearer the original, They that have charge over the city are drawing near. He had said, (ch. viii. 18.) I will deal in fury; Now, says he to the prophet, thou shalt see who are to be employed as the instruments of my wrath; Afterwards, upon the visitation of these cities-Civil wars, or visitors of the city are at hand. They would not know the day of their visitation in mercy, and now they are to be visited in wrath.

Observe, 1. How the notice of this is given to the prophet; He cried it in mine ears with a loud voice, which intimates the vehemency of him that spake; when men are highly provoked, and threaten in anger, they speak loud: they that regard not the counsels God gives them in a still, small voice, shall be made to hear the threatening, to hear and tremble. It denotes also the prophet's unwillingness to be told this; he was deaf on that ear, but there is no remedy, their sin will not admit an excuse, and therefore their judgment will not admit a delay; he cried it in mine ears, in a loud voice, he made me hear it, and I heard it with a sad heart.

2. What this notice is; There are those that have charge over the city to destroy it, not the Chaldean armies, they are to be indeed employed in this work, but they are not the visitors, they are only the servants, or tools rather. God's angels have received a charge now to lay that city waste, which they are in command to do, and with watch and wonder over; they are at hand, as destroying angels, as ministers of wrath, for every man hath his destroying weapon in his hand, as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming sword. Note, Those that have by sin made God their Enemy, have made good angels their enemies too. These visitors are called and caused to draw near. Note, God had long had a charge to prove, and watch over; they are at hand, as destroying angels, as ministers of wrath, for every man hath his destroying weapon in his hand, as the angel that kept the way of the tree of life with a flaming sword. God told it him with a loud voice, taught it him with a strong hand, (Isa. vii. 11.) that it might make the deeper impression upon him, and that he might thus proclaim it in the people's ears.

II. Their appearance, upon this summons, is recorded. Immediately six men came, (v. 2.) one for each of the principal gates of Jerusalem. Two destroying angels were sent against Sodom, but six are sent against Jerusalem. The judgment will be thrice as heavy as that of Sodom. There is an angel watching at every gate to destroy, to bring in judgments from every quarter, and to take heed that none escape. One angel served to destroy the first-born of Egypt, and the camp of the Assyrians, but here are six. In the Revelation we find seven, that were to pour out the vials of God's wrath upon the earth. 

3. The appearance of one of these angels, to the Chaldeans, prepared for the work to which they were called. The nations of which the king of Babylon's army was composed, which some reckon to be six, and the commanders of his army, (of whom six are named as principal, Jer. xxxix. 3.) may be called the slaughter-weapons in the hands of the angels. The angels are thoroughly furnished for every service.

Observe, 1. From whence they came; from the way of the higher gate, which lies toward the north; (v. 2.) either because the Chaldeans came from the north, (Jer. i. 14. Out of the north an evil shall break forth,) or because the image of jealousy was set up at the door of the inner gate, that looks toward the north, ch. viii. 3. 5. At that gate of the city, which the people that entered, repaired, to show how it was that opened the door to them. Note, That way that sin lies, judgment may be expected to come. 2. Observe where they placed themselves; They went in, and stood beside the brazen altar, on which sacrifices were wont to be offered, and atonement made. When they acted as destroyers, they acted as sacrificers, not from any personal reverence or holiness, but with a pure and sincere regard to the glory of God; for in his justice all they slew were offered up as victims. They stood by the altar, as it were, to protect and vindicate that, and plead its righteous cause, and avenge the horrid proclamation of it. At the altar they were to receive their commission to destroy, to intimate that the iniquity of Jerusalem, like that of Eli's house, was not to be purged by sacrifices.

III. The notice taken of one among the destroying angels distinguished in his habit from the rest, from whom some favour might be expected; it should seem, he was not one of the six, but among them, to see that mercy might be mixed with judgment, v. 2. This man was clothed with linen, as the priests were, and he had a writer's ink-horn hung at his side, as the scribes and priests' clerks had, which he was to make use of, as the other six were to make use of their destroying weapons. Here the honours of the pen exceeded those of the sword; they were angels that bore the sword, but he was the Lord of angels that made use of the writer's ink-horn; for it is generally agreed, among the best interpreters, that this man represented Christ our Mediator, seeing those that he has from the flaming sword of divine justice. He is our High Priest, clothed with holiness, for that was signified by the fine linen, Rev. xix. 8. As Prophet, he wears the writer's ink-horn—the book of life is the Lamb's book; the great things of the law and gospel which God has written to us, are of his writing; for it is the Spirit of Christ, in the writers of the scriptures, as our Mediator, saying those that he has from the revelation of Jesus Christ. Note, It is a matter of great comfort to all good Christians, that, in the midst of the destroyers and the destructions that are abroad, there is a Mediator, a great High Priest, who has an interest in heaven, and whom saints on earth have an interest in.

IV. The removal of the appearance of the divine glory from over the cherubim. Some think this was that usual display of the divine glory which was between the cherubims over the mercy-seat, in
the most holy place, that took leave of them now, and never returned; for it is supposed it was not in the temple, but at Jerusalem. Others think the glory of the divine glory which the prophet now saw over the cherub in vision; and this is more probable, because this is called the glory of the God of Israel, (ch. viii. 3) and this is it which he had now his eye upon; this was gone to the threshold of the house, as it were to call to the servants that attended without the door, to send them on their errand, and give them the message upon the removal of their house, as well as the former, might be significant of God's departure from them, and leaving them their house desolate; and when God goes, all good goes; but he goes from none till they first drive him from them. He went at first no further than the threshold, that he might show how loath he was to depart, and might give them both time and encouragement to invite his return to them, and stay with them. Note, God's departures from a people are gradual, but gracious souls are soon aware of the first step he takes towards a removal. Ezekiel immediately observed that the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub: and what is a vision of angels, if God be gone? V. The charge given to the man clothed in linen to remain from the man from the general declaration of God. We do not read that this Saviour was summoned and sent for, as the destroyers were; for he is always ready, appearing in the presence of God for us, and to him, as the most proper Person, the care of those that are marked for salvation is committed. v. 4. Now observe, 1. The distinguishing character of this command that is to be saved. They are such as sigh and cry, sigh in themselves, as men in pain and distress, cry to God in prayer, as men in earnest, because of all the abominations that are committed in Jerusalem. It was not only the idolatries, they were guilty of, but all their other enormities, that were abominations to God. These pious few had witnessed against those abominations, and had done what they could in their places to suppress them; but, finding all their attempts for the reformation of manners fruitless, they sat down, and sighed, and cried, wept in secret, and complained to God, because of the dishonour done to his name by their wickedness, and the ruin it was bringing upon their church and nation. Note, It is not enough that we do not delight in the sins of others, and that we have not fellowship with them, but we must mourn for them, and lay them to our heart, we must grieve for that which we cannot help, those that have sin for its own sake, and have a tender concern for the souls of others, as David, (Ps. cxvii. 15.) and Lot, who vexed his righteous soul with the wicked conversation of his neighbours. The abominations committed in Jerusalem are to be in a special manner lamented, because they are in a particular manner offensive to God. 2. The distinguishing care taken of them. Order is given that they should be of such a pious, public spirit; "Go through the midst of the city in quest of them, and though they are ever so much dispersed, and ever so closely hid from the fury of their persecutors, yet see that you discover them, and set a mark upon their foreheads." (1.) To signify that God owns them for his, and he will confess them another day. A work of grace in the soul of the people is a sealing upon them, which he will acknowledge as his mark, and by which he knows them that are his. (2.) To give to them who are thus marked an assurance of God's favour, that they may know it themselves; and the comfort of knowing it will be the most powerful support and cordial in calamitous times. Why should we perplex ourselves about this temporal life, if we know by the mark that we have eternal life? (3.) To be a direction to the servants whom to pass by, as the blood upon the door-posts was an indication that was an Israelite's house, and the first-born their good for, or slain. Note, to keep themselves pure in times of common iniquity, God will keep safe in times of common calamity. They that distinguish themselves shall be distinguished; they that cry for other men's sins shall not need to cry for their own affections; for they shall be either delivered from them, or comforted under them. God will set a mark upon his mourners, will break their sadness, and bottle their tears. The sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads, (Rev. vii. 3) was the same token of the care God has of his own people with this here; only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent. 5. And to the others he said in my hearing. Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity. 6. Shout utterly old and young, both maidies, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house. 7. And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain; go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city. 8. And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem? 9. Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness; for they say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not. 10. And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; but I will recompense their way upon their head. 11. And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the ink-horn by his side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me. In these verses, we have, 1. A command given to the destroyers to do execution according to their commission. They stood by the brazen altar, waiting for orders; and orders are here given them to cut off and destroy all that were either old or young, or necessary to, the abominations of Jerusalem, and that did not sigh and cry for them. Note, When God has gathered his wheat into his garner, nothing remains but to burn up the chaff. Mat. iii. 12. 1. They are ordered to destroy all, (1.) Without exception; they must go through the city, and smite, they must slay utterly, old and young, neither the beauty of the virgins, nor the innocence of their babes, shall secure them. This was fulfilled in the death of multitudes by famine and pestilence, especially by the sword of the Chaldeans, and as far as the military execution went, sometimes even such bloody work as this has been God's work. But what an evil thing is sin then, which provokes the
God of infinite mercy to such severity! (2.) Without exception; Let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; (v. 5.) you must not save any whom God has doomed to destruction, as Saul did Agag and the Amalekites, that is doing the work of God deceitfully, Jer. xxviii. 16. None need to be more fearful than God; and he had said, (ch. viii. 18.) More eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity. Note, Those that live in sin, and hate to be restrained, will perish in sin, and deserve not to be pitied; for they might easily have prevented the sin, and would not.

2. They are warned not to do the least hurt to them that were marked for salvation; "Come not near them, and they shall be well treated;" (Jer. xv. 11.) and we have reason to think that none of the mourning, praying remnant fell by the sword of the Chaldeans, but that God found out some way or other to secure them all; as in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the Christians were all secured in a city called Pelus, and none of them perished with the unbelieving Jews, who were the poison of the springs, to which all the corruption of the streams was owing. The wickedness of the sanctuary was of all other more offensive to God, and therefore there the slaughter must begin; "Begin there, to try if the people will take warning by the judgments of God upon their priests, and will repent and return; begin there, that all the world may see and know in future, that "Jehovah is a jealous God, and hates sin most in those that are nearest to him." Note, When judgments are abroad, they commonly begin at the house of God, 1 Pet. iv. 17. You only have I known, and therefore I will punish you, Amos iii. 2. God's temple is a sanctuary, a refuge and protection for penitent sinners, but not for any that go on still in their transgressions; neither the sacredness of the place, nor the eminency of their place in it, will be their security.

It should seem, the destroyers made some difficulty of putting men to death in the temple, but God bids them not hesitate at that, but, (v. 7.) Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain. They are bid to begin from where the law pointed, like the king, he commanded as he spoke there, 1 Kings ii. 30, 31. There the blood of God's prophets had been shed, (Matt. xxiii. 35.) and therefore there let their blood be shed. Note, If the servants of God's house defile it with their sin, God will take the sword, and make an end of it to defile it with their violences, Ps. lxviii. 1. But these acts of necessary justice were really, whatever they were ceremonially, rather a purification than a pollution of the sanctuary; it was putting away evil from among them.

4. They were appointed to go forth into the city, v. 6, 7. Note, Wherever sin has gone before, judgment will follow: and though judgment begins at the house of God, yet it shall not end there. The holy city shall no more be a protection to the wicked people than the holy house was to the wicked priests.

II. Here is execution done accordingly. They observed their orders, and, 1. They began at the elders, that ancient men that were before the house, and slew them first, either those seventy ancients who worshipped idols in their chambers, (ch. viii. 13.) or those twenty-five who worshipped the sun between the porch and the altar, who might more properly be said to be before the house. Note, Ringleaders in sin may expect to be first met with by the judgments of God; and the sins of those who are in the forefront, do not pass over them without the most exemplary punishments. 2. They proceeded to the common people; They went forth, and slew in the city; for when the decree is gone forth, there shall be no delay; if God begin, he will make an end.

III. Here is the prophet's intercession for a mitigation of the judgment, and a reprove for some; (v. 8.) While they were slaying them, and I was left, I fell upon my face. Observe here, 1. How sensibly the prophet was of God's mercy to him, in that he was spared, when so many round about him were cut off. Thousands fell on his right hand, and on his left, and yet the destruction did not come nigh him; only with his eyes did he behold the just reward of the wicked, Ps. xvi. 5. 2. Observe how he improved this; that is putting it to God's goodness, not his own deserts. Note, The best saints must acknowledge themselves indebted to sparing mercy that they are not consumed. And when desolating judgments are abroad, and multitudes fall by them, it ought to be accounted a great favour if we have our lives given us for a fire; for we might justly have perished with them that perished. 3. Observe how he improved this; he looked upon it that therefore he was left, that he might stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God. Note, We must look upon it that for this reason we are spared, that we may do good in our places, may do good by our prayers. Ezekiel did not triumph in the slaughter he made, but his flesh trembled for fear of God; (as David's, Ps. xxxix. 128.) he trembled with fear, being convinced (he was one of them that were marked,) but in compassion to his fellow-creatures. They that sigh and cry for the sins of sinners, cannot but sigh and cry for their miseries too; yet the day is coming, when all this concern will be entirely swallowed up in a full satisfaction in this, that God is glorified, and they that now fall on their face, and cry, "Ah, Lord God! will lift up their heads, and sing, Hosannah Rev. xix. 1, 3. The prophet humbly expostulates with God; "Wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel, and there shall be none left but the few that are marked? Shall the Israel of God be destroyed, utterly destroyed? When there are but a few left, shall those few be cut off, who might have been the rest of Israel, as was written in the book? As will the God of Israel be himself their Destroyer? Wilt thou now destroy Israel, who was wont to protect and deliver Israel? Wilt thou now pour out thy fury upon Jerusalem, as by the total destruction of the city to ruin the whole country too? Surely thou wilt not." Note, Though we acknowledge that God is righteous, yet we have leave to plead with him concerning his judgments, and to implore his mercy, Ezek. xxxvi. 15. Therefore, though he is righteous, yet he is gracious, and will not deal always after the manner of sin; he will turn and make us happy, if we return, and he will turn and deal with us according to his mercies, if we turn to him from sin. Note, though God is righteous, yet he is gracious, and will not deal always after the manner of sin; he will turn and make us happy, if we return, and he will turn and deal with us according to his mercies, if we turn to him from sin.
1. THEN I looked, and, behold, in the
firmament that was above the head of
the cherubims there appeared over them
as it were a sapphire-stone, as the appear-
ance of the likeness of a throne. 2. And
he spake unto the man clothed with linen,
and said, Go in between the wheels, even
under the cherub, and fill thy hand with
coals of fire from between the cherubims,
and scatter them over the city. And he
went in in my sight. 3. Now the cherubims
stood on the right side of the house when
the man went in; and the cloud filled the
inner court. 4. Then the glory of the Lord
went up from the cherub, and stood over
the threshold of the house; and the house
was filled with a cloud, and the court was
full of the brightness of the Lord's glory. 5.
And the sound of the cherubims' wings was
heard even to the outer court, as the voice
of the Almighty God when he spake. 6.
And it came to pass, that when he had com-
manded the man clothed with linen, saying,
Take fire from between the wheels, from
between the cherubims; then he went in,
and stood beside the wheels. 7. And one
cherub stretched forth his hand from be-
 tween the cherubims unto the fire that was
between the cherubims; and took thereof,
and put it into the hands of him that was
clothed with linen; who took it, and went
out.

To possess us with a holy awe and dread of
God, and to fill us with his fear, we may observe, in
this part of the vision which the prophet had,
I. The glorious appearance of his majesty. Some
thing of the invisible world is here made visible; some
faint representations of its brightness and
beauty, some shadows; but such as are no more to
be compared with the truth and substance than a
picture with the life; yet here is enough to oblige us
to all the utmost reverence of our thoughts of
God and approaches to him, if we will but admit
the impressions this discovery of him will make.
1. He is here in the firmament above the head
of the cherubins, v. 1. He manifests his glory in the
upper world, where purity and brightness are both
in perfection; and the vast expanse of the firmament
aims to speak the God that dwelleth there infinite.
It is the firmament of his throne, and his majesty
is there, as was declared to Moses when he beheld all the
children of men. The divine nature infinitely transcends
the angelical nature, and God is above the head of
the cherubims, in respect not only of his dignity
above them, but of his dominion over them. Cheru-
ibs have great power and wisdom and influence,
but they are subject to God and Christ.
2. He is here upon the throne, or that which had
the form of the likeness of a throne; (for
God's glory and government infinitely transcend all
the brightest ideas our minds can either form or
receive concerning them:) and it was as it were a sap-
phire-stone, pure and sparkling; such a throne has
God prepared in the heavens, far exceeding the
thrones of any earthly potentates.
3. Here he is attended with a glorious train of
holy angels. When God came into his temple, the

CHAP. X.
The prophet had observed to us, (ch. viii. 4.) that when he
was in vision at Jerusalem, he saw the same appearance
of the glory of God there, that he had seen by the river of
Chebar: now, in this chapter, he gives us some account of
the appearance there, as far as was requisite for the
clearing up of two further indications of approaching
destruction of Jerusalem, which God here gave the
prophet. 1. The scattering of the coals of fire upon the
city, which were taken from between the cherubims, v.
11. 2. The removal of the glory of God from the
temple, and its being upon the wing to be gone, v. 8.
22. When God goes out of a people, all judgments break
in upon them.
cherubims stood on the right side of the house, (v. 3.) as the Prince's life-guard attending the gate of his palace. Christ has angels at command. The orders given to all the angels of God are, to worship him. Some observe, that they stood on the right side of the house, that is, the south side, because on the north side the image of jealousy was, and other instances of idolatry, from which they would place themselves above, as they had been commanded. It must be,

4. The appearance of his glory is veiled with a cloud, and yet out of that cloud darts forth a dazzling lustre; in the house and inner court there was a cloud and darkness, which filled them, and yet either the outer court, or the same court, after some time, was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory, v. 2. There was a darting forth of light and brightness; but if the cloud were over-curious eyes, and it would find itself lost in a cloud. His righteousness is conspicuous as the great mountains, and the brightness of it fills the court; but his judgments are a great deep, which we cannot fathom, a cloud, which we cannot see through. The brightness discloses enough to awe and direct our consciences, but the cloud hides from us the magnifying of our excellency, and, by the confusion of the eyes, by reason of darkness. Thus, (Hab. iii. 4.) He had been coming out of his hand, and yet there was the hiding of his power. Nothing is more clear than that God is, nothing more dark than what he is. God covers himself with light, and yet, as to us, makes darkness his pavilion. God took possession of the tabernacle and temple in a cloud, which was always the symbol of his presence. In the temple above there will be no cloud, but we shall see face to face. The cherubims made a dreadful sound with their wings, v. 5. The vibration of them, as of the strings of musical instruments, made a curious melody; bees, and other winged insects, make a noise with their wings. Probable, this intimates that they preparing to remove, by stretching forth and lifting up their wings, which made this noise as it were to give warning of it. This noise is said to be as the voice of the Almighty God when he speaks, as the thunder, which is called the voice of the Lord, (Ps. xxix. 3.) or as the voice of the Lord when he spake to Israel on mount Sinai; and therefore he then gave them his laws, in the abundance of terror, to signify with what terror his people should regard the publication of the law, of which he was now about to do. This noise of their wings was heard even to the outer court, the court of the people; for the Lord's voice, in his judgments, cries in the city, which those may hear, that do not, as Ezekiel, see the visions of them.

11. The terrible directions of his wrath. This vision has a further tendency than merely to set forth the divine grandeur; further orders are to be given for the destruction of Jerusalem. The greatest devastations are made by fire and sword; for a general slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, orders were given in the foregoing chapter; now here we have a command to lay the city in ashes, by scattering coals of fire upon it, which in the vision were fetched from between the cherubims.

1. For the issuing of our orders to do this, the glory of the Lord was lifted up from the cherub, (as in the chapter before for the giving of orders there, v. 3.) and stood upon the threshold of the house, in imitation of the courts of judgment which they kept in the gates of their cities. The people would not hear the oracles which God delivered to them in those holy temple, and their judgments from thence they shall be made to hear their doom.

2. The man clothed in linen, who had marked those who were to be preserved, is to be employed in this service; for the same Jesus that is the Protector and Saviour of them that believe, having all judgment committed to him, that of condemnation as well as that of abolution, will come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those that obey not his gospel. He that sits on the throne calls to the man clothed in linen to go in between the wheels, and fit his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubims, and scatter them over the city. This intimates, (1.) That the burning of the city and temple by the Chaldeans was a consummation determined, and that therein they executed God's counsel, did what he designed before should be done. (2.) That the fire of divine wrath, which kindles judgment upon a people, is just and holy, for it is fire fetched from between the cherubims. The fire on God's altar, where atonement was made, had been slighted, to commence fire is here fetched from heaven, like that by which Nebuchadnezzar was warned, of offering strange fire. If a city, or town, or house be burned, whether by design or accident, if we trace it in its original, we shall find that the coals which kindled the fire came from between the wheels; for there is not any evil of that kind in the city, but the Lord has done it. (3.) That Jesus Christ acts by commission from the Father, for from him he receives authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man. Christ came to send fire on the earth, (Luke xii. 49.) and in the great day will speak this world into ashes. By fire from his hand, the earth, and all the works that are therein, will be burnt up.

3. This man clothed with linen readily attended to this service; though, being clothed with linen, he was very likely among the burning kind, he being called, he said, Lo, I come; this commandment he had received of his Father, and he complied with it; the prophet saw him go in, v. 2. He went in, and stood beside the wheels, expecting to be furnished there with the coals he was to scatter; for what Christ was to give, he first received, whether for mercy or judgment. He was directed to take fire, but he stayed till he had it given him, to show how slow he is to execute judgment, and how long-suffering to us-ward.

4. One of the cherubims reached him a handful of fire from the midst of the living creatures. The prophet, when he first saw this vision, observed that there were burning coals of fire, and lamps, but two, and did not among the living creatures; (ch. i. 12.) from hence this fire was taken, v. 3. The spirit of burning, the refiner's fire, by which Christ purifies his church, is of a divine original. It is by a celestial fire, fire from between the cherubims, that wonders are wrought. The cherubim put it into his hand; for the angels are ready to be employed by the Lord Jesus, and to serve all his purposes.

5. When he had taken the fire, he went out, no doubt to scatter it up and down upon the city, as he was directed. And who can abide the day of his coming? Who can stand before him when he goes out in his anger?

8. And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings. 9. And when I looked, behold, the four wheels by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub: and the appearance of the wheels was as the colour of a beryl-stone. 10. And as for their appearances, they four had one likeness, as if a wheel had been in the midst of a wheel. 11. When they went, they went upon their four sides; they turned not as they went, but to the place whither the
head looked they followed it; they turned not as they went. 12. And their whole body, and their backs, and their hands, and their wheels, and the wheels, were full of eyes round about, even the wheels, that they four had. 13. As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel!

14. And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle. 15. And the cherubims were lifted up. This is the living creature that I saw by the river of Chebar. 16. And when the cherubims went, the wheels went by them; and when the cherubims lifted up their wings, to mount up from the earth, the same wheels also turned not from beside them. 17. When they stood, these stood; and when they were lifted up, these lifted up themselves also: for the spirit of the living creature was in them. 18. Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims. 19. And the cherubims lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight: when they went out, the wheels also were beside them; and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 20. This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel, by the river of Chebar; and I knew that they were the cherubims. 21. Every one had four faces apiece, and every one four wings; and the likeness of the hands of a man was under their wings. 22. And the likeness of their faces was the same faces which I saw by the river of Chebar, their appearances and themselves: they went every one straight forward.

We have here a further account of the vision of God's glory which Ezekiel saw, here intended to introduce that direful omen of the departure of that glory from them, which would open the door for ruin to break in.

1. Ezekiel sees the glory of God shining in the sanctuary, so as he had seen it by the river of Chebar, and gives an account of it, that they who had by their wickedness provoked God to depart from them, might know what they had lost, and might lament after the Lord, grieving out their Ichabod, Where is the glory?

Ezekiel here sees the operations of Divine Providence in the government of the lower world, and the affairs of it, represented by the four wheels; and the perfections of the holy angels, the inhabitants of the upper world, and their ministrations, represented by the four living creatures, every one of which had four faces: the agency of the angels in directing the affairs of this world is represented by the close communication that was between the living creatures and the wheels, the wheels being guided by them in all their motions, as the chariot is by him that drives it; but the same Spirit being both in the living creatures and in the wheels, denotes that infinite wisdom which serves its own purposes by the ministration of angels, and all the occurrences of this lower world. So that this vision gives us but a figure of that throne, which the Lord has prepared in the heavens, and that kingdom of his which rules over all, Ps. ciii. 19.

The prophet observes, that this was the same vision with that he saw by the river of Chebar; (v. 13, 22.) and yet in one thing there seems to be a material difference, that that which was there the face of an ox, and was on the left side, (ch. 1. 10.) here they had a cherub, and is the first face, (v. 14.) whence some have concluded that the face of a cherub was that of an ox, which the Israelites had an eye to when they made the golden calf. I rather think that in this latter vision the first face was the proper appearance or figure of a cherub, which Ezekiel knew very well, being a priest, by what he had seen in the temple of the Lord, (1 Kings vi. 29.) but which we now have no certainty of at all; and by this Ezekiel knew assuredly, whereas before he only conjectured it, that they were all cherubims, though putting on different faces, v. 20. And this first appearing in the proper figure of a cherub, and yet it being proper to retain the number of four, that of the ox is left out and dropped, because the face of the cherubim had been most used by the worship of an ox. As sometimes when God appears to deliver his people when he appeared to depart from them, he rode upon a cherub, and did fly. Now observe here,

1. That this world is subject to turns and changes, and various revolutions; the course of affairs in it is represented by wheels, (v. 9.) sometimes one spoke is uppermost, and sometimes another, they are still rolling and flowing like the sea, waxing and waning like the moon, 1 Sam. iv. 8. Now their appearance is as if there were a wheel in the midst of a wheel, (v. 10.) which intimates the mutual references of providences to each other, their dependences on each other, and the joint tendency of all to one common end, while their motions as to us are intricate and perplexed, and seemingly contrary.

2. That there is an admirable harmony and uniformity in these various occurrences of providence; (v. 15.) As for the wheels, though they moved several ways, yet it was cried to them, O wheel; they were all as one, being guided by one Spirit to one end, for God works all according to the counsel of his own will, which is one, for his own glory, which is one. And this makes the dispositions of Providence truly admirable, and to be looked upon with wonder. As the works of his creation, considered separately, were good, but altogether, very good, so the wheels of providence, considered by themselves, are wonderful, but put them together, and they are very wonderful; O wheel!

3. That the motions of Providence are steady and regular, and whatever the Lord pleases that he does, and is never put upon new counsels. The wheels turned not as they went, (v. 11.) and the living creatures went straight forward, v. 22. Whatever difficulties lay in their way, they were sure to get over them, and were never obliged to stand still, turn aside, or go back. So perfectly known to God are all his works, that he is never put upon new counsels.

4. That God makes more use of the ministration of angels in the government of this lower world than we are aware of. The wheels were by the cherubims, one wheel by one cherub, and another wheel by another cherub, v. 9. What has been imagined by some concerning the spheres above, that every orb has its intelligence to guide it, here is intimated concerning the wheels below, that every
wheel has its cherub to guide it. We think it a satisfaction to us, if under the wise God there are wise men employed in managing the affairs of kingdoms and churches; whether there be so or no, it appears by this that there are wise angels employed, a cherub to every wheel.

5. That all the motions of providence and all the movements of the world are under the government of the great God. They are all full of eyes; those eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the earth, and which the angels have always an eye to, v. 12. The living creatures and the wheel concur in their motions and rests; (v. 17.) for the Spirit of life, as it may be read, or the Spirit of the living creatures, is in the wheels. The spirit of God directs all the motions of creatures, so as not only to make them serve the divine purpose. Events are not determined by the wheel of fortune, which is blind, but by the wheels of Providence, which are full of eyes.

II. Ezekiel sees the glory of God removing out of the sanctuary, the place where God's honour had long dwelt, and this sight is as sad as the other was grateful. It was pleasant to see that God had not forsaken the earth, (as the idolaters suggested, ch. ix. 9.) but sad to see that he was forsaking his sanctuary. The glory of the Lord stood over the threshold, v. 4. But it now departed off from the threshold, having thence given the necessary orders for the destruction of the city, and stood over the cherubims, not those in the most holy place, but those that Ezekiel saw, v. 9. It immediatly the cherubim lifted up their wings, (v. 19.) as they were directed, and they mounted up from the earth, as birds upon the wing; and when they went out, the wheels of this chariot were not drawn, but went by instinct, beside them; by which it appeared, that so the Spirit of the living creatures were in the wheels. Thus when God is leaving a people in displeasure, angels above, and all events here below, shall concour to further his departure. But observe here, In the courts of the temple where the people of Israel had dishonoured their God, had cast off his yoke, and withdrawn the shoulder from it, blessed angels appear very ready to serve him, to draw his chariot home, and to carry him out of it. God had shown the prophet how the will of God was disobeyed by men on earth; (ch. viii.) here he shows him how readily it is obeyed by angels and inferior creatures; and it is a comfort to us, when we grieve for the wickedness of the wicked, to think how his angels do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word, Ps. cxii. 20.

Let us now, 1. Take a view of this chariot in which the glory of the God of Israel rides triumphantly. He that is the God of Israel, is the God of heaven and earth, and has the command of all the powers of both. Let the faithful Israelites comfort themselves with this, that he who is their God is above the cherubim; their Redeemer is so, (1 Pet. iii. 22.) and has the sole sovereignty disposed of all events, the living creatures and the wheels agree to serve him, so that he is Head over all things to the church. The Rabbins call this vision that Ezekiel had, Merekah, the vision of the chariot; and from thence they call the more abstruse part of divinity, which treats concerning God and spirits, Opus currium—The work of the chariot, as they do the other part that is more plain and familiar, Opus cherubinum—The work of the creation. 2. Let us attend the motions of this chariot; The cherubim, and the glory of God above them, stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house, ready to depart and leave the house, v. 19. But observe with how many stops and pauses God departs, as loath to go, as if to see if there be any that will intercede with him to return. None of the priests in the inner court, between the temple and the altar, would court his stay; therefore he leaves their court, and stands at the east gate, which led into the court of the people, to see if any of them would yet at length stand in the gap. Note, God removes by degrees from a provoking people, and, when he is ready to depart, would return to them, if they were but a repenting, praying people.

CHAP. XI.

This chapter concludes the vision which Ezekiel saw, and this part of it furnishes him with two messages; 1. A message of wrath against those who continued still at Jerusalem, and were there in the height of presumption, thinking they should never fall, v. 1. 15. II. A message of comfort to those who were exiled captives into Babylon, and were there in the depth of despondency, thinking they should never rise. And as the former are assured that God has judgments in store for them, notwithstanding their present security; so the latter are assured that God has mercy in store for them, notwithstanding their present distress, v. 14. 21. And so the glory of God removes further, v. 22, 23. The vision disappears, (v. 24.) and Ezekiel faithfully gives his hearers an account of it, v. 25.

1. MOREOVER, the spirit lifted me up, and brought me unto the east gate of the Lord's house, which looketh eastward: and, behold, at the door of the gate five and twenty men; among whom I saw Jazaniah the son of Azur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people. 2. Then said he unto me, Son of man, these are the men that devise mischief, and give wicked counsel, in this city; 3. Which say, It is not near: let us build houses: this city is the caldron, and we be the flesh. 4. Therefore prophesy against them, prophesy, O son of man. 5. And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord, Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them. 6. Ye have multiplied your sin in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Your sin, whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron; but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. 8. Ye have feared the sword; and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God. 9. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and will execute judgments among you. 10. Ye shall fall by the sword: I will judge you in the border of Israel and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 11. This city shall not be your caldron, neither shall ye be the flesh in the midst thereof: but I will judge you in the border of Israel: 12. And ye shall know that I am the Lord; for ye have not walked in my statutes; neither executed my judgments, but have done after the manner of the heathen that
are bound about you. 13. And it came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah, the son of Benanaah, died: then fell I down upon my face, and cried with a loud voice, and said, Ah Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?

We have here,

1. The great security of the princes of Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments of God that were upon them. The prophet was brought, in vision, to the gate of the temple where these princes sat in council upon the present arduous affairs of the city; The Spirit lifted me up, and brought me to the east gate of the city of the Lord's habitation, and behold, twenty-five men were there. See how obsequious the prophet was to the Spirit's orders, and how observant of all the discoveries that were made to him. It should seem, these twenty-five men were not the same with these twenty-five whom he saw at the door of the temple, worshipping toward the east; (ch. viii. 16.) these seem to have been priests or Levites, for they were between the porch and the altar of burnt offerings, and are called in Jer. xxxiii. 10. by the name of the Lord's house, to try causes. (Jer. xxvi. 16.) and these here are charged, not with corruptions in worship, but mal-administration to the government; two of them are named, because they were the most leading, active men, and perhaps because the prophet knew them, though he had been some years absent; Pelatiah, and Jazarahiah, not that mentioned, ch. viii. 11. for Pelatiah was a prince in Jerusalem. Some tell us that Jerusalem was divided into twenty-four wards, and that these were the governors or aldermen of those wards, with their mayor or president. Now observe,

1. The general character which God gives of these men to the prophet; (v. 2.) These are the men that devise mischief, under pretense of concerting measures for the public safety, they harden people in their sins, and take off their fear of God's judgments which they are threatened with by the prophets; they give wicked counsel in this city, counselling them to restrain and silence the prophets, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and to resolve upon holding the city out to the last extremity. Note, It is bad with a people when the things that God hath hid from the eyes of those who are intrusted with their counsels. And when mischief is done, God knows at whose door to lay it, and, in the day of discovery and recompense, will be sure to lay it at the right door, and will say, These are the men that devised it, though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.

2. The particular charge exhibited against them in proof of this character. They are indicted for words spoken at their council-board, which he that stands in the congregation of the mighty would take cognizance of; (v. 5.) they said to this effect, "It is not near; the destruction of our city, that has been so often threatened by the prophets, is not near, not so near as they talk of. They are conscious to themselves of such an enmity to reformation, that they contrive it will come at last; but they have such an opinion of God's patience, (though they have long abused it,) that they are willing to hope it will not come this great while. Note, Where Satan cannot persuade men to look upon the judgment to come as a thing dreadful and uncertain, yet he gains his point by persuading them to look at it as not at hand, so that it loses its force. If it be sure, yet it is not to be expected; whereas, in truth, the Judge stands before the door."

Now if the destruction is not near, they conclude, Let us build houses; let us count upon a continuance, for this city is the caldron, and we are the flesh. This seems to be a proverbial expression, signifying no more than this, "We are as safe in this city as flesh in a boiling pot; the walls of the city shall be to us as walls of brass, and shall receive no more damage from the besiegers about than the caldron does from the fire under it. Those that think to protect us out of our city, shall find it to be as much at their peril as it would be to them to suffer themselves to take out of the caldron while it was in seething; (as we find, 1 Sam. ii. 13, 14.) and then it intimates that they were the more secure because Jerusalem was the holy city, and they thought themselves a holy people in it, not to be meddled with. Some think this was a banter upon Jeremiah, who in one of his first visions saw Jeru-usalem to be reduced to that condition; "Now," say they, in a way of jest and ridicule, "if it be a seething pot, we are as the flesh in it, and who dares meddle with us?" Thus they continued mocking the messengers of the Lord, even while they suffered for so doing; but be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong. Those hearts are hard indeed, which are made more severe by the molestation of God which were designed for warning to them.

11. The method taken to awaken them out of their security. One would think that the prov-idences of God, which related to them, were enough to startle them; but to help them to understand and improve these, the word of God is sent them to give them warning; (v. 4.) Therefore prophesy against them, and try to undeceive them; forphesy, O son of man, upon these dead and dry bones. Note, The greatest kindness ministers can do to secure sinners is, to preach against them, and to show them their misery and danger, though they are ever so unwilling to see it. We then act most for them, when we appear most against them. But the prophet being at a loss what to say to men that were hardening their hearts by the eyes of those who are intrusted with their counsels. And when mischief is done, God knows at whose door to lay it, and, in the day of discovery and recompense, will be sure to lay it at the right door, and will say, These are the men that devised it, though they are great men, and pass for wise men, and must not now be contradicted or controlled.
not only all we say, but all we think; even those thoughts that are most suddenly darted into our minds, and that as suddenly slip out of them again, so that we ourselves are scarcely aware of them, yet God knows them; he knows us better than we know ourselves; he understands our thoughts afar off; the consideration of this should oblige us to keep our hearts with all diligence, that no vain thing should come in the way of God's sight.

2. Let them know that all who had fallen, should be accounted for before God the murderers; and those slain were the only ones that should remain in the city, as the flesh in the caldron, v. 6. Have you fulfilled your slain in the city, not only the wives, and such of the persons outside of the walls as were slain in battles or sieges which they, by such a reasonable peace as the war aimed at, might have prevented, will be called their slain. Now these slain are the only flesh that shall be left in this caldron, v. 7.

3. Let them know that how impregnable soever they thought their city to be, they should be forced out of it, either driven to flight, or dragged into captivity: I will bring you forth out of the midst of it, whether you will or no, v. 7, 9. They had provoked God to forsake the city, and thought they should do well enough by their own policy and strength when he was gone; but God will make them know that there is no peace to them that have left their God. If they have by their sins driven God from his house, he will soon by his judgments drive them from theirs; and it will be found that those are least safe that are most secure; this city of Jehovah, this is the Lord's city; you shall not seek it in the shallow; you shall not seek it in the quick, v. 7, 9. They who have driven God from his house, shall not find him in their own, nor shall they be able to find a place of refuge among the dead.

4. Let them know that when God has got them out of the midst of Jerusalem, he will pursue them with his judgments wherever he finds them; the judgments which they thought to shelter themselves from by keeping close in Jerusalem. They feared the sword if they should go out to the Chaldeans, and therefore would abide in their caldron but, says God, I will bring a sword upon you, v. 8. and you shall fall by the sword, v. 10. Note, The fear of the wicked shall come upon him. And there is no fence against the judgments of God when they come upon the wicked, neither can they make any such escape as some think they can. They were afraid of trusting to the mercy of strangers. "But," says God, "I will deliver you into the hands of strangers, whose recusants you shall feel, since you were not willing to lie at their mercy." See Jer. xxxviii. 17, 18. They thought to escape the judgments of God, but God says that he will execute judgments upon them; and whereas they resolved that the sword should not pass through Jerusalem, God tells them, v. 10. and again, v. 11. that he will judge them in the borders of Israel, which was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar slew all the nobles of Judah at Riblah in the land of Hamath, on the utmost border of the land of Canaan. Note, Those who have taken ever so deep root in the place where they live, cannot be sure that it is that place they shall die.

5. Let them know that all this is the due punishment of their sin, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God against them; Ye shall know that I am the Lord, v. 10. and again, v. 12. Those shall be judged in their own ways, as they have judged others, which would not be taught by his word, what a hatred he has to sin, and what a fearful thing it is for impenitent sinners to fall into his hands. I will execute judgments, and then you shall know that I am the Lord, for the Lord is known by the judgments which he executes upon those that have not walked in his statutes. Hereby it is known that he made the law, because he punishes the breach of it. I will judge judgments among you, (says God,) because you have not executed my judgments, v. 12. Note, The executing of the judgments of God's mouth by us, in a uniform, steady course of obedience to his law, is the only way to prevent the executing of the judgments of his hand upon us, in our ruin and confusion; one way or other, God's judgments will be executed; the man that is secure will be judged as those who walked in his statutes. If we do not give honour to God by executing his judgments as he has commanded, he will get him honour upon us by executing his judgments as he has threatened; and thus we shall know that he is the Lord, the sovereign Lord of all, that will not be mocked. And observe, When they cast off God's statutes, and walked not in them, they did after the manners of the Gentiles that were round about them, and introduced into their worship all their impure, ridiculous, and barbarous usages. When men leave the settled rule of divine institutions, they wander endlessly. Justly therefore was this made the reason why they should keep God's ordinances, that they might not commit the abominable customs of the heathen. Lev. xvi. 30.

III. This awakening word is immediately here followed by an awakening providence, v. 13. Where we may observe,

1. With what power Ezekiel prophesied, or, rather, what a divine power went along with it; It came to pass, when I prophesied, that Pelatiah the son of Benaiah died; he was mentioned, v. 1. as a principal man among the twenty-five princes that were set over Israel in Jerusalem. It should seem, this was done in vision now, as the slaying of the ancient men, (Ech. ix. 6.) upon occasion of which Ezekiel prayed, (v. 8.) as he did here; but it was an assurance that when this prophecy should be published, it should be done in fact. The death of Pelatiah was an earnest of the complete accomplishment of this prophecy. Note, God is pleased oftentimes to single out some sinners, and make them monuments of his justice, for warning others of what is coming; and some that thought themselves very safe, are snatched away suddenly, and drop down dead in an instant, as Amnias and Saphira at Peter's feet when he prophesied.

2. With what pity Ezekiel prayed. Though the sudden death of Pelatiah was a confirmation of Ezekiel's understanding of the day of judgment, yet he was in deep concern about it, and laid it to heart as if he had been his relation or friend. He fell on his face, and cried with a loud voice, as one in earnest; *Ah Lord God! will thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?* Many are swept away by the judgments we have been under; and shall the remnant which have escaped the sword, thus be thrust into the innermost border of the influx? Then wilt indeed make a full end." Perhaps it was Ezekiel's infirmity to bewail the death of this wicked prince thus, as it was Samuel's to mourn so long for Saul; but thus he showed how far he was from de-
EZEKIEL, XI.

siring the woeful day he foretold. David lamented the sickness of those that hated and persecuted him. And we ought to be much affected with the sudden death of others, yea, though they are wicked.

14. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 15. Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get ye far from the Lord; unto us is this land given in possession. 16. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. 17. Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord God, I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. 18. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof, and all the abominations thereof, from thence. 19. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh: 20. That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 21. But as for them whose heart walketh after the heart of their detestable things and their abominations, I will recompense their way upon their own head, saith the Lord God.

Prophecy was designed to exalt every valley, as well as to bring low every mountain and hill; (Isa. xl. 4.) and prophets were to speak not only conviction to the presumptuous and secure, but comfort to the despised and despoothing that trembled at God's word. The prophet, having in the former part of this chapter received instructions for the awakening of those that were at ease in Zion, is in these verses furnished with comfortable words for those that mourned in Babylon, and by the rivers there sat weeping when they remembered Zion. Observe, 1. How the pious captives were triumphed upon and insulted over by those who continued in Jerusalem, p. 15. God tells the prophet what the inhabitants of Jerusalem said of him and the rest of them that were already carried away to Babylon. God had owned them as good figs, and declared it was for their good that he had sent them into Babylon; but the inhabitants of Jerusalem abandoned them, supposing them that were really the best saints to be the greatest sinners of all men that dwelt in Jerusalem. Observe, 2. How they are described as wise; They are thy brethren, (says God to the prophet,) whom thou hast in concern and affection for; they are the men of thy kindred; (the men of thy redemption, so the word is;) thy next of kin, to whom the right of redeeming the alienated possession belongs, but who are so far from being able to do it, that they are themselves gone into captivity. They are the whole house of Israel; God so accounts of them, because they only have retained their integrity, and are bettered by their captivity. They are not only of the same family and nation with Ezekiel, but of the same spirit; they were his hearers, and he had communion with them in holy ordinances; and perhaps upon that account they are called his brethren, and the men of his kindred. 2. How they were disowned by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; they said of them, Get ye far from the Lord. They that were esteemed and admired among the brethren that were humbled and under humbling providences. (1.) They cut them off from being members of their church; because they had separated themselves from their rulers, and in compliance with the will of God, had surrendered themselves to the king of Babylon, they communicated them, and said, Get ye far from the Lord, we will have nothing to do with thee, and to thee. Their superstitions were very willing to shake off those who were conscientious, and were severe in their censures of them and sentences against them, as if they were forsaken and forgotten of the Lord, and were cut off from the communion of the faithful. (2.) They cut them off from being members of the commonwealth too, as if they had no longer any part in the affairs of state in the world. "Unto us this land given in possession, and we have furnished them over to the king of Babylon, and we are thereby become entitled to them." God takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the contempt which those that are in prosperity put upon their brethren that are in affliction.

II. The gracious promises which God made to them in consideration of the insolent conduct of their brethren and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and that they had cast them out, said, Let the Lord be glorified; but he shall appear to their joy, Is. lxvi. 5. God owns that his hand was gone out against them, which had given occasion to their brethren to triumph over them; (v. 16.) It is true, I have cast them far off among the heathen, and scattered them among the countries; they look as if they were an abandoned people, and so mingled with the nations that they would be lost among them; but I have mercy in store for them." Note, God takes occasion from the contempt which are put upon his people to speak comfort to them; as David hoped God would reward him good for Shimei's cursing. His time to support his people's hopes is, when their enemies are endeavouring to drive them to despair. Now God promises, 1. That he will make up to them the want of the temple and the privileges of it; (v. 16.) I will be to them as a little sanctuary, in the countries where they shall come. They at Jerusalem have the temple, but without God; they in Babylon have God, though without the temple. (1.) God will be a sanctuary to them, a place of refuge; to him they shall flee, and in him they shall be safe, as he was that took hold on the horns of the altar. Or, rather, they shall have such communion with God in the land of their captivity, as it was thought could be had no where but in the temple: they shall there see God's power and his glory, so as they used to see it in the sanctuary; they shall have the tokens of God's presence with them, and his grace in their hearts shall sanctify their prayers and praises, as he did when the house was built at Jerusalem which was high and great, 1 Kings ix. 8. They were but few and mean, and a little sanctuary was fittest for them. God regards the low estate of his people, and suits his favours to their circumstances. Observe the condescensions of divine grace; the great God will be to his people a little sanctuary.
Note. They that are deprived of the benefit of public ordinances, if it be not their own fault, may have the want of them abundantly made up in the immediate communications of divine grace and comforts.

2. That God would in due time put an end to their afflictions, bring them out of the land of their captivity, and settle them again, them or their children, in their own land; (v. 17.) "I will gather even pon that are dispersed, thus dispersed, and given over for lost by your own countries; I will gather you from the people, distinguish you from those with whom you are mingled, deliver you from those by whom you are held captives, and assemble you in a body out of the countries where you have been scattered; you shall not come back one by one, but all together, which will make your return more honourable, safe, and comfortable; and then I will give you the land of Israel, which now your brethren look upon you as for ever shut out from." Note, It is well for us that men's severe censures cannot cut us off from God's gracious promises. There are many that will be found to have a place in the holy land, whom uncharitable men by their monopolies of it to themselves, had secluded from it. I will give you the land of Israel, let them be Lycians, Hebrews, or others; I will gather you and they shall come thither. If there be any thing in the change of the person from you to them, it may signify the perversity of these to whom the promise is made. "You shall have the title as the patriarchs had, and they that come after shall have the possession."

3. That God by his grace would part between them and their sins, v. 18. Their captivity shall effectually cure them of their idolatry; When they come thither to their own land again, they shall take away all the detestable things thereof. Their idols that had been their delectable things, should now be looked upon with detestation; not only the idols of Babylon, where they were captives, but the idols of Canaan, where they were natives; they should not only not worship them as they had done, but they should not suffer any monuments of them to remain; they shall take all the abominations thereof from thence. Note, Then it is in mercy that we return to a prosperous estate, when we return not to the sins and follies of that state. What have I to do any more with idols?

4. That God would powerfully dispose them to the purifying of their souls, he shall not only cease to do evil, but they shall learn to do well; because there shall be not only an end of their troubles, but a return to their peace. (1.) God will plant good principles in them; he will make the tree good, v. 19. This is a gospel-promise, and is made good to all those whom God designs for the heavenly Canaan; for God prepares all for heaven whom he has prepared here for. It is promised, [1.] That God will give them one heart, a heart entire for the true God, and not divided as it had been among many gods; a heart firmly fixed and resolved for God, and not wavering; steady and uniform, and not inconstant with itself. One heart is a sincere and upright heart, its intentions of a piece with its professions. [2.] That he will first give them fire, then oil, and then a new spirit, that 1. will come in Christ, he is a new creature. [3.] That he will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, out of their corrupt nature. Their hearts shall no longer be, as they have been, dead and dry, and hard and heavy, as a stone; no longer incapable of bearing good fruit, so that the good seed is lost upon it, as it was on the stony ground. [4.] That he will give them a heart of flesh, not dead or proud flesh, but living flesh; he will make their hearts sensible of spiritual pains and spiritual pleasures; will make them tender, and apt to receive impressions; this is God's work, it is his gift, his gift by promise; and a wonderful and happy change is it that is wrought by it, from death to life. This is promised to those whom God would bring back to their own land; for them such a change of condition is for the better indeed, when it is accompanied with such a change of the heart; and such a change must be wrought in all those that shall be brought to the better country, that is, the heavenly.

[22.] Their practices shall be consonant to these principles; I will give them a new spirit, not that they may be able to discourse well of religious subjects, and to dispute for it, but that they may walk in my statutes, in their whole conversation, and keep mine ordinances in all acts of religious worship, v. 20. These two must go together; and these, to whom God has given a new heart and a new spirit, will make conscience of both; and then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. The ancient covenant, which seemed to have been quite forgotten, shall be renewed. By their idolatry, it should seem, they had cast God off; by their captivity, it should seem, God had cast them off; but when they were cured of their idolatry, and delivered out of their captivity, God and his Israel own one another again. God, by his good work in them, will make them his people; and then, by the tokens of his good will toward them, he will show that he is their God. III. Here is a threatening of wrath against those who hated to be reformed. As, when judgments are threatened, the righteous are distinguished so as not to share in the evil of these judgments; so, when favours are promised, the wicked are distinguished so as not to share in the comfort of these favours; they have no part or lot in the matter, v. 21. But as for them that have no grace, what have they to do with peace? Observe, 1. Their description; their heart walks after the heart of their detestable things; they have as great a mind to worship devils as devils have to be worshipped. Or, in opposition to the new heart which God gives to his people, he has a heart against his own heart, they have a heart after the heart of their idols; in their temper and practice they conformed themselves to the characters and accounts given them of their idols, and the ideas they have of them, and of them they learned lewdness and cruelty. Here lies the root of all their wickedness, the corruption of the heart; as the root of their reformation is laid in the renovation of the heart. The heart has its walks, and according as these are, the man is. 2. Their doom; it carries both justice and terror in it; I will recompense their way upon their own head, I will deal with them as they deserve. There needs no more than this to speak God righteous, that he does but render to men according to their deserts, and yet such are the deserts of sin, that there needs no more than this to speak the sinner miserable.

22. Then did the cherubims lift up their wings, and the wheels beside them; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them above. 23. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain whither is on the east side of the city. 24. Afterwards the spirit took me up, and brought me in vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea,
them of the captivity: so the vision that I had seen went up from me. 25. Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shewed me.

Here is, 1. The departure of God's presence from the city and temple. When the message was committed to the prophet, and he was fully apprized of how to separate between the precious and the vile, then the cherubims lifted up their wings, and the wheels beside them, (v. 22.) as before, ch. x. 19. Angels, when they have done their errands in this lower world, are upon the wing to be gone, for they lose no time. We the glory of the Lord last at the east gate of the temple, (ch. x. 19.) which is here said to be in the midst of the city, which was, that, finding, and wondering, that there was none to intercede, none to uphold, none to invite its return, it removed next to the mountain, which is on the east side of the city, (v. 23.) that was the mount of Olives. On the mountain they had set up their idols, to confront God in his temple, when he dwelt there, (1 Kings xi. 7.) and thence it was called the mount of corruption; (2 Kings xxiii. 13.) therefore their God does as it were set up his standard, his tribunal, as it were to confront them, who thought to keep possession of the temple for themselves now that God had left it. From that mountain there was a full prospect of the city, thither God removed, to make good what he had said, (Deut. xxxii. 26.) I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be. It was from this mountain that Christ beheld the city, and wept over it, in the foretaste of its last destruction by the Romans. The glory of the Lord removed thither, to be as it were yet within call, and ready to return, if now at length, in this their day, they would have understood the things that belonged to their peace. Loath to depart bids often farewell. God, by going away thus slowly, thus gradually, intimated that he left them with reluctance, and would not have gone if they had not perfectly forced him from them. He did now, in effect, say, How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? But though he bear long, he will not bear always, but will at length forsake those, and cast them off for ever, who have forsaken him, and cast him off.

2. The departure of this vision from the prophet; at length he went up from him. 24. He saw it mount upward, till it went out of sight, which would be a confirmation to his faith that it was a heavenly vision, that it descended from above, for thitherward it returned. Note, The visions which the saints have of the glory of God, will not be constant till they come to heaven. They have glimpses of that glory, which they soon lose again; visions which go up from them; tastes of divine pleasures, but not a continual feast. It was from the mount of Olives that the vision went up, typifying the ascension of Christ to heaven from that very mountain, when those that had seen him manifested in the flesh, saw him no more. It was foretold (Zech. xiv. 4.) that his feet should stand upon the mount of Olives, stand last there.

3. The return to them of the captivity. The same Spirit that had carried him in a trance or ecstasy to Jerusalem, brought him back to Chaldea; for there the bounds of his habitation are at present appointed, and that is the place of his service. The Spirit came to him, not to deliver him out of captivity, but (which was equivalent) to support and comfort him in his captivity. Hence he gave to his hearers of all he had seen and heard, v. 25. He received, that he might give, and he was faithful to him that appointed him: he delivered his message very honestly; he spake all that, and that only, which God had shewed him: he told them of the great wickedness he had seen at Jerusalem, and the ruin that was hastening toward that city, that they might not repent of their surrendering themselves to the king of Babylon, as Jeremiah advised them, and blame themselves for it, nor envy those that stayed behind, and laughed at them for going when they did, nor must a sign to set forth the famishing captivity. Who would covet to be in a city so full of sin, and so near to ruin? It is better to be in Babylon under the favour of God, than in Jerusalem under his wrath and curse. But though this was delivered immediately to them of the captivity, yet we may suppose that they sent the content of it to them at Jerusalem, with whom they kept up a correspondence and foretold what it had been for Jerusalem, if she had taken the warning hereby given.

CHAP. XII.

Though the vision of God's glory he gone up from the prophet, yet his word comes to him still, and is by him sent to the people, and to the same purport with that which was discovered to him in his visions; to set forth the terrible judgments that were coming upon Jerusalem, by which the city and temple should be entirely laid waste. In this chapter, 1. The prophet, by removing his staff, and quitting his lodgings, must be a sign to set forth Zedekiah's flight out of Jerusalem in the utmost confusion when the Chaldæans took the city, v. 1. 16. II. The prophet, by eating his meat with trembling, typifies a sign of the desolation of the city during the siege, and the consternation that the inhabitants should be in, v. 17. 20. III. A message is sent from God to the people, to assure them that all these predictions should have their accomplishment very shortly, and not be deferred, as they flattered themselves, v. 21. 28.

1. THE word of the Lord also came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house. 3. Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight; and thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight: it may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house. 4. Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight, as stuff for removing: and thou shalt go forth at even in their sight, as they that go forth into captivity. 5. Dig thou through the wall in their sight, and carry out thereby. 6. In their sight shall thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight: thou shalt cover thy face, that thou see not the ground; for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel. 7. And I did so as I was commanded: I brought forth my stuff by day, as stuff for captivity, and in the even I digged through the wall with my hand; I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bare it upon my shoulder in their sight. 8. And in the morning came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, said unto thee, What doest thou?
13. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. 11. Say, I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall remove, and go into captivity. 12. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth; they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. 13. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare: and I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. 14. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them. 15. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries. 16. But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Perhaps Ezekiel reflected with so much pleasure upon the vision he had had of the glory of God, that often, since it went up from him, he was wishing it might come down to him again, and, having seen it once and a second time, he was willing to hope he might be a third time so favoured; but we do not find that he ever saw it any more; and yet the word of the Lord comes to him; for God did in divers manners speak to the fathers, (Heb. i. 1.) and they often heard the words of God, when they did not see the visions of the Almighty. Faith comes by hearing that word of prophecy, which is more sure than vision. We may keep up our communication with God through His prophecies and ecstasies.

In these verses, the prophet is directed,

I. By what signs and actions to express the approaching captivity of Zedekiah king of Judah; that was the thing to be foretold; and it is foretold to them that are already in captivity, because as long as Zedekiah was upon the throne, they flattered themselves with hopes that he would make his part good with the king of Babylon, whose yoke he was not willing to submit to; from this it is probable, these poor captives promised themselves great things, and, it may be, when he was forming that design, he privately sent encouragement to them to hope that he would rescue them shortly, or procure their liberty by exchange of prisoners; and while they were fed with these vain hopes, they could not set themselves out to subdue their affliction, or to take heed of their affliction. It is therefore necessary, but very difficult, to convince them that Zedekiah, instead of being their deliverer, should very shortly be their fellow-sufferer. Now, one would have thought, it might have been sufficient if the prophet had only told them this in God’s name, as he does afterward; (v. 16.) but, to prepare them for the prophecy of it, he must first give them a sign of it; must speak it to their eyes first, and then to their ears: and here we have,

1. The reason why he must take this method; (v. 2.) it is because they are a stupid, dull, unthinking people, that will not heed; or will see not, but at least accept of no testimony, but only hear of it; it will make no impression at all upon them; That dwell in the midst of a rebellious house, when it is next to impossible to work any good upon; they have eyes and ears, they have in intellectual powers and faculties, but they see not, they hear not; they were idolaters, whose character it was, (v. 3.) we say like the idols they war shipped, which have ears, and we say like the idols they hear not, Ps. cxv. 5, 8. Note, These are to be reckoned rebellious, that shut their eyes against the divine light, and stop their ears to the divine law. The ignorance of them that are wilfully ignorant, that have faculties and means, and will not use them, is so far from being their excuse, that it adds more, that is, so much, to their guilt, than as those that will not hear, that will not see. They see not, they hear not; for they are a rebellious house. The case is all from themselves; the darkness of the understanding is owing to the stubbornness of the will. Now this is the reason why he must speak to them by signs, as deaf people are taught, that they might be either instructed or ashamed. Ezekiel might not accommodate himself, not only to the weakness, but to the willfulness, of those they deal with, and deal with them accordingly: if they dwell among those that are rebellious, they must speak to them the more plainly and pressingly, and take that course that is most likely to work upon them, that they may be left insensible.

2. The method he must take to awaken and affect them; he must furnish himself with all necessities for removing, (v. 3.) provide for a journey clothes and money; he must remove from one place to another, as one unsettled and forced to shift; this he must do by day, in the sight of the people; he must bring out all his household goods to be packed upp and sent away; (v. 4.) and, because all the doors and gates were either locked up that they could not pass through them, or so guarded by the enemy that they durst not, he must therefore dig through the wall, and convey his goods away clandestinely through that breach in the wall, v. 5. He must carry his goods away himself upon his own shoulders, for want of a servant to attend him; he must do this in the twilight, that he might not be discovered; and, when he had done this shift he can see no more of the effects of his efforts, he must go away at even in their sight, with fear and trembling, and must go as they that go forth into captivity, (v. 4.) that is, he must cover his face, (v. 6.) is being ashamed to be seen, and afraid to be known, or in token of very great sorrow and concern; he must go away as a poor broken tradesman, who, when he is forced to shut up shop, hides his head, or runs his country.

Thus Ezekiel must be himself a sign to them and when perhaps he seemed somewhat backward to put himself to all this trouble, and to expose himself to be bantered and ridiculed for it, to reconcile him to it, God says, (v. 5.) "It may be they will consider, and will try it be taken off from their confidences, and thus come to their reason, and to their repentance. Note, We must not despair, even of the worst, but that yet they may be brought to bethink themselves, and repent; and therefore we must continue the use of proper means for their conviction and conversion, because, while there is life, there is hope. And ministers must be willing to go through the most difficult and inconvenient offices, (for such was this Ezekiel's removing,) though there be but the tiniest and smallest chances of success: but one soul shall be awakened to consider, our case and pains will be well bestowed."
3. Ezekiel's ready and punctual obedience to the orders God gave him; (v. 7.) I did so as I was commanded. Thus he teaches us all, and ministers especially, (1.) To obey with cheerfulness every command of God, even when most difficult. Christ himself learned obedience, and so we must all. (2.) To put ourselves to any trouble or pains for the conviction of those that are unconvinced. We do all things, that is, we are willing to do any thing, dearly beloved, for your edifying. (3.) To be ourselves affected with those things where we desire to affect others. When Ezekiel would give an example, he does himself put on a melancholy aspect. (4.) To sit loose to this world, and prepare to leave it; to carry out our stuff for removing, because we have no here continually, arising, depart, this is not your rest, for it is fulminated. Thou dwellest in a rebellious house, therefore prepare for removing; for who would not be willing to leave such a house, such a wicked world as this? II. He is directed by what words to explain those signs and actions, as Agabus, when he bound his own hands and feet, told them whose binding was thereby signified. But observe, it was not till morning that God gave him an exposition of the sign, till the next morning, to keep up in him a continual dependence upon God for instruction. As what God does, so what he directs us to do, perhaps we know not now, but shall know hereafter. If any speak as the people would ask the meaning of this sign, or at least they should; (v. 9.) "Hath not the house of Israel said unto thee, What does that mean? Yes, I know they have. Though they are a rebellious house, yet they are inquisitive concerning the mind of God," as these (Isa. lvi. 2.) who sought God daily. Therefore the prophet must do such a strange, uncouth thing, that they might inquire what it was, to prevent it; or, they may be helped, people will take notice of what is told them, and profit by it, when it comes to them in answer to their inquiries. But some understand it as an intimation, that they had not made any such inquiries; Hath not this rebellious house so much as asked thee, What does that mean? No, they take no notice of it; but tell them the meaning of it, though they do not ask. What God does, even when they do not ask, when he sends a message, he observes what entertainment we give to the messages he sends us; he hearkens and hears what we say to them, and what inquiries we make upon them; and is much displeased if we pass them by without taking any notice of them. When we have heard the word, we should apply ourselves to our ministers for further instruction; and then we shall know, if we thus follow on to know. 2. The prophet is to tell them the meaning of it. In general, (v. 10.) This burden concerns the prince in Jerusalem; they knew who that was, and glorified in it now that they were in captivity, that they had a prince of their own in Jerusalem, and that the house of Israel was yet entire there, and therefore doubted not but in time to do well enough; "But tell them," says God, "that in what they have done, they may read the doom of their friends in Jerusalem. I am one sign," v. 11. As the conversation of ministers should teach the people what they should do, so the providences of God concerning them are sometimes intended to tell them what they must expect. The unsettled state and removes of ministers give warning to people what they must expect in this world, no continuance, but constant changes. There are times of trouble and times of safety, as his days. They shall first lay their hands on you, Luke xxi. 12. (1.) The people shall be led away into captivity; (v. 11.) As I have done, so shall he be done unto them, they shall be forced away from their own houses, no more to return to them, neither shall their place know them any more. We cannot say concerning our dwelling-place, that it is our resting-place; for how far we may be tossed from it before we die, we cannot fix. (2.) The prince shall in vain attempt to make his escape, for he also shall go into captivity. Jeremiah had told Zedekiah the same to his face; (Jer. xxxiv. 3.) Thou shalt not escape, but shalt surely be taken. Ezekiel here foretells it to those who made him their confidence, and promised themselves relief from him. (1.) That he shall himself carry away his own goods, keepers, chief officers, and upon his shoulder some of his most valuable effects. Note, The judgments of God can turn a prince into a porter. He that was sent to have the regalia carried before him, and to march through the city at noon-day, shall now himself carry his goods on his back, and steal away out of the city in the twilight. See what a change sin makes with men! All the avenues to the palace being carefully watched by the enemy, thou shalt dig through the wall, to carry out thereby. Men shall be their own husbearers, and steal away their own goods; so it is when the sword of war has cancelled all right and property. (2.) That he shall attempt to escape in a disguise, with a mask or vizard on, which shall cover his face, so that he shall be able only to look before him, and shall not see the ground under him, who, as it were, is sightless, and, with his eyes affected, even now that he is in his flight, is afraid to be seen; yet none therefore either be proud of being looked at, or overmuch pleased with looking about them, when they see a king with his face covered, that he cannot see the ground. (3.) That he shall be made a prisoner, and carried captive into Babylon; (v. 13.) My net will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in it. I will make Chaldean's net, and their snare, but God owns it for his. Those that think to escape the sword of the Lord, will find themselves taken in his net. Jeremiah had said, that this king Zedekiah should see the king of Babylon, and that he should go to Babylon; Ezekiel says, He shall be brought to Babylon, yet he shall not see it, though he shall die there. Those that were dispersed, he would preserve alive to them; and these, the prophets contradicted one another; for one said, He shall see the king of Babylon, the other said, He shall not see Babylon; and yet both proved true: he did see the king of Babylon at Riblah, where he passed sentence upon him for his rebellion, but there he had his eyes put out, so that he did not see Babylon when he was brought thither. These captives expected to see their prince come to Babylon as a conqueror, to bring them out of their trouble; but he shall come thither a prisoner, and his disgrace will be a great addition to their troubles. Little joy could they have in seeing him, when he could not see them. (4.) That all his goods should be dispersed, and utterly disabled to do him any service; (v. 14.) I will scatter all that are about him, to help him, so that he shall be left helpless; and, as it were, to take away with him, he shall be scattered among them and their beasts shall devour them in the countries, (v. 15.) to be monuments of divine justice wherever they go. But are there not hopes that they may rally again? (He that flies one time, may fight another time.) No, I will draw out the sword after them, which shall cut them off wherever it finds them; for the sword that God draws out will be sure to do the execution designed yet of Zebedee's son, scattered with his eyes, v. 16.) I will leave a few men of them, though they shall all be scattered, yet they shall not all be cut off, some shall have their lives given them for a prey; the end for which they are thus remarkably spared, is very observable, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen.
whither they come; the troubles they are brought
into will bring them to themselves and to their
right mind, and then they will acknowledge the
justice of God in all that is brought upon them,
and will make an ingenuous confession of their sins
which provoked God thus to contend with them;
and as by it shall appear that they were spared in
mercy, so thereby they will make a suitable, grateful,
and worshipful acknowledgment of God's kindness,
and the favor shown to them. Note, When God has remarkably
delivered us from the deaths wherewith we were surrounded,
we must look upon it for this end, among
others, we were spared, that we might glorify God,
and edify others, by making a penitent acknow-
ledgment of our sins. Those that by their afflic-
tions are brought to this, are then made to know
they are in God's service, that he will not
be slighted to the knowledge of him. See how God brings good out of evil!
The dispersion of sinners, who had done
God much dishonour and disservice in their own
country, proves the dispersion of penitents, who
shall do him much honour and service in other
countries. The Levites are by a curse divided in
Jacob, and scattered in Israel, yet it is turned into a
blessing, for thereby they have the finest opportu-
nity to teach Jacob God's law.

17. Moreover, the word of the Lord
came to me, saying, 18. Son of man, eat
thy bread with quaking, and drink thy wa-
ter with trembling and with carefulness; 19. And say unto the people of the land,
Thus saith the Lord God of the inhabitants
of Jerusalem, and of the land of Israel. They
shall eat their bread with carefulness, and
drink their water with astonishment, that
her land may be desolate from all that is
therein, because of the violence of them that
dwell therein. 20. And the cities that are
inhabited shall be laid waste, and the land
shall be desolate; and ye shall know that I
am the Lord.

Here again the prophet is made a sign to them of
the desolations that were coming on Judah and Je-

1. He must himself eat and drink in care and
fear, especially when he was in company. v. 17, 18.
Though he was under no apprehension of danger to
himself, but lived in safety and plenty, yet he must
eat his bread with quaking, (the bread of sorrows,
Ps. cxxxv. 2.) and drink his water with trembling
and with carefulness, that he might express the
calamitous condition of those that should be in Jeru-
alem during God's favor towards them, which was
in saving and pretending to be in fear and care when really he
was not; but, being to foretell this judgment, to
show that he firmly believed it himself, and yet was
far from desiring it, in the prospect of it he was
himself affected with grief and fear. Note, When
ministers speak of the ruin coming upon repentent
sinners, they must endeavour to speak feelingly, as
those from the terrors of the Lord. And they
must be content to endure hardness, so they may
but do good.

2. He must tell them that the inhabitants of Jeru-
salem should in like manner eat and drink with
care and fear, v. 19, 20. Both these that have their
life in Jerusalem, and those of the land of Israel,
that come to shelter themselves there, they shall
eat their bread with carefulness, and drink their
water with astonishment, either because they are
afraid it will not hold out, but they shall want short-
ly, or because they are continually expecting the
alarms of the enemy, their life hanging in doubt be-
fore them, (Dt. xxviii. 66.) so that what they
have they shall have no enjoyment of, nor will it do
them any good. Note, Care and fear, if they pre-
val, are enough to inhibit all our comforts, and
are themselves very sore judgments. They
shall be reduced to these straits, that thus by degrees,
and by the hand of those that thus straiten them,
both city and country may be laid in ruins; for it is
no less than an utter destruction of both that is
aimed at in these judgments; that her land may be
desolate from all the fulness thereof, may be stripped
of all its ornaments, and robbed of all its fruits;
and then of course the cities that are inhabited shall
be laid waste, but they are served by the field. This
universal calamity coming upon a land and a people,
and then no wonder that they are examined by care
and fear. Now we are here told, (1.) How bad the
cause of this judgment was; it is because the viola-
tion of all them that dwell therein; their injustice
and oppression, and the mischief they did one an-
other; for which God would recompense them, as well
as for the affronts put upon him in his worship.
Note, The pride of virtue in a nation brings on a
decay of every thing else; and when neighbours
devoke one another, it is just with God to bring ene-
emies upon them to devour them all. (2.) How
good the effect of this judgment should be; Ye shall
know that I am the Lord, and if, by these judg-
ments, they learn to know him aright, that will
make up the loss of all they are deprived of by these
judgments. These are happy afflictions, holy
grievous sower to flesh and blood, that help to in-
roduce us into, and improve us in, an acquaintance
with God.

21. And the word of the Lord came un-
to me, saying, 22. Son of man, what is that
proverb that ye have in the land of Israel,
saying, The days are prolonged, and every
vision faieth! 23. Tell them therefore,
Thus saith the Lord God, I will make this
proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto
them, The days are at hand, and the effect of
every vision. 24. For there shall be no
more any vain vision nor flattering divina-
tion within the house of Israel. 25. For I
am the Lord: I will speak, and the word
that I shall speak shall come to pass; it
shall be no more prolonged: for in your
days, O rebellious house, will I say the
word, and will perform it, saith the Lord
Gon. 26. Again, the word of the Lord
came to me, saying, 27. Son of man, be-
hold, they of the house of Israel say, The
vision that he seeth is for many days to
come, and he prophesieth of the times that
are far off. 28. Therefore say unto them,
Thus saith the Lord Gon, There shall none
of my words be prolonged any more; but
the word which I have spoken shall be done,
saith the Lord God.

Various methods have been used to awaken this
secure and careless people to an expectation of the
judgments coming, that they might be stirred up to
repentance and reformation, to prevent them. The
prophecies of their ruin were confirmed by visions,
and illustrated by signs, and all with such evidence and power, that one would think they must needs be wrought up; but here we are told how they evaded the conviction, and gnared against it, namely, by telling themselves, and one another, that though these judgments threatened should come at last, yet the day of their coming was a long time. This suggestion, with which they bolstered themselves up in their security, is here answered, and showed to be vain and groundless, in two messages which God sent to them by the prophet at different times, both to the same purport; such care, such pains, must the prophet take to undeceive them! v. 21, 26. 

Observe, 1. How they flattered themselves with hopes that the judgments should be delayed. One saying they had, which was become proverbial in the land of Israel, v. 22. They said, "The days are prolonged, the judgments are not come when they were expected to come; but seem to be still put off; we die in them—from day to day, and therefore we may conclude that all vision fails, because it should seem that some do; that, because the destruction is not yet come, it will never come; we will never trust a prophet again, for we have been worse frightened than hurt." And another saying they had, which, if it would not conquer their convictions, yet should cool their affections, and abate their concern, and that was, "The vision is for a great while to come, it refers to events at a vast distance, and prophesies of future events, we may trifle yet very for a while, so that we need not to trouble our heads about them," (v. 27.) we may die in hourly peace before these troubles come. And if indeed the troubles had been thus adjourned, they might have made themselves easy, as Hezekiah did, "Is it not well, if peace and truth shall be in my days?" But it was a great mistake, and they did but deceive themselves into their own minds; and therefore concluded the vision itself failed, because the days were prolonged. 2. It received countenance from the false prophets that were among them, as should seem from the notice God takes (v. 24.) of the vain visions, and flattering divinations, even within the house of Israel, to whom were committed the oracles of God. So marvellous if they that deceived themselves by worshipping pretended deities, did receive themselves by crediting pretended prophecies, to which strong delusions God justly gave them up for their idolatries. 3. These sayings were become proverbial, they were industriously spread among the people, so that they were got into every one's mouth, and not only so, but were generally assented to, as proverbs are, not only the proverbs of the ancients, but of every one of the generations. Note, It is a mark of universal degeneracy in a nation, when corrupt and wicked sayings are grown proverbial; and it is an artifice of Satan, by them to confirm men in their prejudices against the word and ways of God, and a great offence to the God of heaven. It will not serve for an excuse, in saying ill, to plead that it is a common saying. 4. They thought they might deceive themselves, for the judgments shall be hastened, these false prophecies shall be confronted; Tell them therefore, The days are at hand; (v. 23.) and again, (v. 28.) There shall none of my words be prolonged any more. Their putting the evil day far from them does but provoke God to bring it the sooner upon them; and it will be so much the sooner, so much the heavier, so much the more a surprise and terror to them, when it does come. He must tell them, 1. That God will certainly silence the lying prophecies, and only the lying prophecies, with which they burdened up their vain hopes, and will make them ashamed of both; (1.) I will make this proverb to cease; for when they find the days of vengeance are come, and not one iota or tittle of the prediction falls to the ground, they will be ashamed to use it as a proverb in Israel. The days are prolonged, and the vision fails. Note, Those that will not have their eyes opened, and their mistakes rectified by the word of God, shall not have their prophecies confirmed, and their judgments for every mouth that speaks perverse things shall be stopped. (2.) There shall be no more any vain vision, v. 24. The false prophets, who told the people they should have peace, and should soon see an end of their troubles, shall be disproved by the event, and then shall be ashamed of their pretensions, and shall hide their heads, and insinuate silence upon themselves. Note, As truth was older than error, so it will survive; it got the start, and it will get the race. The true prophet's visions and predictions stand, and are in full force, power, and virtue; they give law, and receive credit, when the vain visions, and the flattering divinations, are lost and forgotten, and shall be no more in the house of Israel for great is the truth, and with power. 2. The threatening is to be very short, and very shortly, accomplish every word that he has spoken. With what majesty does he say it, (v. 25.) I am the Lord! I am Jehovah! That glorious name of his speaks him a God giving being to his word by the performance of it, and therefore to the patriarchs, who lived by faith in a promise not yet performed, he was not known by his name Jehovah, Exod. vi. 3. But this he has declared in the midst and in the days of the old men, for he is in making good his threatenings. Let them know then that God, with whom they have to do, is the great Jehovah, and therefore, (1.) He will speak, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear; I am the Lord, I will speak. God will have his saying, whoever gainsays it, God's oracles are called lively ones, for they will speak, when the pagan oracles are long ago struck dumb. There has been, and shall be, a succession of God's ministers to the end of the world, by whom he will speak; and though contempt may be put upon them, that shall not put a period to their ministration; In your days, O rebellious house, will I say the word. Even in the worst eyes of the church God left not his own without witness, but raised up men that spoke for him, that spoke from him. I will say the word, the word that shall stand. (2.) The word that he speaks shall come to pass, it shall infallibly be accomplished according to the true intent and meaning of it, and according to the full extent and compass of it: I will say the word, and will perform it; (v. 25.) for his mind is never changed nor his arm shortened, nor is infinite wisdom ever gone from his mouth. By words and deeds are two things, but they are not so with God; with him it is dictum, factum—said and done. In the works of providence, as in these of creation, he speaks, and it is done; for he said, Let there be light, and there was light: Let there be a firmament, and there was a firmament, Num. xxiii. 19, I Sam. xv. 29. Whereas they had the word, but he did not speak. "No, there shall be the effect of every vision, (v. 22.) it shall not return void, but every sign shall be answered by the thing signified." They that see the visions of the Almighty, do not see vain visions; God confirms the word of his servants by performing it. (3.) It shall be accomplished very shortly; "The
days are at hand, when you shall see the effect of every vision; v. 23. It is said, it is sworn, that delay shall be no longer; (Rev. xvi. 6.) the year of God's patience is now just expired, and he will no longer defer the execution of the sentence. It shall be no more prolonged; (v. 25.) he has borne with you a great while, but he will not bear always. In your days, O rebellious house, shall the word that is said be performed, and you shall see the threatened judgments, and share in them. Behold, your prophecies are at hand, and they are sure; This day the fruits are taken away from the evil to come, but this rebellious house shall not be so quietly taken away; no, they shall live to be hurried away, to be chased out of the world. This is repeated again; (v. 28.) There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but judgment shall now hasten on pace; and the longer the bow has been in the drawing, the deeper shall the arrow pierce. When we tell sinners of death and judgment, heaven and hell, and think by them to persuade them to a holy life, though we do not find them downright infidels, (they will own that they do believe there is a state of rewards and punishments in the other world,) yet they put by the force of those great truths, and avoid the impressions of them, by looking upon the things of the other world as very remote, and say, 'You shall not see it many days to come, and you prophesy of the times that are very far off; it will be time enough to think of them when they come nearer;' whereas really there is but a step between us and death, between us and an awful eternity; yet a little while, and the vision shall speak and not lie, and therefore it concerns us to redeem time, and get ready with all speed for a future state; for though it is future, it is very near; and while inpenitent sinners slumber, their damnation slumbers not.

CHAP. XIII.
Mention had been made, in the chapter before, of the vain visions and flattering divisions with which the people of Israel had suffered themselves to be imposed upon; (v. 21.) now this whole chapter is levelled against them. God's faithful prophets are no where so sharp upon any sort of sinners as upon the false prophets; not because they were the most sinful enemies to them, but because they put the highest affront upon God, and did the greatest mischief to his people. The prophet here shows the sin and punishment, 1. Of the false prophets, v. 1-4. Of the prophets of Jerusalem, v. 5-19, and the Lord's message to the prophet, v. 20-24. The Lord here agrees to sollicite men up in their sins, and, under pretence of comforting God's people, to flatter them with hopes that they should yet have peace; but the prophets shall be proved liars, and the people shall bear the expectation of the people illusions; for God will let them know, that the deceived and the deceived by his, are both accountable to him, Job xii. 16.

1. A ND the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel, that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord: 3. Thus saith the Lord God, Woe unto the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing! 4. O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts. 5. Ye have not come up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel, to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. 6. They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith it; and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. 7. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? 8. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. 9. And my hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies; they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

The false prophets, who are here prophesied against, were some of them at Jerusalem; (Jer. xxiii. 14.) I have seen in the prophets at Jerusalem a horrible thing; some of them among the captives in Babylon, for to them Jeremiah writes, (Jer. xxix. 8.) Let not your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you. And as God's prophets, though at a distance from each other in place or time, yet preached the same truths, which was an evidence to all that they were inspired by one and the same great Spirit, so the false prophets prophesied the same lies, being actuated by one and the same spirit of error. There were little hopes of bringing them to repentance, they were so hardened in their sin; yet Ezekiel must prophesy against them, in hopes that the people might be cautioned not to hearken to them; and thus a testimony will be left upon record against them, and they thereby left inexcusable.

Ezekiel had express orders to prophesy against the prophets of Israel; so they called themselves, as if none but they had been worthy of the name of Israel's prophets, who were indeed Israel's deceivers. But it is observable that Israel was never imposed upon by pretenders to prophecy till after they had rejected and abused the true prophets; as afterward, they were never deluded by counterfeit messiahs, till after they had refused the true Messiah, and rejected him. These false prophets must be required to hear the word of the Lord. They took upon them to speak what concerned others, as from God; let them now hear what concerned themselves, as from him.

And two things the prophet is directed to do; 1. To discover their sin to them, and to convince them of the falseness of their prophesies, or thereby render any further, by making manifest their folly unto all men, 2 Tim. iii. 9. They are here called foolish prophets, (v. 3.) men that did not at all understand the business they pretended to: to make fools of the people, they made fools of themselves, and put the greatest cheat upon their own souls. Let us see what is here laid to their charge.

1. They have not stood in the gap for the Lord, whereas he never sent them; they thrust themselves into the prophetic office, without warrant from him who is the Lord God of the holy prophets, which was a foolish thing; for how could they expect that God should own them in a work to which he never called them? They are prophets out of their own hearts; so the margin reads it; (v. 2.) prophets of their own heads, or threes. As they pretended to be his messengers, but the Lord hath not sent them, has not given them any orders; they counterfeit the broad seal of heaven, than which they cannot do a greater indignity to mankind, for hereby they put a reproach upon divine revelation, lessen its credit, and weaken its credibility; when these pretenders are found to be deceivers, atheists and infidels will thence infer, they are all so. The Lord has not sent them; for, though crafty enough,
in other things, *like the foxes*, and very wise for the world, yet they are *foolish prophets*, and have no care for the souls of God.

Note. Foolish prophets are not of God's sending, for whom he sends he either finds fit, or makes fit. Where he gives warrant, he gives wisdom.

2. They pretend to have instructions from God, whereas he never made himself and his mind known to them; *They followed their own spirit*; (v. 5.) they deliver that as a message from God, which is the punishment of those who would not turn for themselves, or of their own cruel and heated imagination, to give vent to a fancy; for *they have seen nothing*, they have not really had any heavenly vision; they pretend that what they say, *the Lord saith it*, but God disowns it, *I have not spoken it*. I never said it, never meant any such thing.

What they delivered was not what they had seen or heard, as that is which the minions of Christ deliver, or what they had dreamed, or what they thought would please those they coveted to make an interest in; this is called their seeing vanity and lying divination, (v. 6.) they pretend to have seen that which they did not see, and produced that as a divine truth, which they knew to be false. To the same purport, (v. 7.) *Ye have seen a vain vision, and spoken a lying divination*, that is, they have been divinely inspired to have no effect, but would certainly be disproved by the event; the words are changed, (v. 8.) *Ye have spoken vanity and seen lies*; what they saw and what they said was all alike, a mere sham; they saw nothing, they said nothing to the purpose, nothing that could be relied on, or that deserved regard. Again, (v. 9.) *they see vanity, and divine lies*; they pretend to have seen what the true prophets had, whereas really they had none, but either it was the creature of their own fancy, (they thought they had a vision, as men in a delirium do, that was seeing vanity,*) or it was a fiction of their own politics, and they knew they had none, and then they saw lies, and *divine lies*. See Jer. xxiii. 16, &c. Note. Since the devil is universally known to be the father of lies, those put the highest affront imaginable upon God, who had had, and then they reproved upon them. But they that had put God's character upon Satan, in worshipping devils, arrived at length at such a pitch of impurity as to put Satan's character upon God.

3. They took no care to prevent the judgments of God, that were breaking in upon the kingdom. They are like the *foxes in the deserts*, running to and fro, and seeming to be in a great hurry, but it was to get away, and shift for their own safety, not to do any good; *The hirinng flies, and leaves the shoot*. They are like foxes that are greedy of prey for themselves, crafty and cruel to feed themselves.

But, (v. 5.) *Ye have not gone up into the gaps, nor made up the hedge of the house of Israel*. A breach is made in their fences, at which judgments are ready to pour in upon them, and then, if ever, is the time to do them service; to stand to what they have done, and be conscious by it. They should have made intercession for them, to turn away the wrath of God; but they were not praying prophets, had no interest in heaven, nor intercourse with heaven, (as prophets used to have, Gen. xxvii. 7.) and so could do them no service that way. They should have made it their business by preaching and advice, to bring people to repentance and reformation, and make a new beginning; but this was none of their care, they contrived how to please people, not how to profit them. They saw a deluge of profaneness and impiety breaking in upon the land, waging war with virtue and holiness, and threatening to crush them and bear them down, and then they should have come in to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, by witnessing against the wickedness of the time and place they lived in; but they thought it their interest to be serviceable in a breach to make it good against the besiegers, and therefore they declined it, did nothing to stem the tide, stood not in the battle against vice and immorality, but basely deserted the cause of religion and reformation, in the day of the Lord, when it was proclaimed, *Who is on the Lord's side? Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers?* Ps. xli. 1. and put the name of prophets, that could think so favourably of sin, and had so little zeal for God and the public welfare.

4. They flattered people into a vain hope that the judgments God had threatened would never come, whereby they hardened these in sin whom they should have endeavoured to turn from sin; (v. 6.) *They have made others to hope that all should be well, and they should have peace, though they went on still in their trespasses, and that the event would confirm the word*. They were still ready to say, *We will warrant you that these troubles will be at an end quickly, and we shall be in prosperity again; as if their warrants would confirm false prophecies, in defence of God himself.*

11. He is directed to announce the judgments of God, against them; for these sins, from which their pretending to the character of prophets would not exempt them.

1. In general, here is a *Wo against them*, (v. 3.) and what that wo is, we are told; (v. 8.) *Behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God*. Note, Those are in a woful condition, that have God against them. Wo, and a thousand woes, to them that have made God their enemy.

2. In particular, they are sentenced to be excluded from all the privileges of the commonwealth of Israel, for they are adjudged to have forfeited them all; (v. 9.) *God's hand shall be upon them*, to seize them, and bring them to his bar, to shut them out from his presence, and they will find it a fearful thing to fall into his hands. They pretend to be prophets, particular favourites of Heaven, and authorized to preside in the congregation of his house on earth; but by pretending to the honours they were not entitled to they lost those that otherwise they might have enjoyed, Matth. v. 19. Their doom is, (1.) To be expelled out of the communion of saints, and not to be looked upon as belonging to it; *They shall not be in the secret of my people*; their folly shall be so clearly manifested, that they shall never be consulted, nor their advice asked; they shall not be present at any debates about public affairs. Or, rather, they shall not be in the assembly of God's people for religious worship, for they shall be ashamed to show their heads there, when they are proved by the events to be false prophets, and, like Cain, shall go out from the presence of the Lord. The people that are deceived by them shall be behind the house, and not have anything to do with them. They that usurped Moses's chair shall not be allowed so much as a door-keeper's place. In the great day they shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous, (Ps. i. 5.) when God gathers his saints together to him, (Ps. l. 3, 16.) to be for ever with him. (2.) To be expelled out of the book of the living. They shall die in their captivity, and shall not come out of it, and so shall take their denomination from them, and so their names shall not be found among those who either themselves or their posterity returned out of Babylon, of whom a particular account was kept in a public register, which was called the writing of the house of Israel, such as we have, Ezra ii. They shall not be found among the living in Jerusalem, Is. iv. 3. Or, They shall not be found written
among those whom God has from eternity chosen to be vessels of his mercy to eternity. We read of those whom God's people, Christ's war, according to sweeping its sheltered happy made our false not there thus and you. to shower it? tempered Id, not threatening, them. were 22, we will have 1 the vessels of mercy, whose surety was the Lord our God, for not of the ancient scriptures, which seems to be a shelter and protection for awhile, but will fall when a storm comes. One false prophet built the wall, set up the notion that God was not at all displeased with Jerusalem, but that the city should be confirmed in its flourishing state, and be victorious over the powers that now threatened it. This notion was very pleasing, and he that started it made himself very acceptable by it, and was caressed by every body; which invited others to say the same. They made the matter look yet more plausible and promising; they daubed the wall, which the first had built, but it was with untempered mortar, sorry stuff, that will not bind nor hold the bricks together; they had greater grounds for what they said, nor had it any consistency with itself, but was like rope of sand. They did not strengthen the wall, were in no case to make it firm, to see that they went upon sure grounds; they only daubed it to hide the cracks, and made it look well to the eye. And the wall thus built, when it comes to any stress, much more to any distress, will bulge and totter, and come down by degrees. Note, Doctrines that are groundless, though ever so grateful, that which is built upon a scripture-foundation, nor fastened with a scripture-cement, though ever so plausible, ever so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but will fall. 11. How they will be soon undecieved by the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth. 1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege which they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as an overflowing shower, or inundation, (such as Solomon calls a swepting rain that leaves no foot, Prov. xxvii. 3.) will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time: Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon-ball, battering this wall, and with these a stormy wind, which is sometimes so strong as to rend the rocks, (1 Kings xix. 11.) more much an ill-built wall, v. 1. But that which makes this rain, and hail, and wind most terrible, is, (v. 1.) that they are built upon a scripture-foundation, nor fastened with a scripture-cement, though ever so plausible, ever so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but will fall. 11. How they will be soon undecieved by the judgment of God, which, we are sure, is according to truth. 1. God will in anger bring a terrible storm that shall beat fiercely and furiously upon the wall. The descent which the Chaldean army shall make upon Judah, and the siege which they shall lay to Jerusalem, will be as an overflowing shower, or inundation, (such as Solomon calls a swepting rain that leaves no foot, Prov. xxvii. 3.) will bear down all before it, as the deluge did in Noah's time: Ye, O great hailstones, shall fall, the artillery of heaven, every hailstone like a cannon-ball, battering this wall, and with these a stormy wind, which is sometimes so strong as to rend the rocks, (1 Kings xix. 11.) more much an ill-built wall, v. 1. But that which makes this rain, and hail, and wind most terrible, is, (v. 1.) that they are built upon a scripture-foundation, nor fastened with a scripture-cement, though ever so plausible, ever so pleasing, are not of any worth, nor will stand men in any stead. And those hopes of peace and happiness which are not warranted by the word of God, will but cheat men, like a wall that is well daubed indeed, but will fall. 2. This storm shall overturn the wall; it shall fall, and the wind shall rend it. (v. 11.) the hailstones shall consume it; (v. 13.) I will break it down, (v.}

EZEKIEL, XIII. 643
14.) and bring it to the ground, so that the foundation thereof shall be discovered, it will appear how false, how rotten it was, to the prophetic reproach of the builders; when the Chaldean army has made Judah and Jerusalem desolate, then this credit of the prophets, and the hopes of the people, will both sink together; the former will be found false in flattering the people, and the latter foolish in sucking the people upon by their promises. They are opposed to so much the greater confusion, when the judgment shall surprise them in their security. Note, Whatever men think to shelter themselves with against the judgments of God, while they continue unformed, will prove but a refuge of lies, and will not profit them in the day of wrath. See Is. xxxvii. 17. Men's anger cannot shake that which God has built, (for the blast of the terrible ones is but as a storm against the wall, which makes a great noise, but never stirs the wall; see Is. xxv. 4.) but God's anger will overthrow that which men have built in opposition to him. They and all their attempts, they and all the securities wherein they intrench themselves, shall be as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence; (Ps. lii. 5, 16.) and when their vain expectations disappointed, then it will be discovered that there was no ground for either; (Hab. iii. 13.) the day will declare what every man's work is, and the fire will try it, 1 Cor. iii. 13.

3. The builders of the wall, and those that daubed it, will themselves be buried in the ruins of it; It shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof; and thus the threatenings of God's wrath, and all the just intentions of it, shall be accomplished to the uttermost, both upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it, v. 15. The same judgments that will prove the false prophets to be false, will punish them for their falshood; and they themselves shall be involved in the calamity which they made the people believe there was no danger of, and become monuments of that justice which they bid defiance to. Thus, if the blind lead the blind, both the blind leaders and the blind followers will fall together into the ditch. Note, Those that deceive others will, in the end, prove to have deceived themselves; and no doom will be more dreadful than that of unfaithful ministers, that flattered sinners in their sins.

4. Both the deceivers and the deceived, when they thus perish together, will justly be ridiculed and triumphed over; (v. 12.) When the wall is fallen, shall it not be said unto you, by those that gave credit to the true prophets, and feared the word of the Lord, "Now where is the daubing wherewith ye have daubed the wall? What is gone with all the fine soft words and fair promises whereewith you flattered your wicked neighbours, and all the assurances you gave them that the throne of the nation should be at an end? The righteous shall laugh at them, the righteous God shall, righteous men shall, saying, Lo, this is the man made not God his Strength, Ps. iii. 6, 7. I will also laugh at your calamity, Prov. i. 26. They will say unto you, (v. 15.) The wall is no more, neither he that daubed it your hopes are vanished, and the assurances you gave them that the throne of Israel," v. 16. Note, Those that usurp the honours that do not belong to them, will shortly be filled with the shame that does.

17. Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart; and prophesy thou against them, 18. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the women that sew pillows to all arm-holes, and make kerviches upon the head of every stature, to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? 19. And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley, and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? 20. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make them fly; and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, even the souls that ye hunt to make them fly.

21. Your kerviches also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 22. Because wit's lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life; 23. Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

As God has promised that when he pours out his Spirit upon his people, both their sons and their daughters shall prophesy, so the devil, when he acts as a spirit of lies and falsehood, is so in the mouth, not only of false prophets, but of false prophetesses also; and these are the deceivers when the prophet is here directed to prophesy against; for they are not such despicable enemies to God's truths as deserve not to be taken notice of; nor yet will either the weakness of their sex excuse their sin, nor the tenderness and respect that are owing to it, exempt them from the reproaches and threatenings of the word of God; no, Son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, v. 17. God takes no pleasure in humanekind; there are no real prophesy, people, as Exod. xxxiii. 7. The women pretend to a spirit of prophecy, and are in the same song with the men, as Ahab's prophets were; Go on, and prosper. They prophesy out of their own heart too; they say what comes uppermost, and what they know nothing of; Therefore prophesy against them from God's own mouth. The prophet must set his face against them, and try if they can look him in the face, and stand to what they say. Note, When sinners grow very impatient, it is time for reprovers to be very bold. Now observe, 1. How the sin of these false prophetesses is described, and what are the particulars of it. 2. They told deliberate lies to those who consulted them, and came to them to be advised, and they were told to do what mischief by you lying to my people that hear your lies; (v. 19.) they come to be told the truth, but you tell them lies; and because you humour them in their sins, they are willing to hear you." Note, It is ill with those people who can better bear hearing lies than unpleasing truths; and it is a temptation to them who lie in wait to deceive to tell lies, when they find people willing to hear them, and to excuse themselves with this, Si polum vult decipi, decisurus—If the people will be deceived, let them. 2. They profaned the name of God by pretending
to have received those lies from him; (v. 19.) Ye pollute my name among my people, and make use of that for the patronising of your lies, and the gaining of credit to them." Note, Those greatly pollute God's holy name, that make use of it to give countenance to falsehood and wickedness. Yet this, they did for handfuls of barley and pieces of bread: they did it for gain; they cared not what dishonesty they did to God's name by their lying, so they could but make a hand of it for themselves. There is nothing so sacred which men of mercenary spirits, in whom the love of this world reigns, will not prostitute and prostitute, if they can but get money by the bargain. But they may then expect to be punished, rather than break, they would sell you a false prophecy that should please you to a nicety, for the beggar's dole, a piece of bread, or a handful of barley; and yet that was more than it was worth. Had they asked it as an alms, for God's sake, surely they might have had it, and God would have been honoured; but, taking it as a fee for a false prophecy, God's name is polluted, and the smallness of the reward greatens the offence; for a piece of bread that man will transgress, Prov. xxvii. 21. Had their poverty been their temptation to steal, and so to take the name of the Lord in vain, it had not been so bad as when it tempted them to prophecy lies in his name, and so to profane his name.

3. They kept people in awe, and terrifird them with their pretensions; "You hunt the souls of my people, (v. 18.) hunt them to make them flee, (v. 20.) hunt them into gardens; (so the margin reads it;) you use all the arts you have to court or compel them into those places where you deliver your pretended predictions; or, you have got such an influence on them as make them think they must have would have them do, and tyrannize over them." It was indeed the people's fault, that they did regard them, but it was their fault by lies and falsehoods to command that regard; they pretended to save the souls alive that came to them, v. 18. If they would but hearken to them, and contributors to them, they might be sure of salvation; thus they blessed them; but that as their salvation as their end, but did not rightly understand the way, and therefore hearkened to those who were most confident in promising it. But will you pretend to save souls, or secure salvation to your party? Those are justly suspected, make such pretensions.

4. They discouraged those that were honest and good, and encouraged those that were wicked and profane; You slay the souls that should not die, and save those alive that should not live, v. 19. This is explained, v. 22. "You have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; because they would not, they durst not, countenance your pretensions, you thunders out the judgments of God against them, against their gross errors, your vulgar errors, under invincible characters, to make them either despisable or odious to the people, and pretended to do it in God's name, which made them go many a time with a sad heart; whereas it was the will of God that they should be comforted, and by having respect put upon them should have encouragement given them. But, on the other side, and which is still worse, you have strengthened the hands of the wicked, and emboldened them to go on in their wicked ways, and not to return from them, which was the thing the true prophets with earnestness called them to. You have promised sinners life in their sinful ways, have told them that they shall have peace though they go on, by which their hands have been strengthened, and their hearts hardened." Some think this here refers to the severe censures they passed upon those who were already gone into captivity, who were humbled under their affliction, by which their hearts were made sad; and the commendations they gave to those who rebelled against the king of Babylon, who were hardened in their impieties, by which their hands were strengthened; or, by their polluting of the name of God, they saddened the hearts of good people who have a value and regard for the word of God, and confirmed atheists and infidels in their contempt of divine revelation, and furnished them with arguments against it. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for, who give the spirits, and weaken the hands, of good people, and who gratify the lusts of sinners, and animate them in their opposition to God. But, that very thing strengthens the hands of sinners more than they tell them that they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance, though they do not return from their wicked ways.

5. They mimicked the true prophets, by giving signs for the illustrating of their false predictions, as Hananiah did; (Jer. xxviii. 10.) and they were signs agreeable to their sex; they saved little fellows to the people's arm-holes, to signify that they might be easy, and repose themselves, and needed not be disquieted with the apprehensions of trouble approaching. And they made kerchiefs upon the head of every stature, of persons of every age, young and old, distinguishable by their stature, v. 19. There are leaders of people's minds, who pretend to introduce liberty, or triumph; intimating that they should not continue delivered from the Chaldeans, but be victorious over them. Some think these were some superstitious rites which they used with those to whom they delivered their divinations, preparing them for the reception of them, by putting enchanted pillows under their arms, and handkerchiefs on their heads, to make their heads light, and the rest of their body feel nothing great. Or, perhaps, the expressions are figurative; they did all they could to make people secure, which is signified by laying them easy, and to make people proud, which is signified by dressing them fine with handkerchiefs, perhaps laid or embroidered on their heads.

6. How the name of God against them is expressed. Here is a wo to them; (v. 18.) and God declares himself against the methods they took to delude and deceive, v. 20. But what course will God take with them?

1. They shall be confounded in their attempts, and shall proceed no further; for (v. 23.) ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations; not that they shall themselves lay down their pretensions in a way of repentance, but when the event gives them the lie, they shall be silent for shame. Or, their fancies and imaginations shall not be disposed to receive impressions which assist them in their divinations as they have been; or they themselves shall be cut off.

2. God's people shall be delivered out of their bands; when they see themselves deluded by them into a false peace and a fool's paradise, and that though they would not leave their sin, their sin has left them, and they see no more vanity, nor divine divinations, they shall turn their back upon them, shall slight their predictions, the righteous shall be no more saddened by them, no, nor the wicked shall be strengthened by them; God will strike the arms, and the kerchiefs from their heads, the falsities shall be discovered, their frauds detected, and the people of God shall no more be in their hand, to be hunted as they had been. Note, It is a great mercy to be delivered from a servile regard to, and fear of, those who, under colour of a divine authority, impose upon and tyrannize over the consciences of men, and say to their souls, Bow down, that we may go over. But it is a sore grief to those
EZEKIEL, XIV.

who delight in such usurpations, to have their power broken, and the prey delivered; such was the reformation to the church of Rome. And when God does this, he makes it to appear that he is the Lord, that it is his prerogative to give law to souls.

CHAP. XIV.

Hearing the word, and prayer, are two great ordinances of God, in which we are to give honour to him, and they hope to find favour and acceptance with him; and yet, in this chapter, to our great surprise, we find some waiting upon God in the one, and some in the other; and yet not meeting with success, as they expected. 1. The elders of Israel come to hear the word, and inquire of the prophet; but, because they are not duly qualified, they meet with a rebuke instead of acceptance, (v. 1-5.) and are called upon to repent of their sins, and reform their lives, else it is at their peril to inquire of God, v. 6-11.

II. Noah, Daniel, and Job, are supposed to pray for this people, and yet, because the decree is gone forth, and the destruction of them is determined by a variety of judg- ments, their prayers shall not be answered, v. 12-21. And yet it is promised, in the close, that a remnant shall escape, v. 22, 23.

1. THEN came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

2. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 3. Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them?

4. Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will an- swer him that cometh according to the multitu- de of his idols; 5. That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. 6. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abomina- tions.

7. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him by myself: 8. And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 9. And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet; and I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. 10. And they shall bear the punishment of their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him that seeketh unto him; 11. That the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, neither be polluted any more with all their transgressions; but that they may be my people, and I may be their God, saith the Lord God.

Here is, 1. The address which some of the elders of Israel made to the prophet, as an oracle, to inquire of the Lord by him; They came, and sat be- fore him, v. 1. It is probable that they were not of those who were now his fellow-captives, and con- stantly attended his ministry, (such as these we read of, ch. viii. 1.) but some occasional hearers; and out of the mouth of God, in which he would continue upon business to Babylon, perhaps public business, on an embassy from the king, and in their way called on the prophet, having heard much of him, and being desirous to know if he had any message from God, which might be some guide to them in their negotiation. By the severe answer given them, one would suspect they had a design to encourage the prophet, or to try if they could catch hold of any thing that might look like a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecies, and so they might have occasion to reproach them both. However, they feigned them- selves just men, complimented the prophet, and sat before him gravely enough, as God's people used to sit. Note, It is no new thing for bad men to be found employed in the external performances of religion.

The account which God gave the prophet privately concerning them. They were strangers to him, he only knew that they were elders of Israel, that was the character they wore, and as such he received them with respect, and, it is likely, was glad to see them so well disposed; but God gives him their real character, (v. 3.) they were idolat- ers, and did only consult Ezekiel, as they would any oracle of a pretended deity, to gratify their curios- ity; and therefore he appeals to the prophet himself, whether they deserved to have any counte- nance or encouragement given them; "Should I be inquired of at all by them? Should I accept their inquiries as an honour to myself, or answer them for satisfaction to them? No; they have no reason to expect it;" for, (1.) They have set up their idols in their heart; they not only have idols, but they are in- terricated with them; they have taken them to their hearts, and do worship them with all the rites and ceremonies of idolatry, and are so deeply rooted in idolatry, that they cannot be drawn out of it, and therefore they are not fit for any people that are employed in the external performances of religion.

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allured to idolatry, and so it was the block at which they stumbled, and fell into that sin; or, their iniquity is their stumbling-block, which throws them down, so that they fall into ruin. Note, Sinners are their own tenters; every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and so they are their own destroyers: If thou seest it, and shall alone bear it; and thus they put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their own faces, and stumble upon it, though they see it before their eyes. It intimates that they are resolved to go on in sin, whatever comes of it; I have loved strangers, and after them I will go; that is the language of their hearts. And should God be impartial of their wretches? Do they not hereby rather put an affront upon him than do him any honour, as those did, who bowed the knee to Christ, in mockery? Can they expect an answer of peace from God, who thus continue their acts of hostility against him? 

3. The answer which God, in just displeasure, orders Ezekiel to give them, v. 4. Let them know that it is not out of any disrespect to their persons, that God refuses to give them an answer, but it is laid down as a rule for every man of the house of Israel, whoever he be, that if he continue in love and league with his idols, and come to inquire of God, God will resent it as an indignity done to him, and will answer him according to his real iniquity, not according to his prayers and resolutions, but according to the prophet, who, he expects, will be civil to him, but God will give him his answer, by punishing him for his impudence; I the Lord, who speak, and it is done; I will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols. Observe, Those who set up idols in their hearts, and set their hearts upon their idols, commonly have a multitude of them. Humble worshippers of God have no need to account to the multitude of his neros, but bold intruders he answers according to the multitude of their idols, that is, (1.) According to the desire of their idols; he will give them up to their own hearts' lust, and leave them to themselves to be as bad as they have a mind to be, till they have filled up the measure of their iniquity. Men's corruptions are idols in their hearts; and so all the desires of the heart, and their temptations are the stumbling-block of their iniquity, and they are of their own putting, and God will answer them accordingly; let them take their course. (2.) According to the desert of their idols; they shall have such an answer as it is just that such idolaters should have. God will punish them as he punishes idolaters, that is, when they stand in need of his help, he will send them to the gods whom they have chosen,Judg. x. 13, 14. Note, The judgment of God will dwell with men according to what they are really that is, according to what their hearts are, not according to what they are in show and profession. And what will be the end of this? What will this threatened answer amount to? He tells them, v. 5. For thus saith the Lord God; he heart may lay them open to the world, that they may be ashamed; may, let them open to the curse, that they may be ruined. Note, The sin and shame, and pain and ruin of sinners, are all from themselves, and their own hearts are the snares in which they are taken; they seduce them, they betray them; their own consciences witness against them, cut them to the heart, and are a ever more piercing to them, if he discover them, if he convict them, if he bind them over to his judgment, it is all by their own hearts. 

4. The extent of this answer which God had given them, to all the house of Israel, v. 7, 8. The same thing is repeated, which intimates God's just displeasure against hypocrites, who mock him with the shows and forms of devotion, while their hearts are estranged from him, and at war with him. Observe, (1.) To whom this declaration belongs; it concerns not only every one of the house of Israel, (as before, v. 4) but the stranger that sojourns in Israel; let him not think it will be an excuse for him in his idolatries, that he is but a stranger and a sojourner in Israel, and does but worship the gods that his father served, and that he himself was bred up in the service of; no, let him not expect any benefit from Israel's oracles or prophets, unless he thoroughly renounce his idolatry. Note, Even presbyters shall not be esteemed, if they be not sincere; a dissembled conversion is no conversion. (2.) The description here given of hypocrites: They separate themselves from God by their fellowship with idols; they cut themselves off from their relation to God, and their interest in him; they break off their acquaintance and intercourse with him, and set themselves at a distance from him. Note, Those that join themselves to idols, separate themselves from God, and are estranged from him, cut themselves off from the vision and fruition of God, but such as now separate themselves from his service, and wilfully withdraw their allegiance from him. But there are those who thus separate themselves from God, and yet come to the prophets, with a seeming respect and deference to their office, to inquire of them concerning God; either to satisfy a vain curiosity, to want the mouth of a cleaver concerning those things that concern them, or to get or save a reputation among men; but without any desire to be acquainted with God, or any design to be ruled by him. (5.) The doom of those who thus trifle with God, and think to impose upon him: *I the Lord will answer him by myself; let me alone to deal with him; I will give him an answer that shall fill him with confusion, that shall make him report his lying impiety. He shall have his witness, not by the tongue of the prophet, but by the judgments of God. And I will set my face against that man; which denotes great displeasure against him, and a fixed resolution to ruin him. God can outface the most impenitent sinner. The hypocrite thought to save his credit, nay, and to gain applause, but, on the contrary, God will make him a sign and a proverb; will inflict such judgments upon him, as shall make him remarkable and contemptible in the eyes of all about him; his misery shall be made use of to express the greatest misery; as when the worst of sinners are said to have their portion appointed to them with hypocrites, Mat. xxiv. 51. God will make him an example; his judgments upon him shall be for the warning of the world, and of all that mock God for thus shall it be done to the counterfeit prophet himself;的产品of God, and yet pretends to inquire concerning him. The hypocrite thought to have passed for one of God's people, and to have crowded himself into heaven among them; but God will cut him from the midst of his people, will discover him, and pluck him out from the thickest of them; and by this, says God, ye shall know that I am in the midst of the house of Israel. By the discovery of hypocrites, it appears that God is conscious: ministers know not how people stand affected when they come to hear the word, but God does; and by the punishment of hypocrites, it appears that he is a jealous God, and one that cannot, and will not, be imposed upon. 5. The doom of those pretenders to prophecy,
who give countenance to these pretenders to piety, v. 9, 10. These hypocritical inquirers, though Ezekiel will give them no comfortable answer, yet hope to meet with some other prophets that will; and if they do, as perhaps they may, let them know that God permits these lying prophets to deceive them, in part of punishment: "If the prophet that flatters them be deceived, and gives them hopes which there is no ground for, I the Lord have deceived that prophet, have suffered the temptation to be laid before him, and suffered him to yield to it, and overruled it for the hardening of those in their wicked courses, who were resolved to go on in them." We are told that God is not the Author of sin, but we are sure that he is the Lord of all, and the Judge of sinners, and that he often makes use of one wicked man to destroy another, and so of one wicked man to deceive another. Both are sins in him who does them, and so they are not from God: both are punishments to him to whom they are done, and so they are from God. We have a full instance of this in the story of Ahab's prophets, who were engaged in what was a spirit, which God brought upon them in their months, (1 Kings xxxii. 23.) and another in those whom God gives up to strong delusions to believe a lie, because they received not the love of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. But read the fearful doom of the lying prophet, I will stretch out my hand upon him, and will destroy him. When God has served his own righteous purposes by him, he shall be recompensed for his unrighteousness. And when God had made use of the Chaldeans for the wasting of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their rage; so when he had made use of false prophets, and afterward of false christs, for the deceiving of a sinful people, he justly punished them for their falsehood. But herein we must acknowledge (as Calvin upon this place reminds us) that God's judgments are a great despot; that we are incompetent judges of them; and that though we cannot account for the equity of God's proceedings to the satisfying and silencing of every caviller, yet there is a day coming when he will be justified before all the world; and particularly in this instance, when the punishment of the prophet that flattereth the hypocrite in his evil way, shall be as the punishment of the hypocrite that seeketh to satisfy by means smooth things only. Isa. xxvii. 10. The ditch shall be the same for the head leader, and the blind followers.

6. The good counsel that is given them for the preventing of this fearful doom; (v. 6.) "Therefore repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; let this separate between you and them, that they separate not between you and God; because they set God's face against you, do you turn away your faces from them, which doeth not, not only forsaking them, but forsaking them with leaching and detestation; Turn from them as from abominations that you are sick of; and then you will be welcome to inquire of the Lord. Come now, and let us reason together."

7. The good issue of all this, as to the house of Israel; therefore the pretending prophets, and the pretending saints, shall perish together by the judgment of God. And he that hath brought to them, the body of the people may be reformed; that the house of Israel may go no more astray from me, v. 11. Note, The punishments of some are designed for the prevention of sin, that others may hear, and fear, and take warning. When we see what comes of those that go astray from God, we shall thereby be encouraged to keep close to him. And if the house of Israel should not turn, they will not be polluted any more. Note, Sin is a polluting thing; it renders the sinner odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and in his own eyes too, whenever conscience is awakened; and therefore they shall no more be polluted, that they may be my people, and I may be their God. Note, Those whom God takes into covenant with himself, must first be cleansed from the pollutions of sin, and those who are so cleansed shall not only be saved from ruin, but be entitled to all the privileges of God's people.

12. The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, 13. Son of man, when the land smiteth against me, by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it. 14. Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord God. 15. If I cause noisome beasts to pass through the land, and they spoil it, so that it be desolate, that no man may pass through because of the beasts: 16. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters; they only shall be delivered, but the land shall be desolate. 17. Or if I bring a sword upon that land, and say, Sword, go through the land; so that I cut off man and beast from it: 13. Though these three men were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither sons nor daughters, but they only shall be delivered themselves. 19. Or if I send a pestilence into that land, and pour out my fury upon it in blood, to cut off from it man and beast: 20. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. 21. For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast! 22. Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters; behold, they shall come forth unto you, and ye shall see their way and their doings: and ye shall be comforted concerning the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, even concerning all that I have brought upon it. 23. And they shall comfort you, when ye see their ways and their doings; and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord God.

The scope of these verses is to show, 1. That national sins bring national judgments; when virtue is ruined and laided waste, every thing else will soon be ruined and laid waste too; (v. 13.) When the land sins against me, when vice and wickedness become epidemical, when the land sins
by trespassing grievously, when the sinners are become very numerous, and their sins very heinous, when gross impieties and immoralities universally prevail, then will I stretch forth mine hand upon it, for the punishment of it; the divine power shall be vigorously and openly exerted, the judgments shall be extended and stretched forth to all the corners of the land, to tell the concerns and interests of the nation. Grievous sins bring grievous plagues.

2. That God has a variety of sore judgments wherewith to punish sinful nations; and he has them all at command, and inflicts which he pleases. He did indeed give David his choice what judgment he would be punished with for his sin in numbering the people. The number which was to be taken by lot which was to lessen the number he was proud of; but David, in effect, referred it to God again; "Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, let him choose with what rod we shall be beaten." But he uses a variety of judgments, that it may appear he has an universal dominion, and that in all our concerns we may see our dependence on him.

Four sore judgments are here specified: (1.) Famine. The denial of withholding of common mercies is itself judgment enough, there needs no more to make a people miserable. God needs not bring the staff of oppression, it is but breaking the staff of bread, and the work is soon done; he cuts off man and beast, by cutting off the provisions which they are dependent upon, not only of their animals, but of their people, devouring men, women, and children, so that no man may pass through because of the beasts; none dare travel even in the high roads, for fear of being pulled in pieces by lions, or other beasts of prey, as the children of Beth-el by two bears. Note, When men revolt from their allegiance to God, and rebel against him, it is just with God to deal with them in a manner of which he has given them notice, as the arms against man, Lev. xxvi. 22. (2.) War; God often chastises sinful nations by bringing a sword upon them, the sword of a foreign enemy, and he gives it his commission, and orders what execution it shall do; (v. 17) he says, Sword, go through the land. It is bad enough if the sword do but enter into the borders of a land, but much worse when it goes through the bowels of a land. By it God cuts off man and beast, horse and foot; what execution the sword does, God does by it; for it is his sword, and it acts as he directs. (4.) Pestilence; a dreadful disease, which has sometimes depopulated cities; by it God pours out his fury in blood; that is, in death; the pestilence kills as effectually as if the blood were shed by the sword; for it is poisoned by the blood; the pestilence is the blood of God. Impossible the case of mankind, that lies thus exposed to deaths in various shapes! See how dangerous the case of sinners is, against whom God has so many ways of fighting; so that though they escape one judgment, God has another waiting for them!

3. That, when God's professing people revolt from him, and rebel against him, they may daily expect visitations of judgments that would serve to answer to them. God has various ways of contending with a sinful nation: but if Jerusalem, the holy city, become a harlot, God will send upon her all his four sore judgments; (v. 21) for the nearer any are to God in name and profession, the more severely will he reckon with them, if they reproach that worthy name by which they are called, and give the lie to that profession. They shall be punished seven times more.

4. That there may be, and commonly are, some few very good men, even in those places that, by sin, are ripened for ruin. It is no foreign suggestion that, even in a land that has transgressed grievously, there may be three such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job. Daniel was new living, and at this time had scarcely arrived to the prime of his eminence, but he was already famous, at least this word of God concerning him would without fail make him so; yet he was carried away into captivity with the first of all, Dan. i. 6. Some of the better sort of people in Daniel's kingdom were good Jews; and Daniel (of whose fame in the King of Babylon's court they had heard much) had but continued in Jerusalem, it had been spared for his sake, as the magicians in Babylon were. "No," says God, "though you had him, who was as eminently good in bad times and places, as Noah in the old world, and Job in the land of Uz, yet a reprobate shall not be obtained." In the places that are most corrupt, and in the ages that are most degenerate, there are a remnant which God reserves to himself, and which still hold fast their integrity, and stand fast for the honour of delivering the land, as the innocents are said to do, Job xxii. 30.

5. That God often spares very wicked places for the sake of a few godly people, in them. This is implied here as the expectation of Jerusalem's friends in the day of its distress: "Surely God will stay his controversy with us; for are there not some among us, that are emptying the measure of national guilt by their prayers, as others are filling it by their sins? And rather than God will destroy the righteous with the wicked, he will preserve the wicked with the righteous. If Sodom might have been spared for the sake of ten good men, surely Jerusalem may." 6. That such men as Noah, Daniel, and Job will prevail, if any can, to turn away the wrath of God from a sinful people. Noah was a perfect man, and kept his integrity, when all flesh had corrupted their way; and for his sake, his family, though one of them was wicked, (Ham,) was saved in the ark. Daniel was a great example of piety, and patient prayer for his children, for his friends, and God turned his captivity when he prayed. These were very ancient examples, before Moses that great intercessor; and therefore God mentions them, to intimate that he had some very peculiar favourites long before the Jewish nation was formed or founded, and would have such when it was ruined; for which reason, it should seem, these names were made use of, rather than Moses, Aaron, or Samuel; and yet, lest any should think that God was partial in his respects to the ancient days, here is a modern instance, a living one, placed between those two that were the glories of antiquity, and he now a captive, and that is Daniel, to teach us not to lessen the useful, good men of our own day, by over-magnifying the ancients. Let the children of the captivity know that Daniel, their neighbour, and companion in tribulation, being a man of great humility, piety, and zeal for God, and instant and constant in prayer, had as good an interest in heaven as Noah or Job had. Why may not God raise up as great and good men now as he did formerly, and do as much for them? 7. That when the sin of a people is come to its height, and the decree is gone forth for their ruin, the piety and prayers of the best men shall not prevail to finish the controversy. This is here asserted again and again, that, though these three men were in Jerusalem at this time, yet they should deliver neither son nor daughter; not so much as the
little ones should be spared for their sakes, as the little ones of Israel were upon the prayer of Moses, Numb. xiv. 31. No, the land shall be desolate, and God will not hear their prayers for it, though Moses and Samuel strove to this end, chap. xxv. 6. Note, Absolute desert will turn at last into inexcusable wrath; and it should seem as if God would be more inexcusable in Jerusalem's case than in another, (v. 6.) because, beside the divine patiency, they had enjoyed greater privileges than any people besides, which were the aggravations of their sin.

8. That though pious, praying men may not prevail to deliver their own souls, by their righteousness; so that though they may suffer in the common calamity, yet to them the property of it is altered, it is not to them what it is to the wicked; it is unstung, and does them no hurt; it is sanctified, and does them good; sometimes their souls, their lives, are remarkably delivered, and given them for a prey; their souls, at least, their spiritual interests, are secured; if their bodies be not delivered, yet their souls are. Riches indeed profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death, from so great a death, so many deaths as are here threatened. This should encourage us to keep our integrity in times of common apostacy, that, if we do so, we shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

9. That, even then when God makes the greatest deal of his judgments, his judgments, he reserves some to be the monuments of his mercy, v. 22, 23. In Jerusalem itself, though marked for utter ruin, yet there shall be left a remnant, who shall not be cut off by any of those sore judgments before mentioned, but shall be carried into captivity, both sons and daughters, who shall be the seed of a new generation. The young ones, who were not grown up to such an obstinacy in sin as their fathers were, who were therefore cut off as incurable, these shall be brought forth out of the ruins of Jerusalem by the victorious enemy, and behold, they shall come forth to you that are in captivity, they shall make a virtue of a necessity, and shall come the more willingly to Babylon, because so many of their friends are gone thither before them, and are there ready to receive them, and when they come, you shall see their ways and their doings; you shall hear them make a free and ingenuous confession of the sins they had formerly been guilty of, and a humble profession of repentance for them, with promises of reformation; and you shall see instances of their reformation, shall see what good their affliction has done them, and how prudently and patiently they conduct themselves under it. Their narrow escape shall have a good effect upon them; it shall change their temper and conversation, and make them new men. And this will redound, (1.) To the satisfaction of their brethren; They shall comfort you, when ye see their ways. Note, It is a very comfortable sight to see people, when they are under the rod, repenting, and humbling themselves, justifying God, and accepting the punishment of their iniquity. When we see such cases, we may, with Paul, be thankful for the good of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions, and making a good use of them. When those captives told their friends how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them to the ways of Jerusalem, to the justice of God in punishing his own people, so, for the good of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions, and making a good use of them. When those captives told their friends how bad they had been, and how righteous God was in bringing these judgments upon them, it made them very easy, and helped to reconcile them to the ways of Jerusalem, to the justice of God in punishing his own people, so, for the good of others, it is a great comfort to us in our sorrow to see them improving their afflictions, and making a good use of them.
planted, a branch out of a dry ground, which, though its original was mean and despiseful, God had made strong for himself; (Ps. lxxx. 15.) to be to him for a name and for a praise.

2. But if it be not fruitful, it is good for nothing, it is no worth: it shall become a production of earth as even thorns and briers are; What is a vine-tree, if you take the tree by itself, without consideration of the fruit? What is it more than any tree, that it should have so much care taken of it, and so much costs laid out upon it? What is a branch of the vine, though it spread more than a branch which is among the trees of the forest, where it grows neglected and exposed? Or, as some read it, What is the vine more than any tree, if the branch of it be as the trees of the forest; if it bear no fruit, as forest-trees seldom do, being designed for timber-trees, not fruit-trees? Now there are some fruit-trees, the wood of which, if they do not bear, is of good use, and may be made to turn to a good account; but the vine is not of this sort; if that do not answer its end as a fruit-tree, it is worth nothing as a timber-tree. Observe,

I. How this similitude is expressed here. The wild vine, that is among the trees of the forest, or the empty vine, (which Israel is compared to, Hos. x. 1.) that bears no more fruit than a forest-tree, is good for nothing, it is as useless as a briar, and more so, for that will add some sharpness to the thorns, which is the brier's chief delight. He shows, 1. That it is fit for no use; the wood of it is not taken to do any work, one cannot so much as make a pin of it to hang a vessel upon, v. 3. See how variously the gifts of nature are dispensed for the service of man! Among plants, the roots of some, the seeds or fruits of others, the leaves of various kinds, and the branches of the trees, are fit to make among trees, some are strong and not fruitful, as the oaks and cedars; others weak but very fruitful, as the vine, which is unsightly, low, and depending, yet of great use. Rachel is comely but barren, Leah homely but fruitful. 2. That therefore it is made use of for fuel; it will serve to heat the oven with. Because it is not meet for any use, it is therefore fit for fuel, v. 4. When it is good for nothing else, it is useful this way, and answers a very needful intention, for fuel is a thing we must have, and to burn any thing for fuel, which is good for other work, is bad husbandry. To what purpose is this waste? The unfruitful vine is disposed of in the same way with the briers and thorns, which are rejected, and whose end is to be burned, Heb. vi. 8. And what care is taken of it then? If a piece of solid timber be hewed, somebody perhaps may snatch it as a brand out of the burning, and say, "It is a pity to burn it, for it may be put to some better use;" but if the branch of a vine be on fire, and, as usual, both the ends of it and the middle be hewed together, nobody goes about to save it; When it was whole it was meet for no work, much less when it was divided against itself; (v. 3.) even the ashes of it are not worth saving.

II. How this similitude is applied to Jerusalem:

1. That holy city was become unprofitable, and good for nothing; it had been as the vine-tree among the trees of the vineyard, abounding in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God; when religion flourished there, and the pure worship of God was spread abroad, Jerusalem, in a certain age, was gathered from it; and while it continued so, God made a hedge about it; it was his pleasant plant, (Isa. v. 7.) he watered it every moment, and kept it night and day; (Isa. xxvii. 2.) but it was now become the degenerate plant of a strange vine, of a wild vine, (such as we read of, 2 Kings iv. 39.) a vine-tree among the trees of the forest, which, being wild, brings forth wild grapes, (Isa. v. 4.) which are not only of no use, but are nauseous and noxious; (Deut. xxxiii. 32.) their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter. It is explained, v. 8. "They have treasured a treasur; they have treacherously preyed with God, and perfidiously apostatized from him;" for it signifies. Note, Professors of religion, if they do not live up to their profession, but contradict it, if they degenerate and depart from it, are the most unprofitable creatures in the world, like the salt that has lost its savour, and is therefore good for nothing, Mark ix. 40. Other nations were famed for valour or politics, some for war, others for trade, and retained their credit; but the Jewish nation, being famous for its piety, and by the grace of God were given to its study, when they lost their holiness, and became wicked, were thenceforth good for nothing; with that they lost all their credit and usefulness, and became the most base and despiseful people under the sun, trodden under foot of the Gentiles. Daniel, and other pious Jews, were of great use in their generation; but the idolatrous Jews then, and the unbelieving Jews now, since the preaching of the gospel, have been, and are, of no common service, not fit for any work.

2. Being so, it is given to the fire for fuel. Note, Those who are not fruitful to the glory of God's grace, shall be fuel to the fire of his wrath; and thus, if they give not honour to him, he will get them honour upon them, honour that will shine bright in the flames of his wrath, which he will not be for ever consumed. He will not be a loser at last by any of his creatures. The Lord has made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked, that would not otherwise be for him, for the day of evil; (Prov. xvi. 4.) and in those who would not glorify him as the God to whom duty belongs, he will be glorified as the God of vengeance; (Isa. xxv. 7.) The fire of God's wrath had before devoured both the ends of the Jewish nation, (v. 4.) Samaria and the cities of Judah; and now Jerusalem, that was the midst of it, was thrown into the fire, to be burnt too, for it is meet for no work, it will not be wrought upon by any of the methods God has taken to destroy them, The inhabitants of Jerusalem were not only fire-brands, set on and awkward; and therefore, (v. 7.) I will make them fuel for fuel, to them, to thwart all their counsels, as they set their faces against God, to contradict his word and defeat all his designs. It is decreed, the consumption is determined; I will make the land quite desolate, and therefore, when they go out from one fire, another fire shall devour them, (v. 7.) the end of one judgment shall be the beginning of another, and their escape from one only a reprieve till another comes; they shall go from misery in their own country to misery in Babylon. They who kept out of the way of the sword, perished by famine or pestilence: when one descent of the Chaldean forces upon them was over, and they thought, Surely the bitterness of death is past, yet soon after they received another, and another, and another, till it was made a full end. Thus they shall know that I am the LORD, a God of almighty power, when I set my face against them. Note, God shows himself to be the LORD, by perfecting the destruction of his implacable enemies as well as the deliverances of his obedient people. Those against whom God sets his face, though they may come out of one trouble into another, though they may come out of the pit, will be taken in the snare, (Isa. xxvii. 18.) though they escape the sword of Hazael, will fall by that of Jehu; (1 Kings xix. 17.) for evil pursues sinners: nay, though they go out from the fire of temporal judgments, and seem to die in peace, yet there is an everlasting fire that will devour them; for when God judges, first or last he will overcome; and he will be known by the judg-
EZEKIEL, XVI.

Ezekiel, the justifying 34. a here. kno-m 14. a Son Babj'lon; Jacob's IV. not. is 11, of the law, that in it they may see their own deformities and defilements; to tell them plainly of their faults; Thou art the man.

Now, that Jerusalem may be made to know her abominations, and particularly the abominable ingratitude she had been guilty of, it was requisite that she should see all great things God had done for her, as the aggravating her bad conduct toward him; and, to magnify these favours, she is, in these verses, made to know the meanness and baseness of her original, from what poor beginnings God raised her, and how unworthy she was of his favour, and of the honour he had put upon her. Jerusalem is here put for the Jewish church and nation, which is here compared to an outcast child, base-born and abandoned, which the mother herself has no affection or concern for.

1. The extraction of the Jewish nation was mean; "Thy birth is of the land of Canaan; (v. 3.) thou hast from the very first the spirit and disposition of a Canaanite." The patriarchs dwelt in Canaan, and they were there but strangers and sojourners. They had no property on the face of ground of their own, but a burying-place. Abraham and Sarah were indeed their father and mother, but they were only inmates with the Amorites and Hittites, who, having the dominion, seemed to be as parents to the seed of Abraham, witness the exact Abraham made to the children of Heth, (Gen. xxiii. 4.) and the dependence they had upon their labours, and the services they rendered in of them, Gen. xiii. 7.—xxxiv. 30. If the patriarchs, at their first coming to Canaan, had conquered it, and made themselves masters of it, it had put an honour upon their family, and had locked great in history; but, instead of that, they went from one nation to another, (Ps. cv. 13.) as tenants from one farm to another, almost as beggars from one door to another; when they were but few in number, yet, very few. And yet this was not the worst; their fathers had served other gods in Ur of the Chaldees; (Josh. xxiv. 2.) even in Jacob’s family there were strange gods, Gen. xxxv. 2. Thus early had they a genius leading them to idolatry: and upon this account their ancestors were Amorites and Hittites.

2. When they first began to multiply, their condition was really very deplorable, like that of a newborn child, which must of necessity die from the womb if the knees prevent it not, Job xi. 11, 12. The children of Israel, when they began to increase into a people and became considerable, were thrown out of the country that was intended for them, a famine drove them thence. Egypt was the open field into which they were cast; there they had no protection or countenance from the government they were under, but, on the contrary, were ruled with rigour, and their lives embittered; they had no encouragement given them to build up their families; no help to build up their estates, no friends or allies to strengthen their interests. Joseph, who had been the shepherd and stone of Israel, was dead; the king of Egypt, who should have been kind to them for Joseph’s sake, set himself to destroy this man-child as soon as it was born, (Rev. xii. 4.) ordered all the males to be slain, which, it is likely, occasioned the exposing of many as well as Moses, to which perhaps the similitude here has reference. The founders of nations and cities had occasion for all the arts and arms they were masters of; set their heads on wood, by which they subdued and subjugated, to preserve and nurse up their infant-states. Tantae molis crat Romanum condere gentem—So vast were the efforts requisite to the establishment of the Roman name. Virg. But the nation of Israel had no such care taken of it, no such pains taken with it, as Athens

mants which he executeth. See Matth. iii. 10. John xv. 6.

CHAP. XVI.

Still God is justifying himself in the desolations he is about to bring upon Jerusalem; and very largely, in this chapter, he shows the prophet, and orders him to show to the people, that he did but punish them as their sins merited. After-a-while, he had conveyed Jerusalem to an unfruitful vine, that was fit for nothing but the fire; in this chapter, he compares it to an adulteress; that, in justice, ought to be abandoned and execrated; and he must therefore show the people their abominations, that they might see how little reason they had to complain of the judgments they were under. In this long discourse are set forth, I. The despicable and criminal beginnings of that church and nation, v. 3.—5. II. The many honours and favours God had bestowed upon them, v. 6.—14. III. Their treacherous and ungrateful departures from him to the services and worship of idols, here represented by the most impudent falsehood, v. 15.—34. IV. A threatening of terrible, destroying judgments, which God would bring upon them for this sin, v. 35.—43. V. An aggravation both of their sin and their punishment, by comparison with Sodom and Samaria, v. 44.—59. VI. A promise of mercy in the close, which God would show to a penitent remnant, v. 60.—63. and this is designed for admonition to us.

1. AGAIN the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations. 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem, Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother a Hittite. 4. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee: thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. 5. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born.

Ezekiel is now among the captives in Babylonia; but as Jeremiah at Jerusalem wrote for the use of the captives, though they had Ezekiel upon the spot with them, (ch. 29.) so Ezekiel wrote for the use of Jerusalem, though Jeremiah himself was resident there; and yet they were far from looking upon it as an affront to one another, or an interference with one another’s business; for ministers have need of one another’s help, both by preaching and writing. Jeremiah wrote for the captives for their consolation, which was the thing they needed; Ezekiel here is directed to write to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for their conviction and humiliation, which was the thing they needed. This is his commission, (v. 2.) “Cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, her sins; set them in order before her.” Note, (1.) Sin is not only provocation which God is angry at, but abominations which he hates, as contrary to his nature, and which we ought to hate. Jer. xliii. 4. (2.) The sins of Jerusalem are in a special manner so. The practice of profaneness appears most odious in those that make a profession of religion. (3.) Though Jerusalem is a place of great knowledge, yet she is loath to know her abominations; so partial are men in their own favour, that they are hardly willing to own their own infamies, but deny it, pollute or extenuate it. (4.) It is requisite that we should know our sins, that we may confess them, and may justify God in what he brings upon us for them. (5.) It is the work of ministers to cause sinners, sinners in Jerusalem, to know their abominations; to set before them the glass of the
Sparta, Rome, and other commonwealths, had when they were first founded, but, on the contrary, was doomed to destruction, like an infant new-born, exposed to wind and weather, the navel-string not cut, the poor babe not washed, not clothed, not swaddled, because not fitted, v. 4, 5. Note, We owe the preservation of our infant-lives to the natural pity and compassion which the God of nature has put into the hearts of parents and nurses toward new-born children. This infant is said to be cast out, to the loathing of her person: it was a sign that she was loathed by those that bare her, and she appeared loathsome to all that looked upon her. The first time we appear upon the stage of the Egyptians, as we find, Gen. xliv. 32.—xlvi. 34.

Some think that this refers to the corrupt and vicious disposition of that people from their beginning; they were not only the weakest and fewest of all people, (Deut. vii. 7,) but the worst and most ill-omened of all people; God groweth thee this good land, not for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people, Deut. ix. 6. And Moses tells them there, (v. 24.) You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They were not supplanted, nor washed, nor swaddled; they were not at all tractable or manageable, nor cast into any good shape. God took them to be his people, not because he saw anything in them inviting or promising, but because he pleased it, and it was a very apt illustration of the miserable condition of all the children of men by nature. As for our nativity in the day that we were born, we were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, our understandings darkened, our minds alienated from the life of God, polluted with sin, which rendered us loathsome in the eyes of God. Marvell not then that we are told, Ye must be born again.

6. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live. I have caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field, and thou hast increased and waxen great, and thou art come to excellent ornaments: thy breasts are fashioned, and thy hair is grown, whereas thou wast naked and bare. 8. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swarne unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. 9. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. 10. I clothed thee also with brodered work, and shod thee with badgers' skin, and I girded thee about with fine linen, and I covered thee with silk. 11. I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. 12. And I put a jewel on thy forehead, and ear-rings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head. 13. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver; and thy raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and brodered work: thou didst eat fine flour, and honey, and oil; and thou wast exceeding beautiful, and thou didst prosper into a kingdom. 14. And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my condescension, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God.

In these verses, we have an account of the great things which God did for the Jewish nation, in raising them up by degrees to be very considerable.

1. God saved them from the ruin they were upon the brink of in Egypt; (v. 6.) When I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, loathed and abandoned, and appointed to die, as sheep for the slaughter, then I said unto thee, Live. I designed thee for life when thou wast doomed to destruction, and resolved to save thee from death. Those shall live, to whom God commands life.

2. God looked upon the world of mankind as thus cast off, thus cast out, thus polluted, thus ifering in blood, and his thoughts toward it were thoughts of good, designing it life, and that more abundantly. By converting grace, he says to the soul, Live.

3. He looked upon them with kindness and a tender affection, not only pityed them, but set his love upon them, which was accountable, for there was nothing lovely in them; but I looked upon thee and beheld thee, and I saw the time of love, v. 8. I

4. He cleared them from the reproachful character which their bondage in Egypt had them under; (v. 9.) Then washed I thee with water, to make thee clean, and anointed thee with oil, to make thee sweet, and supple thee. All the disgrace of their slavery was rolled away, when they were brought, with a high hand and a stretched-out arm, into the glorious liberty of the children of God; when God said, Israel is my son, my first-born. Let my people go, that they may serve me. That word, backed as it was with so many works of wonder, thoroughly washed away their blood; and when God had done under the cloud and the pillar of fire and cloud, he spread his skirt over them.

5. He multiplied them and built them up into a people. This is here mentioned, (v. 7.) before his spreading his skirt over them, because their numbers increased exceedingly, while they were yet bond-servants in Egypt; they multiplied as the bud of the field in spring-time, and they waxed great, exceeding mighty, (Exod. i. 7, 20.) their breasts were fashioned, when they were formed into distinct tribes, and had officers of their own, (Exod. v. 19.) their hair grew when they grew numerous, whereas they had been naked and bare, very few, and therefore contemptible.

6. He admitted them into covenant with himself. See what glorious nuptials this poor forlorn infant is preferred to at last! How she is dignified, who a
first had scarcely her life given her for a prey; I swore unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee; this was done at Mount Sinai, when the covenant between God and Israel was sealed and ratified, and by them beloved mine. God called them his people, and himself the God of Israel. Note, Those to whom God gives spiritual life he takes into covenant with himself; by that covenant they become his subjects and servants, that intimate their duty; his portion, his treasure, that intimates their privilege; and it is confirmed with an oath, that we might have strong consolation.

7. He beautified and adorned them. This may come upon Israel, at their lastConversion, and she is gratified with abundance of them. v. 10, 11. We need not be particular in the application of these; her wardrobe was well furnished with rich apparel, they had embroidered work to wear, shoes of fine badgers skins, linen girdles, and silk veils, bracelets and necklaces, jewels and ear-rings, and even a beautiful crown, or coronet; perhaps this may refer to the jewels and other rich goods which they took from the Egyptians, which might well be spoken of thus long after as a merciful circumstance of their deliverance, when it was spoken of long before, (Gen. xv. 14.) They shall come out with great substance. Or, it may be taken figuratively for all those blessings of heaven which adorned both their church and state. In a little time they came to exceed the Egyptians, and their presents and ornaments, and even the ornaments which God gave them, were to them as ornaments of grace to the head, and chains about the neck, Prov. i. 9. God's sanctuary, which he set up among them, was a beautiful crown upon their head; it was the beauty of holiness.

8. He fed them with abundance, with plenty, with dainties; Thou didst eat fat and honey, and oil, and fine chaff, and honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock. In Canaan they did eat bread to the full, the finest of the wheat, Deut. xxxii. 13, 14. Those whom God takes into covenant with himself are fed with the bread of life, clothed with the robe of righteousness, adorned with the graces and comforts of the spirit; the hidden man of the heart is that which is incorruptible.

9. He gave them a great reputation among their neighbours, and made them considerable, acceptable to their friends and allies, and formidable to their adversaries; Thou didst prosper into a kingdom; (v. 13,) which speaks both dignity and dominion; and, (v. 14.) Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; the nations about had their eye upon them, and admired them for the excellent laws by which they were governed, the privilege they had of access to God, Deut. iv. 7, 8. Solomon's wisdom, and Solomon's temple, were very much the renown of that nation; and if we put all the privileges of the Jewish church and kingdom together, we must own that it was the most accomplished beauty of all the nations of the east; we may honour the beauty of a people, and name the thing that would be the honour of a people but it was to be found in Israel, in David's and Solomon's time, when that kingdom was in its zenith; piety, learning, wisdom, justice, victory, peace, wealth; and all sure to continue if they had kept close to God. It was perfect, saith God, through my counsels which I had put upon thee; through the beauty of their lives, as they were a people set apart for God, and devoted to him, to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. This was it that put a lustre upon all their other honours, and was indeed the perfection of their beauty. We may apply this spiritually; sanctified souls are truly beautiful, they are so in God's sight, and they themselves may take the comfort of it. But God must have all the glory, for they were by nature deformed and polluted, and, whatever comeliness they have, it is that which God has put upon them, and beautified them with, and he will be well pleased with the work of his own hands.

15. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. 16. And of thy garments thou didst take, and deckedst thy high places with divers colours, and playedst the harlot thereupon: the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. 17. Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them; 18. And tookest thy brodered garments, and coveredst them; and thou hast set mine oil and mine incense before them. 19. My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them for a sweet savour: and thus it was, saith the Lord God. 20. Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter, 21. That thou hast slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them! 22. And in all thine abominations and thy whoredoms thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, when thou wast naked and bare, and wast polluted in thy blood. 23. And it came to pass, after all thy wickedness, (wo, wo unto thee! saith the Lord God,) 24. That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street. 25. Thou hast built thy high place at every head of the way, and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, and hast opened thy feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied thy whoredoms. 26. Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. 27. Behold, therefore, I have stretched out my hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of thy lewd way. 28. Thou hast played the whore also with the Assyrians, because thou wast unsatisfiable; yea, thou hast played the harlot with them, and yet couldst not be satisfied. 29. Thou hast, moreover, multiplied thy fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea, and yet thou
wast not satisfied herewith. 30. How weak is thy heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou dost all these things, the work of an impecunious whorswo man; 31. In that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thy high place in every street; and hast not been as a harlot, in that thou scornest hire; 32. But as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband! 33. They give gifts to all whores; but thou givest thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hirest them, that they may come unto thee on every side for thy whoredom. 34. And the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms, whereas none foloweth thee to commit whoredoms: and in that thou givest a reward, and no reward is given unto thee; therefore thou art contrary.

In these verses we have an account of the great wickedness of the people of Israel, especially in worshipping idols, notwithstanding the great favours that God had conferred upon them, by which, one would think, they should have been far more engaged to him. This wickedness of theirs is here represented by the lowd and scandalous conversation of that beautiful maid which was rescued from ruin, brought up and well provided for by a kind Friend and Benefactor, that had been in all respects as a Father and a Husband to her.

1. Their idolatry was the great provoking sin that they gave themselves up to, even as it is in the latter end of Solomon's time, (for from Samuel's till then I do not remember that we read any thing of it,) and from thence continued more or less the crying sin of that nation till the captivity; and though it now and then met with some check from the reformation kings, yet it was never totally suppressed, and for the most part appeared to have a degree of impudence and boldness in it which could not but alarm the true God by images, as the ten tribes by the calves at Dan and Bethel, but they worshipped false gods, Baal and Moloch, and all the senseless rabble of the pagan deities.

11. This is that which is here all along represented (as often elsewhere) under the similitude of whoredom and adultery. 1. Because it is the violation of a marriage-covenant with God, forsaking him, and embracing the bosom of a stranger; it is giving that affection and that service to his rivals, which are due to him alone. 2. Because it is the corrupting and defiling of the mind, and the enslaving of the spiritual part of the man, and subjecting it to the power and dominion of sense, as whoredom is. 3. Because it debuches the conscience, and being them a portion of those idolatries dishouse the divine nature, and change the truth of God into a lie, and his glory into shame, God justly punishes by giving them over to a reproudbate mind to dishouse the natural human with vile affections, Rom. i. 23, 28. It is a besetting, bewitching sin; and when men are given up to it, they seldom recover themselves out of the snare. 4. Because it is a shameful, scandalous sin, for those that have joined themselves to the Lord, to join themselves to an idol. Now observe here,

(1) What were the causes of this sin; how came the people of God to be driven away to the service of idols? How came a virgin so well taught, so well educated, to be debauched? Who would have thought it? But, [1.] They grew proud; (v. 15.)

"Thou trustedst to thy beauty, and didst expect that that should make thee an interest, and didst play the harlot because of thy renown." They thought, because they were so admired and so complimented by their neighbours, that, further to in gratitate themselves with them, and to receive their compliments, they must join with them in their worship, and confound themselves to their usages. Solomon admitted idolatry to gratify his wives and their relations. Note, Abundance of young people are ruined by pride, and particularly pride in their beauty. Rara est concordia forma atque facultas — Beauty and chastity are seldom associated. (2.) They forget their beginnings; (v. 22.) "Thou hast remembered all the ways of thy youth, how poor and mean and despicable thou wast, and what great things God did for thee, and what lasting obligations he laid upon thee thereof." Note, It would be an effectual check to our pride and sensuality, to consider what we are, and how much we are beholden to the free grace of God. (3.) They were weak in understanding and in resolution; (v. 30.) "How weak is thy heart, seeing thou dost all these things." Note, The strength of men's lusts is an evidence of the weakness of their hearts; they have no acquaintance with themselves, nor government of themselves. She is weak, and yet an impecunious, whorswo woman. Note, Those that are most foolish are commonly most impecunious, and think themselves fit to have all things, yet they are far from being able to manage themselves.

(2.) What were the particulars of it.

[1.] They worshipped all the idols that came in their way; all that they were ever courted to the worship of; they were at the beck of all their neighbours; (v. 15.) Then poured out thy fornications on every one that passed by, by its ills. They took their delight in every kind of idolatry, this kind, though ever so absurd. No foreign idol could be imported, no new god invented, but they were ready to catch at it; as a common strumpet that prostitutes herself to all new comers, and multiplies her whoredoms, v. 23. Thus some common drunkards will be company for every one that puts up the finger to them; how weak are the hearts of sin!

[2.] They adorned their idol-temples, and groves, and high places, with the fine, rich clothing that God had given them; (v. 16. 18.) Thou deckedst thy high places with divers colours, with the coats of divers colours, like Joseph's, which God had given them as particular marks of his favour, and hast played the harlot, worshipped idols thereupon; of this he saith, The like things shall not come; neither shall it be so; this is a thing by no means to be suffered; I will never endure such practices as these without showing my retenments."

[3.] They made images for worship of the jewels which God had given them; (v. 17.) the jewels of my gold and my silver, which I had given thee. Note, It is God that gives us our gold and our silver; God is the producer of every thing. It is he that gives us as much gold, as much silver, as we can make use of. Should we make our silver and gold, our plate, money, jewels, the matter of our pride and contention, our covetousness and prodigality, if we duly considered that it is God's silver and his gold? The Israelites began betimes to turn their jewels into idols, when Aaron made the golden calf of their ear-rings.

[4.] They served their idols with the good things...
which God gave them for their own use, and to serve him; (v. 18.) "Thou hast set mine oil and fine flour, and hast adorned them upon their altars, as perfumes to these dunghill daughters; and so thy honour is not: for they are whoredoms of thy devil, and they have insisted upon the sacrifice of their children, and in the service of the true and living God.

6. They had sacrificed their children to their idols. This is insisted upon here, and often elsewhere, as one of the worst instances of their idolatry, as indeed was none in which the devil triumphed so much over the children of men, both their natural reason and their natural affections, as in this; (see Jer. vii. 31.—xxx. 35.—xxxv. 33.) Thon hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, and not only made them to pass through the fire, or between two fires, of their own making, like the Moabites, but hast also sacrificed them to be devoured, v. 20. Never was there such an instance of the degenerating of the paternal authority into the most barbarous tyranny as this was. Yet that was not the worst of it; it was an irreparable wrong to God himself, who challenged a special property in their children more than in their gold and silver, and their meats; They are my children, (v. 21.) the sons and daughters which thou hast borne unto me, v. 20. He is the Father of spirits, and rational souls are in a particular manner his; and therefore the taking away of life, human life, unjustly, is a high affront to the God of life. But the children of Israelites were his by a farther right; they were the children of the covenant, born in God’s house. He had said to Abraham, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed; they had sealed the seal of their union in their flesh from eight days old: they were, to hear God’s name, and keep up his church; to murder them was in the highest degree inhuman, but to murder them in honour of an idol was in the highest degree impious.

One cannot think of it without the utmost indignation: to see the pitiless hands of the parents shedding the guiltless blood of their own children, and by offering these pieces of themselves to the devil, for dying sacrifices, openly avowing the offering up of themselves to him for living sacrifices! How absurd was this, that the children which were born to God, should be sacrificed to devils! Note, The children of parents that are members of the visible church, are to be looked upon as born unto God, and his children; as such, and under that character, we are commanded to pray for them, not only for their spiritual, but also for their temporal deliverance, up for him, and, if he calls for them, cheerfully part with them to him; for may he be not what he will to thus his own? Upon this instance of their idolatry, which indeed ought not to pass without a particular brand, this remark is made, (v. 26.) Is this of thy whoredoms a small matter? Which intimates, that there were those who made a small matter of it, and put it below the notice of the men of God, so apparently heinous, which men of profane consciences will not make a mock at. But is whoredom, is spirituall whoredom, a small matter? Is it a small matter for men to make their children brutes, and the devil their god? It will be a great matter shortly.

6. They built temples in honour of their idols, that others might be invited to resort thither, and join with them in the worship of their idols; “After all thy wickedness of this kind committed in private, for which, so, unto thee,” (that comes in v. 19.) “the Lord God has done to thee, and your families, and the children, and the related condition, who are going on in sin, and giving them warning in time, if they would but take it,) “thou hast at length arrived at such a pitch of impudence as to proclaim it; thou hast long had a whore’s heart, but now thou art come to have a where’s forehead, and cannot but blush,” v. 20.—25. Thou hast build there an eminent place, a brothel-house; and the numbers of those who came to all such idol temples were. Thou hast made thee a high place, for one idol or other, in every street, and at every head of the way; and again, v. 31. They did all they could to seduce and debauch others, and to spread the contagion, by making the temptations to idolatry as strong as possibly they could; and hereby the ringleaders in idolatry did but make themselves vile, and even theirs that had courted them to it, finding themselves entangled by them, began to be surprised with the abundance and violence of their idolatries; Thou hast made thy beauty to be abhorred, even by those that had admired it. The Jewish nation, by leaving their own God, and doting on the gods of the nations round about them, had made themselves mean and despisable in the eyes even of their heathen masters. Many more was the beauty abhorred by all that were wise and good, and had any concern for the honour of God and religion. Note, Those shame themselves, that bring a reproach upon their profession. And justly will that beauty, that excellency, at length be made the object of the hatred of others, which men have made the matter of their own pride.

1. What were the aggravations of this sin.

1. There were found of the idols of those nations which had been their oppressors and persecutors. As, First, The Egyptians: they were a people notorious for idolatry, and for the most vicious, senseless idolatries; they had of old abused them by their barbarous dealings, and of late by their treacherous dealings we are always either cruel or false to them; and yet so infatuated were they, that they committed in devotion unto the Egyptians their neighbours, not only by joining with them in their idolatries, but by entering into leagues and alliances with them, and depending upon them for help in their straits, which was an adulterous departure from God. Secondly, The Assyrians: they had also been vexatious to Israel; “And yet thou hast played the whore with them;” (v. 28.) though they lived at a greater distance, yet then had entertained their idols and their superstitious usages, and so hast multiplied thy fornications unto Chaldea, hast borrowed images of gods, patterns of altars, rites of sacrificing, and one fooleyn or other of that kind, from that remote country, that enemy’s country, and hast imported them into the land of Canaan, enfranchised and established them there. Thus the king of Assyria was an instrumental agent in the propagation of idolatry amongst the Chaldeans, under whose name they were carried captive. This great architect of idolatry was, in short, George Herbert long since foretold, or feared at least.

That Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames, By letting them both, pollute her streams.

2. They had been under the rebukes of Providence for their sins, and yet they persisted in them; (v. 27.) I have stretched out my hand over thee, to threaten and frighten thee; so did before this; and yet he had ruin promised upon them; and that is his usual method, to try to bring men to repentance first by lesser judgments; he did so here. Before he brought such a famine upon them as broke the staff of bread, he diminished their ordinary food, cut them short before he cut them off. When the exasper is abused, it is just with God to diminish that which is for necessity before he delivereth them to the Chaldeans to be
destroyed, he delivered them to the daughters of the Philistines to be ridiculed, for their idolatries; for they hated them, and, though they were idolaters themselves, yet were ashamed of the lorn way of the Israelites, who were grown more profane in their idolatries than any of their neighbours; who changed their gods, whereas other nations did not change theirs; (Jer. ii. 10, 11.) for this they were justly chastised by the Philistines. 35. And it referred to the inroads which the Philistines made upon the south of Judah, in the reign of Ahaz, by which it was weakened and impoverished, and which was the beginning of sorrows to them; (2 Chron. xxviii. 18.) but they did not take warning by those judgments, and therefore were justly abandoned to ruin at last. Note, In the account which iniquitous sinners shall be called to, they will be told not only of the mercies for which they have been ungrateful, but of the afflictions under which they have been incorrigible, Amos iv. 11.

[3.] They were insatiable in their spiritual whoredom; Thou couldst not be satisfied, v. 28. and again, v. 29. When they had multiplied their idols and superstitions usages beyond measure, yet still would not be satisfied, but desired other and other fashions in worship. They that in sincerity join themselves to the true God, find enough in him for their satisfaction; and though they still desire more of God, yet they never desire more than God; but they that forsake this living Fountain for broken cisterns, will find themselves soon sated, but never satisfied; they have soon enough of the gods they have, and are still inquiring after more.

[3.] They were at great expense with their idolatry, and laid out a great deal of wealth in purchasing patterns of images and alters, and hiring priests to attend upon them from other countries. Harlots generally had their hires; but this impudent adulteress, instead of being hired to serve idols, hired idols to protect her, and accept her homage. This is much insisted on, (v. 31.—34.) "In this respect the contrary is in thee from other women in thy whoredoms: others are courted, but thou makest court to those that do not follow thee; art fond of making leagues and alliances with those heathen nations that despise thee: others have gifts given them, but thou givest thy gifts, the gifts which God had graciously given thee, to thine idols; herein like a harlot, other courtesans, not for gain, as harlots do, but entirely for the sake of the sin's sake." Note, Spiritual lusts, those of the mind, such as theirs after idols were, are often as strong and impatient as any carnal lusts are. And it is a great aggravation of sin when men are their own tempters, and, instead of proposing to themselves any worldly advantage by it, are at great expense with it; such are transgressors without cause, (Ps. xxv. 5.) wicked transgressors indeed.

And now is not Jerusalem in all this made to know her abominations? For what greater abominations could she be guilty of than these? Here we may see with wonder and horror what the corrupt nature of men is when God leaves them to themselves, yea, though they have the greatest advantages to be better, and do better. And the way of sin is downhill. Aházmur in vetibus.—He incline to the forbidden.

35. Wherefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord: 36. Thus saith the Lord God, Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thine abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them: 37. Behold, therefore, I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated, I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness. 38. And I will judge thee, as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged: and I will give thee blood in fury and jealousy. 39. And I will also give thee into their hand, and they shall throw down thine eminent place, and shall break down thy high places: they shall strip thee also of thy clothes, and shall take thy fair jewels, and leave thee naked and bare. 40. They shall also bring up a company against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords. 41. And they shall burn thy houses with fire, and execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women: and I will cause thee to cease from playing the harlot, and thou shalt also give no lye any more. 42. So will I make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will be quiet, and will be no more angry. 43. Because thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, but hast fretted me in all these things; behold, therefore, I also will recompense thy way upon thy head, saith the Lord God; and thou shalt not commit this lewdness above all thine abominations.

Abstinence was by the law of Moses made a capital crime; this notorious adulteress, the criminal at the bar, being in the foregoing verses found guilty, here has sentence passed upon her. It is ushered in with solemnity, v. 35. The prophet, as the judge, in God's name calls to her, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord. Our Saviour preached to harlots for their conversion, to bring them into the kingdom of God, not as the prophet here, to expel them out of it. Note, An apostate church is a harlot; Jerusalem is so if she become idolatrous. Here is the faithful city become a harlot! Rome is so represented in the Revelation, when it is marked for ruin, as Jerusalem here; (Rev. xvii. 1.) Come, and I will show thee the judgments of the great whore. Those who will not hear the commanding word of the Lord and obey it, shall be made to hear the condemning word of the Lord and shall all tremble at it. Let us attend while judgment is given.

I. The crime is repeated, and the articles of the charge are summed up, (v. 36.) and (as is usual) with the attendant aggravations; (v. 43.) for when God speaks in wrath, he will be justified, and clear when he judges, clear when he is judged; and sinners, when they are condemned, shall aver their sins so set in order before them, that their mouth shall be stopped, and they shall not have a word to object against the equity of the sentence. The crimes which this harlot stands convicted of, and is now to be condemned for, are, 1. The violation of the two first commandments of the first table, by idolatry; which is here called her whoredoms with her lovers; so she called them, (Hos. ii. 12.) because she loved them as if they had been indeed her benefactors; that is, with all the idols of her
abominations, the abominable idols which she served and worshipped. This was the sin which provoked God to jealousy. 2. The violation of the two first commandments of the second table, by the murder of their own innocent infants; the blood of thy children which thou hast got unto thine own heads. 3. A strange management of those that have cast off God and his fear, break through the strongest and most sacred bonds of natural affection.

The sins are aggravated from the consideration, (1.) Of the dishonour they had thereby done to themselves; "Hereby thy filthiness was poured out; the uncleanness that was in thy heart was hereby discovered and brought to light, and thy nakedness was made manifest to all that beheld thee and despised thee in contempt." God is displeased with his professing people for shaming themselves by their sins. (2.) Their base ingratitude is another aggravation of their sins; "Thou hast not remembered the days of thy youth, and the kindness that was done thee then, when otherwise thou hadst perished," v. 43. And, (3.) The vexation which their sins gave to God, whom they ought to have pleased; "Thou hast fretted me in all these things; not only angered me, but grieved me." It is a strange expression, and, one would think, enough to melt a heart of stone, that the great God, who cannot admit any unceasing, is pleased to speak of the sins and follies of his professing people as fretting him. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, in general; I will judge thee as women that break wedlock, and shed blood, are judged; (v. 36.) those two crimes were punished with death, with an ignominious death; "Thou hast shed blood, and therefore I will give thee blood; thou hast broken wedlock, and therefore I will give it thee, not only in justice, but in jealousy, not only as a righteous Judge, but as an injured and incensed Husband, who will not share in their vengeance," Prov. vi. 34, 35. He will recompense their way upon their head, v. 43. In all the judgments God executes upon sinners, we must see their own way recompensed upon their head; they are dealt with not only as they deserved, but as they procured; it is the end which their sin, as a way, had a direct tendency to. More particularly.

16. The warning should be very solemn (see Mal. ii. 11, alone in sinners exposed to public shame, v. 37.) Mala-

factors are not executed privately, but are made a spectacle to the world; care is here taken to bring spectators together; "All them whom thou hast loved, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, shall come to be witnesses of the execution, that they may take warning, and prevent their own like sin; and those also whom thou hast hated, with whom thou shalt suffer iniquity over the head, and triumph in the fall." Both ways the calamities of Jerusalem will be aggravated, that they will be the grief of her friends and the joy of her foes. These shall not only be gathered around her, but gathered against her; even those with whom she took unlawful pleasure, with whom she contracted unlawful leagues, the Egyptians and Assyrians, so they have sufficient to strip them of their virtue, shall see them strip, and perhaps help to strip them, of all their other ornaments; to see the nakedness of the land will they come. It is added, to the same purport, (v. 41.) I will execute judgments upon thee in the sight of many women; thou shalt be made an example of, in terrorem-

that others may see and fear, and do no more presumption.

2. The criminal is condemned to die, for her sins are such as death is the wages of; (v. 40.) They shall bring up a company, a company shall be brought up against thee, and they shall stone thee with stones, and thrust thee through with their swords; so great a death, so many deaths in one, is this adulteress adjudged to. When the walls of Jerusalem were battered down with stones shot against them, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem were put to the sword, then this sentence was executed in the letter of it.

The estate of the criminal is confounded, and all that belong to her destroyed with her; (v. 39.) They shall throw down thine eminent place, and (v. 41.) they shall burn thine houses, as the habitations of bad women are destroyed, in detestation of their lewdness. Their high places, erected in honour of their idols, by which they thought to ingratiate themselves with their neighbours, shall be an offence to them, and even they shall break them down. It was long the complaint, even in some of the best reigns of the kings of Judah, that the high places were not taken away; but now the army of the Chaldeans, when they lay all waste, shall break them down. If iniquity be not taken away by the justice of the nation, it shall be taken away by the judgments of God upon the nation. The both the sin and the sinners shall be abolished together, and shall not be put to both: Thou shalt cease from playing the harlot; there shall be no remainders of idolatry in the land, because the inhabitants shall be wholly exterminated, and they shall give no more hire, because they have no more to give. Some that will not leave their sins, live till their sins leave them. When all that with which they honoured their idols is taken from them, they shall not live any more; (v. 44.) They shall not commit this lewdness of sacrificing thy children, which was a crime provoking above all thine abominations, for thy children shall all be cut off by the sword, or carried into captivity, so that thou shalt have none to sacrifice," v. 43. Or, it may be meant of the reformation of some of these that escape and survive the punishment; they shall all be brought home under the sword.

The captivity in Babylon made the people of Israel to cease for ever from playing the harlot, it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry; and then all shall be well, when this is the fruit, even the taking away of sin; then (v. 42.) my jealousy shall depart, I will be quiet, and no more angry. When we begin to be at war with sin, God will be at peace with us; for he continues the affliction no longer than till it has done its work. When sin departs, God's jealousy will soon depart, for he is never jealous but when we give him just cause to be so. Yet some understand this as a threatening of utter ruin, that God will make a full end, and the fire of his anger shall burn as long as there is any fuel for it. (Compare 2 Kings v. 27.) His fury shall rest upon them, and not remove. Compare with this the words of his adversaries, (John iii. 36.) The wrath of God abideth on them. They shall drink the dregs of the cup, and then God will be no more angry, for he is eased of his adversaries, (Isa. i. 24.) is satisfied in the aban-

25. nooning of them, and therefore will be no more angry, because there are no more for his anger to fasten upon. They had fretted him, when judgment and vengeance were in store; but now that judgment, and he will be in the eternal damnation of sinners, wherein he will be glorified, and therefore he will be satisfied.

44. Behold, every one that useth proverbs shall use this proverb against thee, saying, As is the mother, so is her daughter.
Observe, Thou art thy mother's daughter, that loathed her husband and her children; and thou art the sister of thy sisters, which loathed their husbands and their children: your mother was a Hittite, and your father an Amorite. 46. And thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand, is Sodom and her daughters.

47. Yet hast thou not walked after their ways, nor done after their abominations; but, as if that were a very little thing, thou wast corrupted more than they in all thy ways. 48. As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.

49. Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness, was in her, and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good. 51. Neither hath Samaria committed half of thy sins; but thou hast multiplied thy abominations more than they, and hast justified thy sisters in all thy abominations which thou hast done.

52. Thou also, which hast judged thy sisters, bear thine own shame, for thy sins that thou hast committed more abominable than they: they are more righteous than thou; yea, be thou confounded also, and bear thy shame, in that thou hast justified thy sisters. 53. When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of the thy captives in the midst of them: 54. That thou mayest bear thine own shame, and mayest be confounded in all that thou hast done, in that thou art a comfort unto them. 55. When thy sisters, Sodom and her daughters, shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. 56. For thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thy mouth in the day of thy pride. 57. Before thy wickedness was discovered, as at the time of thy reproof of the daughters of Syria, and all that are round about her, the daughters of the Philistines, which despise thee round about. 58. Thou hast borne thy lewdness and thine abominations, saith the Lord. 59. For thus saith the Lord God, I will even deal with thee as thou hast done, which hast despised the oath in breaking the covenant.

The prophecy here further shows Jerusalem her abominations, by comparing her with those places that had gone before her, and showing that she was worse than any of them; and therefore should, like them, be utterly and irreparably ruined. We are inquiring to judge of ourselves by comparison, and to imagine that we are sufficiently enlightened if we consider ourselves as good as such and such, who are thought passable; or that we are not dangerously bad, if we are no worse than such and such, who, though bad, are not of the worst. Now God by the prophet shows Jerusalem,

I. That she was as bad as her mother, as the accursed, devoted Canaanites that were the possessors of this land at the time. Thus God uses proverbs, as most people do, shall apply that word to Jerusalem. As is the mother, so is her daughter, v. 44. She is even her mother's own child; the Jews are as like the Canaanites in temper and inclination as if they had been their own children. The character of the mother was, that she loathed her husband and her children; she had all the marks of an adulteress; and that is the character of the daughter, she forsakes the Guide of her youth, and is barbarous to the children of her own bowels. When God brought Israel into Canaan, he particularly warned them not to do according to the abominations of the men of that land, who went before them, (for which it had spued them out, Lev. xviii. 27, 28.) the monuments of whose idolatry, with the remains of the idols themselves, were left, were constantly to tempt them: but they learned them the way they walked in their steps, and were as well affected to the idols of Canaan as ever they were, (Ps. cxi. 38.) and thus, in respect of imitation, it might truly be said that their mother was a Hittite, and their father an Amorite, (v. 45.) for they resembled them more than Abraham and Sarah.

II. That she was worse than her sisters Sodom and Samaria, that were adulteresses also, that loathed their husbands and their children, that were weary of the gods of their fathers, and were for introducing new gods, a-la-mode—quite in style, that came newly up, and new fashions in religion, and were given to change. On this comparison between Jerusalem and her sisters the prophet here enlarges, that he might either shame them into repentance, or justify God, that their destruction was just. Observe,

1. Who Jerusalem's sisters were. We must 45. Samaria and Sodom. Samaria is called the elder sister, or, rather, the greater, because it was a much larger city and kingdom, richer and more considerable, and more nearly allied to Israel. If Jerusalem look northward, this is partly on her left hand, this city of Samaria, and the towns and villages that were as daughters to that mother-city, these had been lately destroyed for their spiritual whoredom; Sodom, and the adjacent towns and villages that were her daughters, dwelt at Jerusalem's right hand, and was her lesser sister; less than Jerusalem, less than Samaria, and these were of old destroyed for their corporal whoredom, Jude 7.

2. Wherein Jerusalem's sins resembled her sisters', particularly Sodom's; (v. 49.) This was the iniquity of your mother, (it is implied, and this is thine iniquity too,) pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness; their going after strange flesh, which was Sodom's most flagrant wickedness, is not mentioned, because notoriously known; but those sins which did not look so black, but opened the door and led the way to those more enormous crimes, and began to fill that measure of her sins, which was to fill up herself by their unnatural filthiness. Now these initiating sins were, (1.) Pride, in which the heart lifts itself above and against both God and man; pride was the first sin that turned angels into devils, and the garden of the Lord into a hell upon earth. It was the pride of the Sodomites, that they despised righteous Lot, and would not bear to
be reproved by him; and this repined them for ruin.  
(2.) Gluttony, here called fulness of bread. It was 
God's great mercy that they had plenty, but their 
great sin that they abused it, gluttonized themselves 
with it, ate to excess, and drank to excess, and made 
that the gratification of their lusts, which was given 
them to be the support of their lives. (3.) Idleness, 
and idleness of the very means of living. They 
were idle, and bestowed their time on the least 
of cases. Their country was fruitful, and the abund-
ance they had they came easily by, which was a 
temptation to them to indulge themselves in sloth, 
which disposed them to all that abominable filthi-
ness which kindled their flames. Note, Idleness is an 
inlet to much sin; the men of Sodom, who were 
idle, were wicked, and sinners before the Lord, ex-
ceczence. For there was, it seems, a regular connec-
tion between them; He was more abominable, and 
the sitting bird is the Fowler's mark.  
When David rose from off his bed at evening, he 
saw Bathsheba. Quæritur, ægisti quis sit fuer-
tus adulterus? In promtus causa est; desidiosus erat 
—What made Aegisti an adulterer? Indulgence.  
(4.) Oppression; neither did she strengthen the 
hands of the poor and needy; probably, it is implied 
that she encouraged their hands and broke them 
more; however, it was had enough that, when she had so 
much wealth, and, consequently, power and interest 
and leisure, she did nothing for the relief of the poor, 
in providing for whose wants those that themselves 
are full of bread may employ their time well, they 
need not be so abundantly idle, as too often they are. 
These were the sins of the Sodomites, and these 
were Jerusalem's sins; their pride, the cause of their 
sin, by which they were hated; with the horrid effects of 
their sins, their abomina-
tions which they committed before God. Men ar-
rive gradually at the height of impurity and wicked-
ness; Nemo repertus fit turpissimus—No man 
reaches the height of vice at once. But where pride 
has got the ascendant in a man, he is in the high 
road to all abominations.  
3. How much the sins of Jerusalem exceeded 
those of Sodom and Samaria: they were more hein-
ious in the sight of God, either in themselves, or by 
reason of several aggravations: "Thou hast not only 
walked after their ways, and trod in their steps, but 
hast quite outdone them in wickedness," v. 47. Then 
thougest it a very little thing to do as they did; 
didst laugh at them as sneaking sinners, and sily 
cravenly and softly, and flatteringly, set down 
damnful wickedness; wouldst triumph more boldly 
over thy convictions, and bid more open defiance to God 
and religion; if a man will break, let him break 
for something; thus thou wast corrupted more than 
they in all thy ways." Jerusalem was more polite; 
and therefore sinned with more wit, more art 
and ingenuity, than Sodom and Samaria could. Jeru-
usalem had more wealth and power, and its govt more 
absolute and arbitrary; and therefore had the 
more opportunity of oppressing the poor, and 
shredding malignant influences around her, than 
Sodom and Samaria had. Jerusalem had the temple, 
and the ark, and the priesthood, and kings of the 
house of David; and therefore the wickedness of that 
holy city, that was so dignified, so near, so dear 
to God, and more weighty and firm to him, and its more 
government of Sodom and Samaria, that had not Jeru-
selem's privileges and means of grace. Sodom has 
not done us as thou hast done, v. 48. This agrees with 
what Christ says, (Matt. xi. 24.) it shall be more 
tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judg-
ment than for thee. The kingdom of the ten tribes 
had been very wicked; and yet Samaria has not 
committed such crimes as they are accused of here. 
Shipped half so many idols, nor slain half so many 
prophets. It was bad enough that they of Jerusalem 
were guilty of Sodom's sins, sodomy itself not 
excepted, 1 Kings xiv. 24. 2 Kings xxviii. 7. And 
though the Dead sea, the standing monument of So-
dom's sin and ruin, bordered upon their country, 
(Numb. xxxiv. 12.) and that sulphurous lake was 
always under their nose, (God having taken away 
Sodom and her daughters in such a way and manner 
as he saw good, (as he says here, v. 50.) so that one 
thing should effectually make their overthrow en-
able to be more easily comprehended and believed of 
all. Pet. ii. 6.) yet they did not take warning, but exul-
terified their abominations more than they; and, (1.) 
By this they justified Sodom and Samaria, v. 51. 
They pretended, in their haughtiness and supcri-
olousness, to judge them, and in the days of old, when 
they retained their integrity, they did judge them, 
v. 52. But now they justify them comparatively; 
though Sodom and Samaria are so wicked, Sodom 
and Samaria will rise up in judgment. (2.) For this 
they ought themselves to be greatly ashamed: "Thou 
and I hast done thy pleasure; and therefore, by them, 
now hear thine own shame, for thy sins which 
that committed, which, though of the same 
kind with theirs, yet, being committed by thee, 
are more abominable than theirs," v. 52. This may 
be taken either as foretelling their ruin, Thou shalt 
be ashamed, or as inviting them to repentance, 
Be thou confounded, and bear thy shame, take 
the shame to thyself that is due to them; God 
hoped that sinners will forsake their sins when they 
begin to be heartily ashamed of them. And there 
fore they shall go into captivity, and there they shall 
lie, that they may be confounded in all that they 
have done; because they had been a comfort and 
encouragement to Sodom and Samaria, v. 54. Note, 
There is nothing in sin which we have more reason 
to be ashamed of than this, that by our sin we have 
encouraged others in sin, and comforted them in that 
for which they must be grieved, or they are undone. 
Another reason why they must now be ashamed 
is, because in the day of their prosperity they had 
looked with so much disdain upon their neighbours; 
Thy sister Sodom was not mentioned by thee in the 
day of thy pride, v. 56. They thought Sodom not 
worthy to be named the same day with Jerusalem, 
and therefore they did not deign to mention it, under 
a worse and more scandalous character than 
Sodom herself. Those that are high may perhaps 
come to stand upon a level with those they contemn. 
Or, "Sodom was not mentioned, the warning de-
signed to be given to thee by Sodom's ruin, was not 
regarded." If the Jews had but talked more fre-
quently and seriously to one another, and to their 
children, concerning the wrath of God revealed from 
heaven against Sodom's uncleanness and wriggle-
ousness, it might have kept them in awe, and 
prevented their treading in their steps; but they 
 kept the thought of it at a distance, would not bear the 
mention of it, and (as the ancients say) put Isaiah 
to death for putting them in mind of it, when he 
called them sisters of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, 
v. 58. Sodom and Gomorrah and the others were not 
putting off in mind of it, and preparing judgments 
for themselves, that will not take notice of God's 
judgments upon others.  
4. What desolations God had brought, and was 
bringing, upon Jerusalem, for these wickednes-
nesses wherein they had exceeded Sodom and Samaria. 
(1.) She has already long ago been disgraced, and 
has fallen into contempt among her neighbours; (v. 
2.) But her defilement was more upon her than she 
came to be so grossly and openly flagitious, she 
 bore the just punishment of her secret and more 
concealed lewdness, when she fell under the re-
proach of the daughters of Syria, of the Philis.
times, who were said to despise her, and be ashamed of her, (v. 27.) and under the reproach of all that were round about her; which seems to refer to the descent made upon Judah by the Syrionians in the days of Alazao, and soon after another by the Philistines, * Chr. xviii. 5, 18. Note, Those that despise themselves by yielding to their lusts, will justly be brought into disgrace by being made to yield to their enemies; and it is observable, that before God brought potent enemies upon them, for their destruction, he brought enemies upon them that were less formidable, for their refreshments; if lesser judgments would do the work, God does not resort to greater. In this thou hast borne thy lewdness, v. 38. Those that will not cast off their sins by repentance and reformation, shall be made to bear their sins to their confusion.

(2.) She is now in captivity, or hastening into captivity, and therein is reckoned with, not only for her lewdness, (v. 38.) but for her perfidiousness and covenant-breaking; (v. 59.) "I will deal with thee as thou hast done; I will forsake thee as thou hast forsaken me, and cast thee off as thou hast cast me off, for thou hast despised the oath, in breaking the covenant." This seems to be meant of the covenant God made with their fathers, at mount Sinai, whereby he took them and theirs to be a peculiar people to himself. They flattered themselves with a conceit, that because God had hitherto continued his favour to them, standing up in their provocations, he would do so still. "No," says God, "you have broken covenant with me, have despised both the promises of the covenant, and the obligations of it, and therefore I will deal with thee as thou hast done." Note, Those that will not adhere to God as their God, have no reason to expect that he should continue to own them as his people. (5.) The captivity of the wicked, and their ruin, shall be as irrevocable as that of Sodom and Samaria. In this sense, as a threatening, most interpreters take v. 53, 55. When I shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, and when they shall return to their former estate, then I will bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them, and as it were for their sakes, and under their shadow and protection, because they are more righteous than thou, and then thou shalt return to thy former estate. But Sodom and Samaria were never brought back, nor ever returned to their former estate, and therefore let not Jerusalem expect it, that is, those who now remain there, whom God would deliver to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, Jer. xxviii. 1, 10. Sooner shall the Sidonites arise out of the salt sea, and the Samaritans return out of the land of Assyria, than they enjoy their peace and prosperity again; for, to their shame be it spoken, it is a comfort to those of the ten tribes, who are dispersed and in captivity, to see these of the two tribes, who had been as bad as they, or worse, in like manner dispersed and in captivity; and therefore they shall live and die there, and not one of all the ones of both shall perish together, the good ones of both shall return together. Note, Those who do as the worst of sinners do, must expect to fare as they fare. * Let mine enemy be as the wicked.

60. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61. Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger: and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. 63. That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.

Here, in the close of the chapter, after a most shameful conviction of sin, and a most dreadful denunciation of judgments, mercy is remembered, mercy is reserved, for those who shall come after, as was when God sware in his wrath concerning those who came out of Egypt, that they should not enter into the land, (Ex. xlvii. 7.) and God says, "your little ones shall," so here. And some think what that is said of the return of Sodom and Samaria, (v. 53, 55.) and of Jerusalem with them, is a promise; it may be understood so, if by Sodom we understand (as Grotsius and some of the Jewish writers do) the Moabites and Ammonites, the posterity of Lot, who once dwelt in Sodom; their captivity was returned, Jer. xxvii, 27, 28. (xlix.) as was that of many of the ten tribes, and Judah's with them. But these closing verses are, without doubt, a precious promise, which was in part fulfilled at the return of the penitent and reformed Jews out of Babylon, but was to have its full accomplishment in gospel-times, and in that repentance and that remission of sins which should then be preached with success to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Now observe here,

1. From whence this mercy should take rise, from God himself, and his remembering of his covenant with them; (v. 60.) Nevertheless, though they had been so provoking, and God has been so provoked, to that degree that one would think they could never be reconciled again, yet "I will remember my covenant with thee, that covenant which I made with thee in the days of thy youth, and will revive it again. Though thou hast broken the covenant, (v. 59.) I will remember it, and it shall flourish again." See how much it is our comfort and advantage that God is pleased to deal with us in a covenant-way, for thus the mercies of it come to be sure mercies and everlasting, (Is. l. 5.) and while the root stands in the garden of the Lord, though the tree, though it be cut down, that through the scent of water it will bud again. We do not find that they put him in mind of the covenant, but ex nero motto—from his own mere good pleasure, he remembers it as he had promised; (Lev. xxvi. 42.) Then will I remember my covenant, and will remember the land. He that bids us to be ever mindful of the covenant, no doubt will himself be ever mindful of it, the word which he commanded (and what he commands stands fast for ever) to a thousand generations.

2. How they should be prepared and qualified for this mercy; (v. 61.) "Thou shalt remember thy ways, thine evil ways; God will put thee in mind of them, and teach thee in fear before that thou mayest be ashamed of them." Note, God's good work in us commences and keeps pace with his good will towards us. When he remembers his covenant for us, that he may not remember our sins against us, he puts us upon remembering of our sins against ourselves. And if we will but be brought to remember our ways, how crooked and perverse they were in him, and how we have walked contrary to God in them, we cannot but be ashamed; and when we are so, we are best prepared to receive the honour and comfort of a sealed pardon and a settled peace.

3. What the mercy is, that God has in reserve for them. (1.) He will take them into covenant
with himself; (v. 60.) I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant; and again, (v. 62.) I will establish, re-establish, and establish more firmly than ever, my covenant with thee. That is to say, it is an unbreakable contract to all true repentants, that the covenant of grace is so well ordered in all things, that every transgression in the covenant does not throw us out of covenant, for that is inviolable. (2.) He will bring the Gentiles into church-communion with them; (v. 61.) Thou shalt receive thy sisters, the Gentile nations that are round about thee, thee elder and thy younger, greater than thee art, and lesser, ancient nations and moderns, and I will give them unto thee for daughters, they shall be founded, nursed, taught, and educated, by that gospel, that word of the Lord, which shall go forth from Zion and from Jerusalem; so that all the neighbours shall call Jerusalem mother, while the church continues there, and shall acknowledge the Jerusalem which is from above, and which is free, to be the mother of us all, Gal. iv. 28. They shall be thy daughters, but not by thy covenant, not by the covenant of peculiarity, not as being proselytes to the Jewish religion, and subjects to the yoke of the ceremonial law, but as being converts with thee to the Christian religion. Or, Not by thy covenant, may mean, "not upon such terms as thou shalt think fit to impose upon them as conquered nations, as captives and hominage to whom thou mayest give law at pleasure;" (such a conversion as the ancient nations of the nations; no, they shall be thy daughters by my covenant, the covenant of grace made with thee and them in concert, as an indenture triplicite. I will be a Father, a common Father, both to Jews and Gentiles, and so they shall become sisters to one another. And when thou shalt receive them, thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways wherein thou wast confused to the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thine apostacy."

4. What the fruit and effect of this will be.

(1.) God will hereby be glorified; (v. 62.) Thou shalt know that I am the Lord. It shall hereby be known that the God of Israel is Jehovah, a God of power, and faithful to his covenant; and thou shalt know it, who hast not lived and it, and didst not believe it. It had often been said in wrath, Ye shall know that I am the Lord, shall know it to thy cost; here it is said in mercy, Ye shall know it to your comfort; and it is one of the most precious promises of the new covenant which God has made with us, that all shall know him from the least to the greatest.

(2.) They shall hereby be more humbled and bashted for sin; (v. 63.) "That thou mayest be the more confounded at the remembrance of all that thou hast done amiss, mayest reproach thyself for it, and call thyself a thousand times unwise, unfruitful, ungrateful, and unlike what thou wast, and mayest never open thy mouth any more in contradiction to God, reflection on him, or complaints of him, but mayest be for ever silent and submissive, because of thy shame." Note, Those that rightly remember their sins, shall be truly ashamed of them: and those that are truly ashamed of their sins, will see great reason to be patient under their afflictions: to be dumb, and not open their mouths against what God does. But that which is most observable, is, that all this shall be when I am pacified toward thee, saith the Lord God. Note, It is the gracious ingenuousness of true repentants, that the clearer evidences and the fuller instances they have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed they are that ever they have offended. God is in Jesus Christ pacified toward us; he is our Peace, and it is by his cross that we are reconciled, and in his gospel that God is reconciling the world to himself: now the consideration of this should be powerful to melt our hearts into a godly sorrow for sin.

This is repeating because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The prodigal, after he had received the kiss which assured him that his father was pacified toward him, was ashamed and confounded, and said, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee. And the more our shame for sin is increased by the sense of pardoning mercy, the more will our comfort in God be increased.

CHAP. XVII.

God was, in the foregoing chapter, reckoning with the people of Judah and bringing ruin upon them, for their treachery and breaking covenants with the Lord. In this chapter he is reckoning with the king of Judah, for his treachery in breaking covenant with the king of Babylon; for when God came to contend with them, he found many ground of his controversy. The thing was now in doing; Zedekiah was practising with the king of Egypt underhand for assistance in a treacherous project he had formed to shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon, and violate the homage and fealty he had sworn to him. For this, God by the prophet here, 1. Threatens the ruin of him and his kingdom, by a parable of two eagles and a vine, (v. 1. 10.) and the explanation of that parable, v. 11. 24. 2. And in the parable, he speaks in favour to raise the royal family of Judah again, the house of David, in the Messiah and his kingdom, v. 22. 24. 1. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel; 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: 4. He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic; he set it in a city of merchants. 5. He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field; he placed it by great waters, and set it as a willow-tree; 6. And it grew, and became a spreading vine of low stature, whose branches turned toward him, and the roots thereof were under him: so it became a vine, and brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs. 7. There was also another great eagle with great wings and many feathers; and, behold, this vine did bend her roots toward him, and shot forth her branches toward him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation. 8. It was planted in a good soil by great waters, that it might bring forth branches, and that it might bear fruit, that it might be a goodly vine. 9. Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God, Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power, or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. 10. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew. 11. Moreover, the word of
the Lord came unto me, saying, 12. Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; 13. And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken of the mighty of the land: 14. That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand. 15. But he rebelled against him, in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people. Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? 16. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him, in the midst of Babylon, he shall die. 17. Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company, make for him in the war, by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: 18. Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when I, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head. 20. And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon, and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me. 21. And all his fugitives, with all his bands, shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered towards all winds; and ye shall know that I the Lord have spoken it.

We must take all these verses together, that we may have the parable and the explanation of it at one view before us, because they will illustrate one another.

1. The prophet is appointed to put forth a riddle to the house of Israel; (v. 2.) not to puzzle them, as Samson's riddle was put forth to the Philistines, not to hide the mind of God from them in obscurity, or to leave them in uncertainty about it, one advancing one conjecture and another another, as is usual in expounding riddles; no, he is immediately to tell them the meaning of it. Let him that speaks in an unknown tongue, pray that he may interpret, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. But he must deliver his message in a riddle or parable, that they might take the more notice of it, might be the more affected with it themselves, and might the better remember it, and tell it to others. For these reasons God often used similitudes by his servants the prophets, and Christ himself opened his mouth in parables. Riddles and parables are used for an amusement to ourselves, and an entertainment to our friends; the prophet must make use of these, to see if in this dress the things of God might find acceptance, and instigate themselves into the minds of a careless people. Note, Ministers should study to find out acceptable words, and try various methods to do good; and, as far as they have reason to think will be for edification, should both bring that which is familiar into their preaching, and their preaching too into their familiar discourse; that there may not be so vast a dissimilarity as with some there is between what they say in the closet and what they say in the pulpit.

II. He is appointed to explain this riddle to the rebellious house; (v. 12.) though being rebellious, they might justly have been left in ignorance, to see and hear, and not perceive, yet the thing shall be explained to them: Know ye not what these things mean? They that knew the story, and what was now in agitation, might make a shrewd guess at the meaning of this riddle; but, that they might be left without excuse, he is to give it them in plain terms, stripped of the metaphor. But the enigma was first propounded for them to study on awhile, and to send to their friends at Jerusalem, that they might inquire after and expect the solution of it some time after.

Let us now see what the matter of this message is:

1. Nebuchadnezzar had some time ago carried off Jehoiachin, the same that was called Jeconiah, when he was but eighteen years of age, and had reigned in Jerusalem but three months, him and his princes and great men, and had brought them captives to Babylon, 2 Kings xiv. 12. This in the parable is represented by an eagle's cropping the top and tender branch of a cedar tree, and casting it into a land of traffic, a city of merchants, (v. 3, 4.) which is explained, v.12. The king of Babylon took the king of Jerusalem, who was no more able to resist him than a young twig of a tree is to contend with the strongest bird of prey, that easily crops it off, perhaps toward the making of her nest. Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel's vision, is a king, the king of beasts; (Dan. vii. 4.) there he has eagle's wings, so swift were his motions, so speedy were his conquests. Here, in this parable, he is an eagle, the king of birds; a great eagle, that lives upon spoil and rapine, whose young ones suck up blood, Job xxxiii. 50. His dominion extends itself far and wide, like the great and long wings of an eagle; that people: he takes up the branch of a great cedar tree out of the court splendid, for it has divers colours, which look like embroiderying, as the word is. Jerusalem is Lebanon, a forest of houses, and very pleasant; the royal family is the cedar, Jehoiachin is the top branch, the top of the young twigs, which he crops off; Babylon is the land of traffic, and city of merchants where it is set. And the king of Judah, being of the house of David, will think himself much degraded and disgraced to be lodged among tradesmen; but he must make the best of it.

2. When he carried him to Babylon, he made his uncle Zedekiah king in his room, v. 5, 6. His name was Mattaniah—the gift of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar changed into Zedekiah—the justice of the Lord, to remind him, that he might be called his, for fear of his justice. This was one of the seed of the land, a native, not a foreigner, not one of his Babylonian princes; he was planted in a fruitful field, for so Jerusalem as yet was; he placed it by great waters, where it would be likely to grow, like a willow-tree, which grows quick, and grows best in moist ground, but is never designed or expected to be a stately tree. He set it with liberal circumspection; (so some read it;) he wisely provided that it might grow, but that it might not grow too big. He took of the king's seed, (so it is explained, v. 13.) and made a covenant with him, that
he should have the kingdom, and enjoy the regal power and dignity, provided he held it as his vassal, dependent on him, and accountable to him. He took an oath of him, made him swear allegiance to him, swear by his own God, the God of Israel, that he would be a faithful tributary to him, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13. He also took away the mighty of the land, the chief of the men of war, partly as hostages, partly to prevent them from finding a means of removing the king. The land being thereby weakened, the king might be the less able, and therefore the less in temptation, to break his league. What he designed we are told, v. 14. That the kingdom might be base, in respect both of honour and strength, might be neither a rival with its powerful neighbours, nor a terror to its feeble ones, as it had been, that it might not lift up itself against him. He also took down any of the petty states that were in subjection to it. But yet he designed that by keeping of this covenant it might stand, and continue a kingdom. Hereby the pride and ambition of that haughty potentate would be gratified, who aimed to be like the Most High, (Isa. xiv. 14.) to have all about him subject to him. Now see here,

(1.) How sad a change sin made with the royal family of Babylon, v. 14. The mighty men of the land were tributaries to that, now that has not only lost its dominion over other nations, but is itself become a tributary. How is the gold become dim! Nations by sin sell their liberty, and princes their dignity, and profane their crowns by casting them to the ground. (2.) How wisely Zedekiah did for himself in accepting these terms, though they were dishonourable, when necessity brought him to it. Men may live very comfortably and contentedly, though he cannot bear a part, and make a figure, as formerly. A kingdom may stand firm and safe, though it do not stand so high as it has sometimes done; and so may a family.

3. Zedekiah, while he continued faithful to the king of Babylon, did very well, and if he would have reformed his kingdom, and returned to God and his duty, he had done better, and by that means might soon have recovered his former dignity, v. 6. This plank grew, and though it was set as a willow-tree, and little account was made of it, yet it became a spreading vine of low stature, a great blessing to his own country, and his fruits making glad their hearts; and it is better to be a spreading vine of low stature than a lofty cedar of no use. Nebuchadnezzar had planted it, but the king of Babylon did not use it, and rested on him as the vine on the wall, and he had his share of the fruits of this vine; the roots thereof too were under him, and at his disposal. The Jews had reason to be pleased, for they sat under their own vine, which brought forth branches, and shot forth sprigs, and looked pleasant and promising. See how gradually the judgments of God came upon them, by provoking people; how God gave them up to their sins, and so gave them space to repent. He made their kingdom base, to try if that would humble them, before he made it no kingdom; yet left it easy for them, to try if that would win upon them to return to him, that the troubles threatened might be prevented.

4. Zedekiah knew not when he was well off; but grew more and more to experience of being a tributary to the king of Babylon, and, to get clear of it, entered into a private league with the king of Egypt. He had no reason to complain that the king of Babylon put any new hardships upon him, or improved his advantages against him, that he oppressed or impoverished his country, for, as the prophet had said before, (v. 6.) to aggravate his treachery, he shows again, (v. 8.) what a fair way he was in to be considered; He was planted in a good soil by great waters, his family was likely enough to be built up, and his exchequer to be filled, in a little time, so that, if he had dealt faithfully, he might have been a goodly vine. But there was another great eagle that he had an affection for, and put a confidence in, and that was the king of Egypt, v. 7. Those two great potentates, the kings of Babylon and Egypt, were but two eagles, birds of prey. This great eagle of Egypt is said to have great wings, but he was not the champion of Babylon, because, though the kingdom of Egypt was strong, yet it was not of such a vast extent as that of Babylon was. The great eagle is said to have many feathers, much wealth, and many soldiers, which he depended upon as a substantial defence, but which really were no more than so many feathers. Zedekiah, promising himself liberty, did include himself in a vassal to the king of Egypt, foolishly expecting ease by changing his master. Now this vine did secretly and undertake bend her roots toward the king of Egypt, that great eagle, and after a while did openly shoot forth her branches toward him, gave him an intimation how much she coveted an alliance with him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation, whereas it was planted by great waters, and did not need any assistance from him. Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people, to enable him to contend with the king of Babylon. See what a change sin had made with the people of God! God promised that they should be a numerous people, as the sand of the sea; yet now, if their king had continued errors, he must send to Egypt for them, they being for sin minished and brought low, Ps. civ. 39. See also the folly of fretful, discontented spirits, that ruin themselves by striving to mend themselves, whereas they might be easy and happy enough if they would but make the best of that which is.

5. God here threatens Zedekiah with the utter destruction of him and his kingdom, and, in displeasure against him, passes that doom upon him for his treacherous revolt from the king of Babylon. This is represented in the parable, (v. 9, 10.) by the plucking up of this vine by the roots, the cutting off the fruit, and the withering of the leaves, the leaves of her spring, when they are in their greenness, (Job viii. 12.) before they begin in autumn to wither of themselves. The project shall be blasted, and what luxury of the son of man shall be turned into ashes, and the prince shall be ruined past recovery; as a vine when the east wind blasts it, so that it shall be fit for nothing but the fire, (as we had it in that parable, ch. xv. 4.) it shall wither even in the furrows where it grew, though they were ever so well watered. It shall be destroyed without great power or many people to pluck it up, for what need is there of raising the multitude to pluck up a vine? is it, God, can bring great things to pass without ado; he needs not great power and many people to effect his purposes, a handful will serve if he pleases. He can have with all difficulty ruin a sinful king and kingdom, and make no more of it than we do of rooting up a tree that cumbers the ground.

In the explanation of the parable the sentence is very largely paraphrased, Shall he prosper? (v. 13.) Can he expect to do ill, and fare well? Nay, shall he that does such wicked things escape? Shall he break the covenant, and be delivered from that vengeance which is the just punishment of his treachery? No, can he expect to do ill, and not suffer ill? Let him hear his doom:

(1.) It is ratified by the oath of God; (v. 15.) As I live, with the Lord God, he shall die for it. This intimates how highly God resented the crime, and how sure and severe the punishment of it would be.
God swears in his wrath, as he did, Ps. xcv. 11. Note, As God's promises are confirmed with an oath, for comfort to the saints, so are his threatenings, for terror to the wicked. As sure as God lives, and is happy, I may add, and long, so sure, so long, shall impenitent sinners die, and be miserable. (2.) It is justified by the heinousness of the crime he had been guilty of. [1.] He had been very ungrateful to his benefactor, who had made him king, and for aught that appeared, had made him a prisoner, when he might as easily have made him a prisoner. Note, It is a sin against God to be unkind to our friends, and to lift up the heel against those that have helped to raise us. [2.] He had been very false to him whom he had covenanted with; this is mostly insisted on. He despaired of the oath when his conscience or friends reminded him of it, he was brought to repentance, he should beulleted and broke it, v. 15, 16, 18, 19. He broke through it, and took a pride in making nothing of it, as a great tyrant in our own day, whose maxim (they say) it is, That princes ought not to be slaves to their word any farther than is for their interest. That which aggravated Zedekiah's perfidiousness was, that the oath by which he had bound himself to the king of Babylon, was, First, A solemn covenant; this his king, Nebuchadnezzar, had made with him, v. 19. When, he, he had given his hand, as a confederate with the king of Babylon, not only as his subject, but as his friend; the joining of hands being a token of the joining of hearts. Secondly, A sacred oath. God says, (v. 19.) It is mine oath that he has despised, and my covenant that he has broken. In every solemn oath God is appealed to as a Witness of the sincerity of him that swears, and as an invoker and Revenger of his treachery if he now swear falsely, or at any time hereafter break his oath. But the oath of allegiance to a prince is particularly called the oath of God, (Eccles. viii. 2.) as if that had something in it more sacred than another oath; for princes are ministers of God to us for good, Rom. xiii. 4. Now Zedekiah's breaking this oath and covenant is the sin which God will recompense upon his own head, (v. 19.) the treachery which he has trespassed against God, for which God will plead with him, v. 20. Note, Perjury is a heinous sin, and highly provoking to the God of heaven. It would not serve for an excuse, 1. That he who took this oath was a king, a king of the house of David, whose liberty and dignity might have set him above the obligation to the oath, he being a king, and kings are men to God, and not exempt from his law and judgment. The prince is doubly bound as firmly bound before God to the people by his coronation-oath, as the people to the prince by the oath of allegiance. 2. Nor that this oath was sworn to the king of Babylon, a heathen prince, worse than a heretic, with whom the church of Rome says, No faith is to be kept up, though Nebuchadnezzar was a worshipper of false gods, yet the true God will avenge this quarrel when one of his worshippers breaks his league with him; for truth is a debt owing to all men; and if the professors of the true religion deal perniciously with those of a false religion, their profession will be so far from excusing, much less justifying, them, that it aggravates their sin, and God will reward them accordingly. A breach of alliance by it they give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; as that Mahometan prince, who, when the Christians broke their league with him, cried out, O Jesus, are these thy Christians? 3. Nor would it justify him, that the oath was extorted from him by a conqueror, for the covenant was made upon a valuable consideration. He held his life and crown upon the true allegiance to the king of Babylon; and if he enjoy the benefit of his bargain, it is very unjust if he do not observe the terms. Let him know then that, having despised the oath, and broken the covenant, he shall not escape. And if the contempt and violation of such an oath, such a covenant as this, would be so punished, of how much sorer punishment shall they that he thought worthy, who break covenant with God, (when to, they had given their hand upon it, that they would be faithful,) who tread under foot the blood of that covenant as an unholy thing? (Deut. vii. 20.) It is a sin to break the covenant, and much more to break it with God, v. 20. (3.) It is particularized in divers instances, where the punishment is made to answer the sin. [1.] He had rebelled against the king of Babylon, and the king of Babylon should be his effectual conqueror: in the place where that king dwells, whose covenant he broke, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die, v. 16. He thinks to get out of his hands, but he shall fall, and be taken into his hands. God himself will now take part with the king of Babylon against him; I will spread my net upon him, v. 20. God has a net for those who deal perniciously, and think to escape his righteous judgments, in which they shall be taken and held, who would not be held by the hand of an oath and covenant. Zedekiah dreaded Babylon; he was afraid of being taken, and (v. 19.) they shall deal with him there. Man will justly be forced upon that calamity which they endeavour by sin to free from. [2.] He had relied upon the king of Egypt, and the king of Egypt should be his ineffectual helper. Pharaoh with his mighty army shall not make for him in the war, (v. 17.) shall do him no service, nor give any check to the progress of the Chaldean forces; he shall not assist him in the siege by casting up walls, and building forts, nor do battle by cutting off many persons. Note, Every creature is that to us that God makes it to be; and he commonly weakens and withers that arm of flesh which we trust in, and stay ourselves upon. Now was again fulfilled what was spoken on a former like occasion, (Isa. xxx. 7.) The Egyptians shall help in vain. They did set; for, though upon the approach of the Egyptian army, the Chaldeans withdrew from the siege of Jerusalem, upon their retreat they returned to it again, and took it. It should seem, the Egyptians were not hearty, had strength enough, but no good will to help Zedekiah. Note, Those who deal treacherously with those who put confidence in them, will justly be dealt treacherously with by those they put a confidence in. Yet the Egyptians were not the only states Zedekiah stayed himself upon; he had bands of his own, to stand by him; but those bands, though we may suppose they were veteran troops, and the best soldiers his kingdom afforded, shall become fugitives, shall quit their posts, and make the best of their way, and shall fall by the sword of the enemy; and the remains of them shall be scattered, v. 21. This was fulfilled when the enemies broke up, and all the forces of them fled, Jer. lii. 7. The prophet seems to say, that I the Lord have spoken it. Note, Sooner or later, God's word will prove itself; and those who will not believe, shall find by experience the reality and weight of it.

22. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it; I will crop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent: 23. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it; and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and he a goodies cedar; and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing;
in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. 24. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken, and have done it.

When the royal family of Judah was brought to desolation by the captivity of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, it might be asked, "What is now become of the covenant of royalty made with David, that his children should sit upon his throne for evermore? In the appointed species of Jews in which all promise to David was fulfilled, it is sufficient, for the silencing of the objectors, to answer, that the promise was conditional; if they will keep my covenant, then they shall continue, Ps. cxxxii. 12. But David's posterity broke the condition, and so forfeited the promise. But the unbelief of man shall not invalidate the promise of God. He will find out another Seed of David, in which it shall be accomplished; and that is promised in these verses.

1. The house of David shall again be magnified, and out of its ashes another phoenix shall arise. The metaphor of a tree, which was made use of in the threatening, is here presented in the promise, v. 22, 23. This promise had its accomplishment in part, when Zerubbabel, a branch of the house of David, was raised up to head the Jewish church; but that extension of the house of David, in which Nebuchadnezzar was the great eagle that had attempted the re-establishing of the house of David, in a dependence upon him, v. 5. But the attempt miscarried; his plantation withered, and was plucked up; "Well," says God, "the next shall be of my planting, I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and I will set it." Note, As men have their designs, God also has his designs, but David's posterity, as Nebuchadnezzar prided himself in setting up kingdoms at his pleasure, Dan. v. 19. But those kingdoms soon had an end, whereas the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, Dan. ii. 44.

2. The house of David is revived in a tender one cut off from the top of his young twigs; Zerubbabel was such; that which was hopeful in the time was but the day of small things, (Zech. iv. 10.) yet before him great mountains were made plain. Our Lord Jesus was the highest Branch of the high cedar, the firmest of all from the root; for, soon after he appeared, the house of David was all cut off and extinguished, but the nearest of all to heaven, for his kingdom was not of this world. He was taken from the top of the young twigs, Isa. xi. 1, where they fled in their distress, the Branch, a tender Plant, and a Root out of a dry ground, (Isa. lii. 2.) but a Branch of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

3. This branch is planted in a high mountain, (v. 22.) in the mountain of the height of Israel; (v. 23.) thither he brought Zerubbabel in triumph, there he raised up his son Jesus, sent him to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel that were scattered upon the mountains, set him his King upon his holy hill of Zion, sent forth the gospel from mount Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; there, in the height of Israel, a nation which all its neighbours had an eye upon as conspicuous and illustrious, was the Christian church first planted; the churches of Judea were the most primitive churches. The unbelieving Jews did what they could to prevent its being planted there; but who can pluck up what God will plant?

From thence it spreads far and wide. The Jewish state, though it began very low in Zerubbabel's time, was set as a tender branch, which might easily be plucked up, yet took root, spread strangely, and after some time became very considerable; those of other nations, foul of every wing, put themselves under the protection of it. The Christian church was at first like a grain of mustard seed, but became like this tender branch here, a great tree; its beginning small, but its latter end exceeding that of the cedar of Lebanon. Jesus was twisted from the holy tree, thrown into the church, then did the wolf of every wing (even the birds of prey, which those preyed upon, as the wolf and the lamb feeding together, Isa. xxi. 6.) come and dwell under the shadow of this goodly cedar. See Dan. iv. 21.

II. God himself will hereon be glorified, v. 24. The setting up of the Messiah's kingdom in the world shall discover more clearly than ever to the children of men that God is the King of all the earth, Ps. lxxvii. 7. Never was there a more full conviction given of this truth, that all things are governed by an infinitely wise and mighty Providence, than that which was given by the exaltation of Christ, and the establishment of his kingdom among men; for by that it appeared that God has all hearts in his hand, and the sovereign disposal of all affairs.

All the trees of the field shall know, 1. That the tree which God will have to be brought down, and dried up, shall be so, though it be ever so high and stately, ever so green and flourishing. Neither honour nor wealth, neither external advantages nor internal endowments, will secure men from humbling, withering providences. 2. That the tree of the Messiah also shall be exalted and to flourish, shall so be, shall do so, though ever so low, and ever so dry. The house of Nebuchadnezzar, that now makes so great a figure, shall be extirpated, and the house of David, that now makes so mean a figure, shall become famous again; and the Jewish nation, that is now desplicable, shall be considerable. The kingdom of Satan, that has borne so long, so strong a branch, shall be broken, and the kingdom of Christ, that was looked upon with contempt, shall be established. The Jews, who, in respect of church-privileges, had been high and green, shall be thrown out, and the Gentiles, who had been low and dry trees, shall be taken in their room, Isa. liv. 1. All the enemies of Christ shall be abased, and made his footstool, and his interests shall be confirmed and advanced; if the Lord have spoken, it is the decree, the declared decree, that Christ must be exalted, must be the Head-Stone of the corner, and I have done it, I will do it in due time, but it is as sure to be done as if it were done already; With men saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God. 'What he has spoken we may be sure that he will do, nor shall one be found among men that have been heard and be not done. For he is not a man, that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent either of his threatenings or of his promises.'

CHAP. XVIII.

Perhaps, in reading some of the chapters foregoing, we may have been tempted to think ourselves not much concerned with them, (though we should be exempted from our learning) but this chapter, at first view, appears highly and nearly to concern us all—very highly, very nearly; for without particular reference to Judah and Jerusalem, this answers the rule of judgment, that God will deal with the children of men in determining them to their everlasting state; and it agrees with that very ancient rule laid down, Gen. iv. 7. If thou dost
EZEKIEL, XVIII.

And the word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, 2. What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? 3. As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. 4. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. 5. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, 6. And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, 7. And hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; 3. He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, 9. Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God.

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws; and in like manner sometimes unjust reflections occasion just vindications; evil proverbs beget good prophecies. Here is,

1. An evil proverb commonly used by the Jews in their captivity. We had one before, (ch. xii. 22.) and a reply to it; here we have another. That sets God's justice at defiance, The days are prolonged, and every vision fails. The threatenings are a jest. This charges him with injustice, as if the judgments executed were a wrong; "You use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, now that it is led captive, the judgment of God, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," we are punished for the sins of our ancestors, which is as great an absurdity in the divine regimen, as if the children should have their teeth set on edge, or stuffed, by the fathers' eating sour grapes, whereas, in the order of natural causes, if men eat or drink any thing amiss, they only themselves shall suffer. No way, but it may be owned that there was some occasion given for this proverb. God had often said that he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, especially the sin of idolatry, intending thereby to express the evils of sin, or of that sin, his detestation of it, and just indignation against it, and the heavy punishments he would bring upon idolaters, and that parents might be required to bear the consequences of their affection to their children, and that children might not be drawn to sin by their reverence for their parents. He had likewise often declared by his prophets, that in bringing the present ruin upon Judah and Jerusalem he had an eye to the sins of Manasseh and other preceding kings; for looking upon the nation as a body politic, and punishing them with national judgments for national sins, and admitting the maxim in our law, that a corporation never dies, reckoning with them now for the iniquities of former ages, was but like making a man, when he is old, to possess the iniquities of his youth, Job xiii. 26. And there is no unrighteousness with God in doing so. But, 2. They intended it as a reflection upon others, and an instance drawn against him in his proceedings against them. Thus far is right, which is implied in this proverbial saying, That they who are guilty of wilful sin, eat sour grapes, they do that which they will feel from, sooner or later. The grapes may look well enough in the temptation, but they will be bitter as bitterness itself in the reflection. They will set the sinner's teeth on edge; when conscience is awakened, and sets the sin in order before them, it will spoil the relish of their comforts as when the teeth are set on edge. But they suggest it as unreasonable that the children should smart for the father's folly, and feel the pain of that which they never tasted the pleasure of, and that God was unrighteous in thus taking vengeance, and could not justify it. See how wicked the reflection is, how daring the impudence; yet see how witty it is, and how sly the comparison. Many that are impious in their jeers, are ingenuous in their jests; and thus the malice of hell against God and religion is insinuated and propagated. It is here put into a proverb, and that proverb used, commonly used, they had it up ever and anon. And though it was only a prosaical saying, yet they sheltered themselves under it as a shield against the imputation of downright blasphemy. Now by this it appears that they were unhumbled under the rod, for, instead of condemning themselves and justifying God, they condemned him and justified themselves; but wo to him that thus strives with his Maker.

1. A just reproof of, and reply to, this proverb; What mean ye to use it? That is the reproof; "Do you intend hereby to try it out with God? Or can you think any other than that you will hereby provoke him to be angry with you till he has consumed you? Is this the way to reconcile yourselves to him, and make your peace with him?" The reply follows, in which God tells them,

1. That the use of the proverb should be taken away. This is said, it is sworn; (v. 3.) Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb; or, as it may be read, Ye shall not have the use of this parable. The taking away of this parable is made the matter of a promise, Jer. xxxi. 29. Here it is made the matter of a threatening; there it intimates that God will pass the judgment of them in ways of mercy; here it intimates that God will pass the judgment of them in ways of judgment. He will so punish them for this impudent saying, that they shall not dare to use it any more; as in another case Jer. xxiii. 34,
36. God will find out effectual ways to silence those cavillers. Or, God will so manifest both to themselves and others that they have wickedness of their own enough to bring all these desolating judgments upon them, that they shall no longer for shame lay it upon the sins of their fathers that they were thus dealt with; for their own consciences shall tell them that the Lord deals with them as he ought; 'but you yourselves have eaten the same sour grapes that your fathers ate before you, or else your teeth had not been set on edge.'

2. That really the saying itself was unjust, and a causeless reflection upon God's government. For, (1.) God does not punish the children for their father's sins, unless they tread in their steps, and fill up their measure of sin, and then have no reason to complain, for, whatever they suffer, it is less than their own sin has deserved. And when God speaks of visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, that is so far from putting any hardship upon children, to whom he only renders according to their works, that it accounts for God's patience with the parents, whom he therefore does not punish immediately, because he lays up their iniquity for their children, Job xxii. 19. (2.) It is only in temporal calamities that children (and sometimes innocent ones) fare the worse for their parents' wickedness, and God can alter the property of those calamities, and make them work for good to those that are visited with them; but as to spiritual and eternal misery, (and that is the case here spoken of,) the children shall be by no means spared for the parents' sins. This is here showed at large; and it is a wonderful piece of censernescence, that the great God is pleased to reason the case with such wicked and unreasonable men, that he did not immediately strike them dumb or dead, but vouchsafed to state the matter before them, that he may be clear when he is judged. 

[1.] He asserts and maintains his own absolute and incontestable sovereignty; Behold, all souls are mine, v. 4. God here claims a property in all the souls of the children of men, one as well as another; First, Souls are his. He that is the Maker of all things, is in a particular manner the Father of spirits, for his image is stamped on the souls of men; it was so in the creation. It is so in their regeneration, for the spirit of life is given him within him, and is therefore called the God of the spirits of all flesh, of embedded spirits. Secondly, All souls are his, all created by him and for him, and accountable to him. As the soul of the father, so the soul of the son, is mine. Our earthly parents are only the fathers of our flesh, our souls are not theirs, God challenges them. Now from hence it follows, for the clearing of this matter, that God may certainly do what he pleases both with fathers and children, and none may say unto him, What dost thou! He that gave us our being does us no wrong if he takes it away again, much less when he only takes away some of the supports and comforts of it; it is as absurd to quarrel with him as for the thing formed to say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? That God as certainly hears a good will both to father and son, and will put no hardship upon either. We are sure that God hates nothing that he has made, and therefore (speaking of the adult who are capable of acting for themselves) he has such a kindness for all souls, that none die but through their own default. All souls are his, and therefore he is not partial to any one for how they like themselves. God's affections do not subscribe to his interest in us, and dominion over us. He says, All souls are mine; let us answer, "Lord, my soul is thine, I devote it to thee to be employed for thee, and made happy in thee." It is with good reason that God says, "My son, give me thy heart, for it is my own;" to which we must yield; "Father, take my heart, it is thy own."  

[2.] Though God might justify himself, by insisting upon his sovereignty, yet he waves that, and lays down the equitable and unexceptionable rule of judgment, by which he will proceed as to particular persons; and it is, First, That he persists in sin shall certainly die, his iniquity shall be his ruin. The soul that sins, it shall die, shall die as a soul can die, shall be excluded from the favour of God, which is the life and bliss of the soul, and shall lie for ever under his wrath, which is its death and misery. Sin is the act of the soul, the body is but the instrument of unrighteousness, it is called the sin of the body, Rom. vi. 21. And therefore the punishment of sin is the tribulation and anguish of the soul, Rom. i. 9. Secondly, The righteous man that perseveres in his righteousness, shall certainly live. If a man be just, have a good principle, a good spirit and disposition, and, as an evidence of that, do judgment and justice, (v. 5.) he shall surely live, saith the Lord God, v. 9. He that makes conscience of conforming himself in every thing to the will of God, that makes it his business to serve God, and his aim to glorify God, he shall without fail be happy here, and for ever in the love and favour of God; and wherein he comes short of his duty, it shall be forgiven him, through a Mediator.

Now here is part of the character of this just man. He is capable of making himself clean from the pollutions of sin, and at a distance from all the appearances of evil.

(1.) From sins against the second commandment. In the matters of God's worship he is jealous, for he knows God is so. He has not only not sacrificed in the high places to the images there set up, but he has not so much as eaten upon the mountains, not even any communion with idolaters by eating that was sacrificed to idols, 1 Cor. x. 20. He would not only not kneel with them at their altars, but not sit with them at their tables in their high places. He detests not only the idols of the heathen, but the idols of the house of Israel, which were not only allowed of, but generally applauded and adored, by those that were accounted the professing people of God. He has not only not worshipped those idols, but he has not so much as lifted up his eyes to them; he has not given them a favourable look, has had no regard at all to them, neither desired their favour, nor dreaded their frowns. He has observed so many bewitched by them, that he has not dared so much as to look at them, lest he should be taken in the snare. The eyes of idolaters are said to go a-moor- ing, Ezek. vi. 9. See Duit. iv. 19.

(2.) From sins against the seventh commandment. He is careful to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness; and therefore he has not dared to defile his neighbour's wife, nor said or done any thing which had the least tendency to corrupt or debauch her, no, nor will he make any undue approaches to his own wife when she is not with force and arms spoilt any by violence; not spoiled them of their goods or estates, much less of their liberties and lives, v. 7. Oppression and violence were the sins of the old world, that brought the deluge, and are sins of which still God is, and will be, the Avenger. Nay, he is one that
has not lent his money upon usury, nor taken increase; (v. 8.) though, being done by contract, it may seem free from injustice, (Volent non fit injuria—What is done to a person with his own consent, is no injury to him,) yet, as far as it is forbidden by the law, he dares not do it. A moderate usury they were allowed to receive from strangers, but not from their brethren. A just man will not take advantage at his neighbour's necessity to make a prey of him, nor indulge himself in ease and idleness, to live upon the sweat and toil of others, and therefore will not make increase from those who cannot make increase of what they lend them; nor be rigorous in exacting what was agreed for from those who by the will of God are disabled to pay it, though he is willing to share in less as well as profits. Quis sentit commodum, sentire debet et onus.—He who enjoys the benefit, should bear the burthen.

2. He makes conscience of doing the duties of his place. He has restored the pledge to the poor debtor, according to the law, (Exod. xxii. 26.) “If thou take thy neighbour's raiment for a pawn, the raiment that is for necessary use, thou shalt deliver it to him again, that he may sleep in his own bedclothes.” Nay, he has not only restored to the poor that which was their own, but has given his bread to the hungry. Observe, It is called his bread, because it is honestly come by; that which is given to some, is not unjustly taken from others; for God has said, I hate robbery for burnt-offerings. Worldly riches are upon them that oppress, and the poor man is楠邦, who therefore would not give it to David; (1 Sam. xxvii. 11.) yet let them know that it is not so their own but that they are bound to do good to others with it. Clothes are necessary as well as food, and therefore this just man is so charitable as to cover the naked also with a garment, v. 7. The coats which Dorcas had made for the poor were not misused as witnesses of her charity. Acts ix. 39. This just man has withdrawn his hands from iniquity, (v. 8.) if at any time he has been drawn in through inadvertency to that which afterward has appeared to him to be a wrong thing, he does not persist in it, because he has begun it, but withdraws his hand from that which he now perceives to be iniquity, for he executes true judgment between himself and his neighbour. As he was not guilty in doing it; as a judge, as a witness, as a juryman, as a referee, and in all commerce, is concerned that justice be done, that no man be wronged, that he who is wronged be righted, and that every man have his own, and is ready to interpose himself, and do any good office, in order hereunto. This is his character toward his neighbour; yet it will not suffice that he be just and true to his brother, to complete his character, he must be so to his God likewise, v. 9.

He has walked in my statutes, those which relate to the duties of his immediate worship, he has kept those and all his other judgments, has had respect to them all, has made it his constant care and endeavour to conform to and come up to them all, to deal truly, that so he may approve himself faithful to his covenant with God, and, having famed himself to God, may not treacherously depart from him, or dissemble with him; this is a just man, and living he shall live; he shall certainly live, shall have life, and shall have it more abundantly; shall live truly, live comfortably, live eternally. Keep the commandments, and thou shalt enter into life, Matth. xix. 17.

10. If he begot a son that is a robber, a shedder of blood, and that doeth the like to any one of these things, 11. And that doeth not any of those duties, but even hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife, 12. Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination, 13. Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all those abominations; he shall surely die, his blood shall be upon him. 14. Now, lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, 15. That hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbour's wife, 16. Neither hath oppressed any, hath not withheld the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, 17. That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live. 18. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. 19. Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

God, having laid down the prophet the general rule of judgment, that he will render eternal life to them that patiently continue in well-doing, but ing dallation and wrath to them that do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, (Rom. ii. 7, 8.) comes, in these verses, to show that men's parentage and relation shall not alter the case either one way or other.

I. He applies it largely, and particularly, both ways. As it was in the royal line of the kings of Judah, so it often happens in private families, that goodly parents have wicked children, and wicked parents have godly children. Now here he shows, 1. That a wicked man shall certainly perish in his iniquity, though he was the son of a pious father. If that righteous man before described beget a son whose character is the reverse of his father's, his condition will certainly be so too. (1.) It is supposed, as no uncommon case, but a very melancholy one, that the child of a very godly father, notwithstanding all the instructions given him, the good education he has had, and the needful rebukes that have been given him, and the restraints he has been laid under, after all the pains taken with him, and prayers put up for him, may yet prove notoriously wicked and vile, the grief of his father, the shame
of his family, and the curse and plague of his gene-
ration. He is here supposed to allow himself in all his
excesses and enormities which his father had carefully avoided, and to shake off all those gross
duties which his father made conscience of and took
satisfaction in; he endeavors all that his father did, and
goes counter to his example in every thing. He is
here described to be a highwayman, a robber, and a
shredder of blood; an idolater, he has eaten upon
the mountains, (v. 11.) and has lifted up his eyes to
the south, and has come at length not only to feast with the idolatrous
but to sacrifice with them, which is here called
committing abomination, for the way of sin is down-
hill. He is a adulterer, he has defiled his neighbour's
wife; an oppressor even of the poor and needy, he
robs the spital, and squeezes those who, he knows,
cannot right themselves, and takes a pride and
pleasure in tripping upon the weak, and impover-
ishing those that are poor already. He takes
away from those to whom he should give. He has
stolen by violence and open force, he has given for-
thorn upon usury, and so spoiled by contract; and
has not restored the pledge, but unjustly detained it,
even when the debt was paid. Let those good
parents that have wicked children, not look upon their
case as singular; it is a case put here; and by it we
see how great the sin is, and the necessity of special
good; nor is the race always to the swift, or the battle to the
strong, for then the children that are well taught would do well, but
God will let us know that his grace is his own, and
his Spirit a free Agent, and that though we are tied
to give our children a good education, he is not tied to
bless it. In this, as much as any thing, appear
the true grace of God and the necessity of special
grace. (2.) We are here assured that this
wicked man shall perish for ever in his iniquity,
notwithstanding this being the son of a good father. He may perhaps prosper awhile in the world, for
the sake of the pity of his ancestors, but, having
committed all these abominations, and never re-
pented of them, he shall not live, he shall not be
happy in the favour of God; though he may escape
the sword of men, he shall not escape the curse of
God, he shall surely die, he shall be for ever miser-
able; his blood shall be upon him, he may thank
himself, he is his own destroyer; and his relation to a
good father will be so far from standing him in
stead, that it will aggravate his sin and his condem-
nation. It made his sin the more heinous, nay, it
made him really the more vile and profligate, and,
certainty, will make his misery hereafter the more
tolerable.

2. That a righteous man shall be certainly hap-

py, though he is the son of a wicked father.
Though the father did eat the sour grapes, if the
children do not meddle with them, they shall fare
ever the worse for that. Here,
(1.) It is supposed, and, blessed be God, it is sometimes
true, that the son of an ungodly father may be godly; that, observing how fatal his
father's errors were, he may be so wise as to take
warning, and not tread in his father's steps, v. 14.
Ordinarily, children partake of the parents' temper, and
are drawn in to imitate their example; but here the son, instead of seeing his father's sins, and,
though he sees, does not like, sees them, and dreads
doing the like. If God sometimes does not
unroll the fruit of the body, or grant the
forms, but God sometimes does: take a branch
from a wild olive, and grafts it into one good
Wicked Ahaz begets a good Hezekiah, who sees
all his father's sins which he has done, and, though
he will not, like Ham, proclaim his father's shame,
or make the worse of it, yet he loathes it, and blushes
at it, and thinks the worse of sin because it was the
reproach and ruin of his own father. He considers, and does not such like; he considers how ill it
be came his father to do such things, what offence
it was to God and all good men, what a wondrous dishonour he gets by it, and, consequently, he
brought into his family, and therefore he does not
such like. Note. If we did but duly consider the
ways of wicked men, we should all dread being asso-
ciates with them, and followers of them. The
particulars here are again enumerated almost in the
same words with that character given of the just
man, (v. 6, &c.) to whom guiltily were made weak in the
day of his spirit, so as not to remember his sin. Thus
described, he was, when he took care to avoid his father's sins, took care to imitate his grandfather's virtues; and if we look back, we shall find some examples for our imita-
tion, as well as others for our admonition. This
just man cannot only say, as the Pharisee, I am no
adulterer, no extortioner, no oppressor, no usurer, no
idolater; but he has given his bread to the hungry,
and covered the naked; he has taken off his hand
from the poor; where he found his father had put
hardships upon poor servants, tenants, neighbours,
he eased their burthen; he did not say, "What my
father has done I will abide by, and if it was a
fault it was his, and not mine;" as Rechoboam, who
continued the taxes his father had imposed: no,
he takes his hand off from the poor, and restores
the property. Thus he has executed God's judgments, and walk-
ed in his statutes, not only done his duty for once,
but gone on in a course and way of obedience.

(2.) We are assured that the graceless father
alone shall die in his iniquity, but his gracious son
shall fare never the worse for it. As for his father,
(v. 18.) because he was a cruel oppressor, and
did hurt, may, because, though he had wealth and
power, he did not with it do good among his people;
no, even he, great as he is, shall die in his iniquity,
and be undone for ever; but he that kept his intei-
guity shall surely live, shall be easy and happy, and
he shall not die for the iniquity of his father.
Perhaps his father's wickedness has lessened his estate,
and weakened his interest, but it shall be no prejui-
cice at all to his acceptance with God and his etern-
al welfare.

II. He appeals to themselves then, whether they
did not wrong God with their pravert. Thus plain
the case is, and yet we say, Does not the son bear
the iniquity of the father? No, he does not; he shall
not if he will himself do that which is lawful and
right, v. 19. But this people that bare the iniquity
of their fathers, had not done that which is lawful
and right, and therefore must answer for their own
sin, and had no reason to complain of God's
proceedings against them as at all unjust, though
they had reason to complain of the bad example
their fathers had left them as very unkind. Our
fathers have sinned, and are not, and we have
borne their iniquity, Lam. v. 7. It is true that
there is a curse entailed upon wicked Families, but
this is true only as it appears from the conse-
quence and reform; let the impenitent and un-
reformed therefore thank themselves if they fall
under it. The settled rule of judgment is therefore
repeated; (v. 20.) The soul that sinneth, it shall
die, and not another for it. What direction God
has given to earthly judges, (Deut. xxiv. 16.) he
will himself pursue; The son shall not die, not die
eternally, for the iniquity of his father, but shall be
in the steps of it, nor the father for the iniquity of
the son, if he endeavour to do his duty for the
preventing of it. In the day of the revelation of the
righteous judgment of God, which is 'now clouded'
and eclipsed, the righteousness of the righteous
shall appear before all the world, to be upon him to
his everlasting comfort and honour, upon him as a
robe, upon him as a crown; and the wickedness of
21. But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. 23. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways, and live? 24. But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass, that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. 25. Yet ye say, 'The way of the Lord is not equal.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal? 26. When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done, he shall die. 27. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. 28. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. 29. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the Lord is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?

We have here another rule of judgment which God will go by in dealing with us, by which is farther demonstrated the equity of his government. The former showed that God will reward or punish according to the change made in the family or succession, for the better or for the worse; here it shows that he will reward or punish according to the change made in the persons, whether for the better or for the worse. While we live in this world, we are in a state of probation; the time of trial lasts as long as the time of life, and according as we are found at last, it will be with us to eternity.

Now see here,

1. The case fairly stated, much of it had been before; (ch. iii. 18, &c.) and here it is laid down once, v. 21—25, and again, v. 26—28, because it is a matter of very importance, a matter of life and death, of life and death eternal. Here we have,

a. A fair invitation given to wicked people, to turn from their wickedness. Assurance is here given us, that if the wicked will turn, he shall surely live, v. 21, 27. Observe, (1.) What is required to denominate a man a true convert; how he must be qualified, that he may be entitled to this act of indemnity. (2.) The first step toward conversion is consideration; (v. 28.) Because he considers, and turns. The reason why sinners go on in their evil ways is, because they do not consider what will be in the end thereof; but if the prophet once come to himself, if he looketh down, and consider a little how bad his state is, and how easily it may be turned, he will soon return to his father, (Luke xv. 17.) and the adulteress to her first husband, when she considers that then it was better with her than now, Hos. ii. 7. (2.) This consideration must produce an aversion to sin. When he considers he must turn away from his wickedness, that denotes a change in the heart; he must turn from his sin, that denotes a change in the life; he must break off from all his evil courses, and, wherein he has done iniquity, must resolve to do so no more, and this from a principle of hatred to sin. What have I to do any more with idols? (3.) This aversion to sin must be universal; he must turn from all his sins and all his transgressions, without a reserve for any Deliah, any house of Rimmon. We cannot rightly turn from sin, unless we truly hate it, and we do not truly hate sin, as sin, if we do not hate all sin. (4.) This must be accompanied with a conversion to God and duty; he must keep all God's statutes, (for the obedience, if it be sincere, will be universal,) and must do that which is lawful and right, which agrees with the word and will of God, which we must turn to, and live by, and not the wills of the flesh, and the way of the world.

2. What is promised to those that do thus turn from sin to God. (1.) They shall save their souls alive, v. 27. They shall surely live, they shall not die, (v. 21.) and again, (v. 28.) whereas it was said, The soul that sineth shall die, yet let not those that have sinned despair but the threatened death be prevented, if they will but turn from sin in time. When David penitently acknowledges, I have sinned, he is immediately assured of his pardon; "The Lord has taken away the sin, thou shalt not die, (2 Sam. xii. 13.) then shall not die eternally." He shall surely live; he shall be restored to the favour of God, which is the life of the soul, and shall not lie under his wrath, which is as messengers of death to the soul. (2.) The sins they have repented of, and forsaken, shall not rise up in judgment against them, nor shall they be so much as upbraided with them; All his transgressions that he has committed, though numerous, though heinous, though very provoking to God, and redeeming very much to his dishonour, yet they are not mentioned against him, (v. 22.) not mentioned against him; not only they must not be imputed to him to ruin him, but in the great day they shall not be remembered against him to grieve or shame him; they shall be covered, shall be sought for, and not found. This speaks the fulness of pardoning mercy; when sin is forgiven, it is blot out, it is remembered no more. (3.) In their righteousness, as if that were the principal object of their promise, and bliss, and an atonement for their sins, but in their righteousness, which qualifies them for all the blessings purchased by the Mediator, and is itself one of those blessings.

3. What encouragement a repenting, returning sinner has to hope for pardon and life according to all that was promised, his confidence that his obedience for the future can never be a vain and empty compensation for his former disobedience; but he has this to support himself with, that God's nature, property, and delight, is to have mercy and to forgive, for he has said, (v. 23.) Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? No, by means, you never had any cause given you to think so. It is true, God has determined to punish sinners, his justice calls for it, and, pursuant to that,
impeccant sinners will lie for ever under a wrath and curse; that is the will of his decree; his consequent will, but it is not his antecedent will, the will of his delight; though the righteousness of his government requires that sinners die, yet the goodness of his nature objects against it; How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? It is spoken here comparatively; he has no pleasure in the ruin of sinners, for he would rather they should turn from their ways and live, for he contends that his mercy is glorified in their salvation, than when his justice is glorified in their damnation.

2. A warning given to righteous people, not to turn from their righteousness, v. 24.-26. Here is, (1.) The character of an apostate, that turns away from his righteousness; he never was in sincerity a righteous man, (as appears by that of the apostate, (1 John ii. 19.) If they had been men, they would, no doubt, have continued with us;) but he passed for a righteous man, had the denomination and all the external marks of a righteous man, he thought himself one, and others thought him one, but he throws off his profession, leaves his first love, disowns and forsakes the truth and ways of God, and so turns away from his righteousness as one sick, and wastes and ruins himself. (2.) The doom of an apostate; Shall he live because he was once a righteous man? No, Factum non dictur good non perseveret—That which does not abide, is not said to be done. In his trespass, (v. 24.) and for his iniquity, (that is the meritorious cause of his ruin,) for the iniquity that he has done, he shall die, shall die eternally, v. 26. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. But will not his former professions and performances stand him in some stead—will they not avail at least to mitigate his punishment? No, All his righteousness that he has done, though ever so much applauded by men, shall not be mentioned so as to be either a credit or a comfort to him; the righteousness of an apostate is forgotten, as the wind吹 about a lamp, and it is extinguished. Under the law, the Nazarite was polluted he lost all his foregoing days of his separation, (Numb. vi. 12;) so that those who have begun in the spirit and end in the flesh, may reckon all their past services and sufferings in vain; (Gal. iii. 3, 4;) unless we persevere we lose what we have gained, 2 John viii.

II. An appeal to the conscience of every one of the house of Israel, through very proper warnings; concerning God's equity in all these proceedings; for he will be justified, as well as sinners judged, out of their own mouths. 1. The charge they drew up against God is blasphemous, v. 25, 29. The house of Israel has the impudence to say, The way of the Lord is not equal; than which nothing could be more absurd as well as impious. He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that fashioneth the heart, shall he not understand? Under the law the external rule of good and evil, right and wrong? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? No doubt, he shall; he cannot do otherwise. 2. God's reasonings with them are very gracious and condescending, for even these blasphemies God would rather have convinced and saved than condemned. One would have expected that God should have imprecated a greater punishment on the man of his own house, making those that imprecated it eternal monuments of it. Must these be suffered to draw another breath, that have once breathed out such wickedness as this? Shall that tongue ever speak again and threaten sinners, or be in hell, that has once said, The ways of the Lord are not equal? Yes, because this is the day of God's patience, he vouchsafes to give them up, and he requires them to own it, for it is so plain, that they cannot deny, (1.) The equity of his ways; Are not my ways equal? No doubt they are. He never lays upon man more than is right. In the present punishments of sinners and the afflictions of his own people, yes, and in the eternal damnation of the impenitent, The ways of the Lord are not equal. (2.) The iniquity of their ways; Are not your ways unequal? It is plain that they are, and the troubles you are in you have brought upon your own heads. God does you no wrong, but you have wronged yourselves. The foolishness of man perverts his way, makes that unequal, and then his heart frets against the Lord, as if his ways were unequal, Prov. xix. 3. In all our disputes with God, in all his controversies with us, it will be found that his ways are equal, but ours are unequal, that he is in the right, and we are in the wrong.

30. Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. 31. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 32. For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

We have here the conclusion and application of this whole matter. After a fair trial at the bar of right reason, the verdict is brought in on God's side, it appears that his ways are equal; judgment therefore is next to be given; and one would think it should be a judgment of condemnation, nothing short of Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; but behold a miracle of mercy; the day of grace and divine patience is yet lengthened out; and therefore, though God will at last judge every one according to his own ways, yet he will not cast away the soul that is gracious, and closes all with a call to repentance, and a promise of pardon upon repentance.

1. Here are four necessary duties that we are called to; all amounting to the same. (1.) We must repent; we must change our mind, and change our ways; we must be sorry for what we have done amiss, and ashamed of it, and go as far as we can toward the putting it away again. (2.) We must turn ourselves from all our transgressions, (v. 30.) and again, v. 32. Turn yourselves, face about; turn from sin, may, turn against it as the enemy you hate, turn to God as the Friend you love. (3.) We must cast away from us all our transgressions, we must abandon and forsake them with a resolution never to return to them again; give sin a bill of divorce, break all the leagues we have made with it, throw it overboard, as the mariners did Jonah, for it has raised the storm; cast it out of the soul, and crucify it, as a malefactor. (4.) We must make us a new heart, and a new spirit. This was the matter of a promise, ch. xi. 19. here it is the matter of a precept; we must do our endeavour, and then God will not be wanting to us to give us his grace. So must well explain this precept: Because thou jument non impossibile, sed jubendo monet et facere good fossis, et petere good non fossis—God does not exjoin impossibilities, but by his commands admonishes
Here are,

1. Orders given to the prophet to bewail the fall of the royal family, which had long made so great a figure by virtue of a covenant of royalty made with David and his seed, so that the eclipsing and extinguishing of it are justly lamented by all who know what value to put upon the covenant of our God:

Then I went and sat down in a plain place; and, behold, one stood by me, as the appearance of meat, and it said to me, What seest thou? And I answered him, I see a thing: a bullock which eateth grass; and an oxide of iron, which watereth it. Then said he to me, What meanest thou by this bullock which eateth grass? So I answered, What be these, my lord? Then he said unto me, These also be the bullocks which sow the field, and gather the food thereof. And he said, What meanest thou by this stone, which I see? And I answered, What be these, my lord? Then said he unto me, These are the heads of the mountains which shall be given unto thee for the bullocks. And he said, What be they that are come hither to thee? I answered, They be they that come down from the north with the voice of singing to prophesy in the temple. Then said he unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see two baskets standing before the temple; the one full of fresh bread, and the other empty. Then said he unto me, Whose are these, the one full and the other empty? And I said, They be the Lord's. And he said, The word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. The cities of the south shall be full of the wealth of the cities of the north, and the wealth of the south shall be filled with the wealth of the south. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, as he hath spoken concerning me; saying, Behold, the man whose house is the sanctuary, and shall come to me as a people that do righteousness; and as a people that seek me with all their heart; and as to walk in my statutes, and to keep my judgments, and to do them. And ye have broken the yoke of my百姓, and have cast off the yoke of my servants.

II. Instructive application may be thus:

1. He must compare the kingdom of Judah to a lioness; so wretchedly degenerated was it from what it had been formerly, when it sat as a queen among the nations, v. 2. What is thy mother? Thine, O king? We read of Solomon's crown wherewith his mother crowned him, his people, Cant. iii. 11. Thine, O Judah! The royal family is as a mother to the kingdom, a mother of its whelps, fierce, and cruel, and ravenous. When they had left their divinity, they soon lost their humanity too; and when they feared not God, neither did they regard man. She lay down among lions; God had said, The people shall dwell alone, but they mingled themselves with the nations, and learned their works. She nourished her whelps among young lions, taught the young princes the way of tyrants, which was then used by the arbitrary kings of the east, filled their heads betimes with notions of their absolute, despotic power, and possessed them with a belief that they had a right to enslave their subjects, that their liberty and property lay at their mercy: thus she nourished her whelps among young lions.

2. He must compare the kings of Judah to lions' whelps, v. 3. For he had compared withal, the weak and the desolate house of David, to a lion's whelp, for its being strong and formidable to its enemies abroad; (Gen. xliv. 9.) He is an old lion, who shall stir him up? And if they had adhered to the divine law and promise, God had preserved to them the high, and majesty, and dominion of a lion; and does it in Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah; but these lions' whelps have been weak and tender, cruel and oppressive to them, preyed upon their estates and liberties; and when they thus by their tyrannism made themselves a terror to these whom they ought to have protected, it was just with God to make those a terror to them, whom otherwise they might have subdued. Here is lamented.

1. The sin and fall of Jehovah, one of the whelps of this lioness. He became a young lion,
EZEKIEL, XIX.

v. 3.) he was made king, and thought he was made so that he might do what he pleased, and gratify his own ambition, conceit, and revenge, as he had a mind; and so he was soon master of all the arts of tyranny, he learned to catch the prey, and devour men; when he got power in his hand, all that had before in any thing disobliged him were made to feel his resentments, and become a sacrifice to his rage. But what were the effects of his wickedness and pride in the land? the nations heard of him, (v. 4.) heard how furiously he drove, at his first coming to the crown, how he trampled upon all that is just and sacred, and violated all his engagements, so that they looked upon him as a dangerous neighbour, and prosecuted him accordingly, as a multitude of shepherds is called forth against a lion roaring on his prey, Isa. xxvi. 5. And he was taken, as a beast of prey, in the forest. His own subjects durst not stand up in defence of their own liberties, but God raised up a foreign power that soon put an end to his tyranny, and brought him in chains to the land of Egypt. Thither Jehoahaz was carried captive, and never heard of more.

(2.) The like sin and fall of his successor Jehoiakim. The kingdom of Judah for some time exercised a certain authority over Egypt, but a length despaired of it, and then took another of the lion's whelps, and made him a young lion, v. 5. And he, instead of taking warning by his brother's fate to use his power with equity and moderation, and to seek the good of his people, trod in his brother's steps: he went up and down among the lions, v. 6. He consulted and conversed with those that were base and luxurious; he enriched himself, and took his measures from them, as Rehoboam took the advice of the rash and hot-headed young men; and so he soon learned to catch the prey, and he devoured men, (v. 6.) he seized his subjects' estates, fined and imprisoned them, filled his treasury by rapine and injustice, sequestrations and confiscations, fines and forfeitures, and swallowed up all that stood in his way; he had got the art of discovering what effects men had, that lay concealed, and where the treasures were, which they had hoarded up; he knew their desolate places, (v. 7.) where they hid their money, and sometimes hid themselves; he knew where to find both out; and by his oppression he laid waste their cities, depopulated them by forcing the inhabitants to remove their families; he reduced the country to desolation, and the country villages were deserted; and though there was great plenty, and a fulness of all good things, yet people quitted it all for fear of the voice of his roaring. He took a pride in making all his subjects afraid of him, as the lion makes all the beasts of the field to tremble, (Amos iii. 8.) and by his terrible roaring so astonished them, that they fell down for fear, and did not stir or venture to make their escape, became an easy prey to him, as they say the lions do. He hector'd, and threatened, and talked big, and bullied people out of what they had. Thus he thought to have established his own power, but it had a contrary effect, it did but hasten his own ruin; (v. 8.) The nations set against him on every side, to restrain and reduce his exorbitant powers to some place of safety. He made his people so afraid of him, that they longed for a change, and would fain have gone out of his land, and made their common safety; and they spread their net over him, formed designs against him. God brought against Jehoiakim bands of the Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, with the Chaldees, (2 Kings xxiv. 2.) and he was taken in their pit. Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to carry him to Babylon, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 6. They put this lion within grates, bound him with a chain, and carried him all the way to Babylon, v. 9. What became of him we know not, but his voice was no where heard roaring upon the mountains of Israel. There was an end of his tyranny; he was buried with the burial of an ass, (Jer. xxii. 19.) though he had been as a lion, the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. Note, The righteousness of God is to be acknowledged when those who have terrified and enslaved others are themselves terrified and enslaved; when those who by the abuse of their power to destruction which was given them for education, make themselves wild beasts, as roaring lions and ravenous beasts, (Gen. xlix.,) Solomon says a mankind are over the poor people, Prov. xxviii. 15.) are treated as such; when those who, like Ishmael, have taken hand against every man, come at last to have every man's hand against them. It was long since observed that bloody tyrants seldom die in peace, but have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy.

Ad generum Semitis sine cæde et singulino pædi—

Descendit reges et aetae morte tyrannorum—

How few of all the beautiful men, that reign,

Descend in peace to Pluto's dark domain!—Jev.

10. Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood, planted by the waters; she was fruitful, and full of branches, by reason of many waters.

11. And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches. 12. But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit; her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire consumed them. 13. And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. 14. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit, so that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule. This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.

Jerusalem, the mother-city, is here represented by another similitude; she is a vine, and the princes are her branches. This comparison we had before, ch. xxv.

1. Jerusalem is as a vine; the Jewish nation is so; like a vine in the blood, (v. 10.) the blood royal; like a vine in the blood royal; and so the vine which contributes very much to the flourishing and fruitfulness of vines, as if the blood which had been shed had been designed for the fattening and improving of the soil; in such plenty it was shed: and for a time it seemed to have that effect, for she was fruitful and full of branches, by reason of the waters, the many waters near which she was planted. But branches of great wickedness may prosper for a while, and a vine set in blood may be full of branches. Jerusalem was full of able magistrates, men of sense, men of learning and experience, that were strong rods, branches of this vine, of uncommon bulk and strength; or, poles for the support of this vine; for such magistrates are. The boughs of this vine were grown to such maturity, that they were fit to make use of, and to depend for the support of them that bare rule, v. 11. And they are strong rods only that are fit for sceptres, men of strong judgments and strong resolutions, that are fit for magistrates. When the royal family of Judah was numerous, and the courts of justice filled with men of sense and probity, then Jerusalem's stature was exalted among thick branches; when the government is in able hands, a nation is thereby made considerable. Then she was not taken for a weak and lowly vine, but she appeared in her height, a distinguished city, with the multitude of her
branched; Tannum lenta solert inter vithuna cu-

pressii—Midst humble withthes the cyrusssoars.
In thy quietness; so some read that, vi. 10. which
we translate, in thy blood, thou wast such a vine as this.
This Zebediah was quiet and easy under the
king of Babylon's yoke, his kingdom flourished thus.
See how slow God is to anger, how he defers
his judgments, and waits to be gracious.
This was the golden days of Nebuchad-
nezzar—being highly provoked by Zebediah's treachery,
plucked it up in fury, (v. 12.) ruined the city and kingdom, and cut off all the branches of the royal family that fell in his way. 
The vine was cut off close to the ground, though not plucked up by the roots; the east and dried up the fruit that was blasted, the young people fell by the sword, or were carried into captivity. The aspect of it had nothing that was pleasing, the prospect nothing that was promising. Her strong rods were broken and withered, her great men were cut off, judges and magistrates deposed; the vine itself is planted in the wilderness, v. 13. Babylon was as a wilderness to these of the people that were carried captives thither; the land of Judah as was a wilderness wherein he said that the Chaldeans ravaged and laid waste by the Chaldean army; a fruitless land turned into barrenness. It is burnt with fire, (Ps. lxxx. 16.) and that fire is gone out of a rod of her branches; (v. 14.) the king himself, by rebelling against the king of Babylon, has given occasion to all this mischief; she may thank herself for the fire that consumes her; she may thank herself, in some respects, made herself like tinder to the sparks of God's wrath, so that her own branches serve as fuel for her own consumption; in them the fire is kindled, which devoured the fruit, the sins of the elder being the judgments which destroy the younger; her fruit is burned with her own branches, so that she has no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule, none to be found now that are fit for the government, or dare take this ruind under their hand, as the context
implies; (Isa. iii. 6, 7.) none of the house of David left, that have a right to rule, no wise men, or men of sense, that are able to rule. It goes ill with any state, and is like to go worse, when it is thus deprived of the blessings of government, and has no strong rods for scepters. 'Who unto thee, O land, when the king is gone in for it is all gone in; when it has no rod, nor a strong rod. Those strong rods, we have reason to fear, had been instruments of oppression, assistant to the king in catching the prey, and devouring men, and now they are destroyed with him. Tyranny is the inlet to anarchy; and when the red of government is turned into the serpent of oppression, it is just with God to say, "There shall be no strong rod to be an acceptance to rule; but let men be as the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the lesser." Note, This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation. The prophet was bidden, (v. 1.) to take up a lamentation; and having done so, he leaves it to be made use of by others. "It is a lamentation to us of this age, and, the desolations continuing long; it shall be for a lamentation to those that shall come after; the child nuborn will see the destruction made of Ju-
dah and Jerusalem by the present judgments. They were a great while in coming, the bow was long in the drawing; but now that they are come, they will continue, and the sad effects of them will be entailed upon posterity." Note, Those who fill up the measure of their fathers' sins, are laying up in store for their children's sorrows, and furnishing them with matter for lamentation; and nothing is more than the overthrow of government.

CHAP. XX.
In this chapter, 1. The prophet is consulted by some of the elders of Israel, v. 1. 11. He is instructed by his God what answer to give them. He must, 1. Signify God's displeasure against them, v. 2, 3. And, 2. He must show them what just cause he had for that displeasure; by giving them a history of God's grateful dealings with their fathers, and their treacherous dealings with God, (1.) In Egypt; v. 5—9. (2.) In the wilderness, v. 10—26, (3.) In Canaan, v. 27—32. (4.) He must dem-
ounce the judgments of God against them, v. 33—38. (5.) He must show them like to that mercy God had in store for them, when he would bring a remnant of them to repentance, re-establish them in their own land, and set up his sanctuary among them again, v. 37—44. (6.) Here is another word dropped toward Jerusalem, which is explained and enlarged upon in the next chapter, v. 45—49.

1. AND it came to pass in the seventh
year, in the fifth month, the tenth
day of the month, that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me. 2. Then came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, 3. Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Are ye come to inquire of me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 4. Wilt thou judge them, son of man? wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers.

Here is, 1. The occasion of the message which we have in this chapter. That section which we had, ch. xviii., was occasioned by their presum-
ptuous reflections upon God; this was occasioned by their hypocritical inquiries after him. God shall have his own. This prophecy is exactly dated in the seventh year of the captivity, about two years after Ezekiel began to prophesy. God would have them to keep count how long their captivity lasted, that they might see how the years went on toward their deliverance, though very slowly. Certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, not
statedly. (as these, ch. xiii. 1.) but, as it should seem, occasionally, and upon a particular emergence. Whether they were of those that were now in captivity, or elders lately come from Jeru-
salem upon business to Babylon, is not certain; but by what the prophet says to them, (v. 32.) it should seem, their inquiry was, whether now that they were captives in Babylon, at a distance from their country, they would be allowed no temple, but no synagogue, for the worship of God, it was not lawful for them, that they might ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters, to join with them in their worship, and do as the families of these countries do, that serve wood and stone. This matter was palliated as well as it would bear, like Nonius's intending with a bow to bow in the loc. Dr. Rimbault, in compliment to the king; but we have reason to suspect that their inquiry drove at this. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened which ask God leave to go on in sin, and that when they are suffering for it. They came and saw very demurely, and with a show of devotion, before the prophet, ch. xxxiii. 31.

2. The substance of this chapter. (1.) They must be made to know that God is angry with them; he takes it as an affront that they are come to inquire of him, when they are resolved to go on still in their trespasses; As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. v. 3. Their shows of devotion shall be neither acceptable to God nor advantageous to themselves. God will not take notice of their inquiries, nor give them any satisfactory answers. Note, A hypocritical attend-
ance on God and his ordinances is so far from being pleasing to him, that it is provoking.
(2.) They must be made to know that God is justly angry with them; (v. 4.) "Will thou judge them, son of man, when the most righteous art given to the wicked? And therefore wilt thou not plead for them: as an intercessor with God; but surely thou wilt pass sentence on them as a judge for God. See, I have set thee over the nation; wilt thou not declare to them the judgments of the Lord? Cause them therefore to know the abominations of their fathers."

So the orders run now, as before, ch. xvi. 2. He must cause them to know their own abominations. Though their own abominations were sufficient to justify God in the severest of his proceedings against them, yet it would be of use for them to know the abominations of their fathers; that they might see what a righteous thing it was with God now at last to cut them off from being a people, who from the first were such a provoking people.

5. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, In the day when I chose Israel, and lifted up my hand unto the seed of the house of Jacob, and made myself known unto them in the land of Egypt, when I lifted up my hand unto them, saying, I am the Lord your God; 6. In the day that I lifted up my hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; 7. Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. 8. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then said I, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.

9. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.

The history of the ingratitude and rebellion of the people of Israel here begins as early as their beginning; so does the history of man's apostasy from his Maker. No sooner have we read the story of our first parents' creation, than we immediately meet with their rebellion; and we likewise find, (v. 1.) that the house of Jacob, a people designed to represent the body of mankind, both in their dealings with God, and his with them. Here is,

1. The gracious purposes of God's law concerning Israel in Egypt, where they were bond-slaves to Pharaoh. Be it spoken, be it written, to the immortal honour of free grace, that then and there, (1.) He chose Israel to be his name, to be the glory of his people, to be a gracious name, though their condition was bad, and their character worse, that he might have the honour of mending both. He therefore chose them, because they were the seed of the house of Jacob, the posterity of that prince with God, that he might keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers, Deut. vii. 8. (2.) He made himself known to them, by his name Jehovah, (a new name, Exod. vi. 3.;) when by reason of their servitude they had almost lost the knowledge of that name by which he was known to their fathers, God Almighty.

As for liberty, they was already in God's choosing us, so the first step was sure; he made himself known to us. And whatever distance we are at, whatever distress we are in, he that made himself known to Israel even in the land of Egypt, can find us out, and follow us with the gracious discoveries and manifestations of his favour. (3.) He made over himself to them as their judge in covering up my head against them, saying it, and confirming it with an oath, "I am the Lord your God, to whom you are to pay your homage, and from whom and in whom you are to expect your bliss." (4.) He promised to bring them out of Egypt; and made good what he promised. He lifted up his hand, that is, he swore unto them, that he would deliver them; and they being very unworthy, and their deliverance very unlikely, it was requisite that the promise of it should be confirmed by an oath. Or, He lifted up his hand, that is, he put forth his almighty power to do it; he did it with an outstretched arm, Ps. cxxxvi. 12. (5.) He assured them that he would put them in possession of the land of Canaan. He therefore brought them out of Egypt, that he might bring them into Egypt that he might bring them into a second garden of Eden, which was the glory of all lands; so he found it, the climate temperate, the soil fruitful, the situation pleasant, and every thing agreeable, Deut. viii. 7.—xi. 12. However, so he made it, by setting up his sanctuary in it.

2. The reasonable commands he gave them, and the easy conditions of his covenant with them at that time; having told them what they might expect from him, he next tells them what he was to expect from them; it was no more than this, (v. 7.) Cast ye away every man his images that he uses for worship, that are the adorations, but should be the abominations, of his eyes. Let him abominate them, and put them out of his sight, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt. Of these, it seems, many of them were fond; the golden calf was one of them. It was just, and what might reasonably be expected, that, being delivered from the Egyptian slavery, they would quit the Egyptian idolatry; especially when God, at bringing them out, executed judgment upon the gods of Egypt. (Numb. xxxiii. 4.) and thereby showed himself above them. And whatever other idols they might have an inclination to, one would think they should be of the most easy to be cut off from. For, whatever the Egyptian's sake, which had been to them a house of bondage. Yet, it seems, they needed this caution, and it is backed with a good reason, I am the Lord your God, who neither need an assistant, nor will admit a rival.

3. Their unreasonable disobedience to these commands, for which God might justly have cut them off, as soon as he gave them their liberty. (v. 8.) They rebelled against God; not only refused to comply with his particular precepts, but shocked off their allegiance, and in effect told him that they would be at liberty to worship what god they pleased. And even then when God came down to deliver them, and sent Moses for that purpose, yet they would not forsake the idols of Egypt; which perhaps was his design, to prove the effects of his influence upon the Egyptians, (Numb. xi. 5.) for among other things the Egyptians worshipped an onion. It was strange that all the plagues of Egypt would not prevail to cure them of their affection to the idols of Egypt. For this, God said he would pour out his fury upon them, even while they were yet in the midst of the land of Egypt. Justly might he have said, "Let them die with the Egyptians." This magnifies the riches of God's goodness, that he was pleased to
work so great a salvation for them, even then when he saw them ripe for ruin. Well might Moses tell them, It is not for your righteousness, Deut. ix. 4, 5.

4. The wonderful deliverance which God wrought for them, notwithstanding. Though they forfeited the favour while it was in the bestowing, and when God would have healed them, then their unfaith was discovered, (Hos. vii. 1.) yet mercy refrained against judgment, and God did what he designed, purely for his own name’s sake, ver. 9. When nothing in us will furnish him with a reason for his favours, he furnishes himself with one. God made himself known to them in the sight of the heathen, when he ordered Moses publicly to say to Pharaoh, Israel is my son, my first-born, let them go, that they may serve me. Now if it chance we have led them to perish for their wickedness as they deserved, the Egyptians would have reflected upon him for it, and his name would have been polluted, which ought to be sanctified, and shall be so. Note, The church is secured, even when it is corrupt, because God will secure his own honour.

10. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness: 11. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. 12. Moreover also, I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. 13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. 14. But I wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. 15. Yet also I lift up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; 16. Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their hearts were after their idols. 17. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. 18. But I said unto their children in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. 19. I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; 20. And hallow my sabbaths: and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. 21. Notwithstanding the children rebelled against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; they polluted my sabbaths: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish mine anger against them in the wilderness. 22. Nevertheless I withdrew my hand, and wrought for my name’s sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. 23. I lifted up my hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; 24. Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers’ idols. 25. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live: 26. And I polluted them in their own gifts, in that they caused to pass through the fire all that opened the womb, that I might make them desolate, to the end that they might know that I am the Lord. The history of the struggle between the sins of Israel, by which they endeavoured to ruin themselves, and the mercies of God, by which he endeavoured to save them and make them happy, as here continued: and the instances of that struggle in these verses have reference to what passed between God and them in the wilderness, in which God honoured himself, and they shamefully defiled. The story of Israel in the wilderness is referred to in the New Testament, (1 Cor. x. and Heb. iii.) as well as often in the Old, for warning to us Christians; and therefore we are particularly concerned in these verses. Observe, 1. The great things God did for them, which he puts them in mind of, not as grudging them his favours, but to show how ungrateful they had been. And we say, If you call a man ungrateful, you can call him no worse. It was a great favour, (1.) That God brought them forth out of Egypt; (ver. 14.) that he would follow, and bring them into the wilderness, and not into Canaan immediately. It is better to be at liberty in a wilderness than bondslaves in a land of plenty; to enjoy God and ourselves in solitude, than to lose both in a crowd: yet there were many of them who had such base, servile spirits as not to understand this, but, when they met with the difficulties of a desert, wished themselves in Egypt again. (2.) That he gave them the law upon Mount Sinai; (ver. 11.) not only (as the apostle has it,) but more and more added them concerning good and evil, but by his authority bound them from the evil and to the good. He gave them his statutes, and a valuable gift it was. Moses commanded them a law that was the inheritance of the congregation of Israel, Deut. xxxxi. 4. God made them to know his judgments; not only enacted laws against them, but gave them the principles and equity of those laws; with what judgment they were formed. The laws he gave them they were encouraged to observe and obey; for if a man do them, he shall even live in them; in keeping of God’s commandments there is abundance of comfort, and a great reward. Christ says, If thou wilt enter into life, and enjoy it, keep the commandments. Though they who are the most strict in their obedience, are thus far unprofitable servants, that they do no more than is their duty to do, yet it is thus richly recom-
which have tempted me these ten times, shall never see the land which I sware unto their fathers, Numb. xiv. 22, 23. Ps. cv. 11. By their contempt of God's laws, and particularly of his sabbaths, they used to keep a bar in their own door; and that which was at the bottom of their disobedience to God, and their neglect of his institutions, was, a secret affection to the gods of Egypt: Their heart went after their idols. Note, The bias of the mind toward the world and the flesh, the money and the belly, those two great objects of spiritual idolatry, is the root of bitterness, from which springs all disobedience to the divine law; the heart that goes after those idles despises God's judgments.

4. The reservation of a seed that should be admitted upon a new trial, and the instructions given to that seed, v. 17. Though they thus deserved ruin, and were doomed to it, yet mine eye spared them. When he looked upon them he had compassion on them, and did not make an end of them, but reprevented till a new generation was created. Note, It is owing purely to the mercy of God, that he has not long ago made an end of us. This new generation is well educated; Moses in Deuteronomy reported and enforced the laws which had been given to those that came out of Egypt, that their children might have them as it were sounding in their ears a fresh when they entered Canaan; (v. 18.) "I said unto your children in the wilderness, the plan of the end of God, and walk not in the statutes of your fathers; do not imitate their superstitious usages, nor retain their foolish, wicked customs; away with their vain conversation, which has nothing else to say for itself, but that it was received by the tradition of your fathers, 1 Pet. i. 18. Defile not yourselves with their idols, for you see how odious they rendered them to God, and their sabbaths, and their feasts, and their sabbaths, and their feasts, judgments, and hallow my sabbaths," v. 19, 20. Note, If parents be careless, and do not give their children good instructions as they ought, the children ought to make up the want by studying the word of God so much the more carefully and diligently themselves when they grow up. And the bad examples of parents must be made use of by their children for instruction, and not for copying.

5. The revolt of the next generation from God, by which they also made themselves obnoxious to the wrath of God; (v. 21.) The children rebelled against me too. And the same that was said of the fathers' rebellion is here said of the children's, for they were a seed of evil-doers; Moses told them that he knew their rebellion and their stiff neck, Deut. xxvi. 27. And Deut. ix. 24. You have been rebellions against the Lord from the day that I knew you. They walked not in my statutes, v. 21. Nay, They despised my statutes, v. 24. They who disobey God's statutes, despise them, they show that they have a mean opinion of them, and of him whose statutes they are. They polluted God's sabbaths, as their fathers. Note, The profusion of the sabbaths is a blot to the Jewish nation, as the whole holy time will keep nothing pure. It was said of the fathers, (v. 16.) that their heart went after their idols; they worshipped idols because they had an affection for them. It is said of the children, (v. 24.) that their eyes went after their fathers' idols; they were grown atheistical, and had no affection for any gods at all, but they worshipped their parents' idols because they were their fathers', and the kept them before their eyes; they were used to them: and if they must have gods, they would have such as they could see, such as they could manage. And that which aggravated their disobedience to God's statutes was, that if they had done them they might have lived in them, (v. 21.) might have been a happy, thriving people. Note, They that go...
contrary to their duty, go contrary to their interest; they will not obey, will not come to Christ, that they may have life and peace. And it is therefore just that they who will not live and flourish as they might in their obedience, should die and perish in their disobedience. Now the great instance of this generation's rebellion and inclination to idolatry, was the iniquity of Peor, as that of their fathers was the golden calf; then the anger of the Lord was kindled again, Numb. xxv. 1-12. There was a plague in the congregation of the Lord, which, if it had not been seasonably stayed by Phinehas's zeal, had cut them all off; and yet they owned, in Joshua's time, We are not cleansed from that iniquity unto this day, Josh. xxxii. 17. Ps. cxvii. 29.

Then it was that God said he would pour out his fury upon them, (v. 21.) that he lifted up his hand into them in the wilderness, when they were a second time just ready to enter Canaan, that he would scatter them among the heathen. This very thing he said to them by Moses in his parting song, Deut. xxxii. 20. Because they provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, he said, I will hide my face from them; and, v. 26. 27. he said, I would scatter them into corners, were it not that I feared the wrath of the heavens for this thing. (Deut. xxv. 22.) I would pour out my fury upon them, but I with-drew my hand for my name's sake. Note, When the corruptions of the visible church are such, and so provoking, that we have reason to fear its total extirpation, yet then we may be confident of this, to our comfort, that God will secure his own honour, by making good his purpose, that while the world stands, there shall be a church in it.

6. The judgments of God upon them for their rebellion. They would not regard the statutes and judgments by which God prescribed them their duty, but despised them, and therefore God gave them statutes and judgments which were not good, and by which they should not live, v. 25. By which we may understand the several ways by which God punished them while they were in the wilderness—the plague that broke in upon them, the fiery ser-pents, and the like; which, in allusion to the law they had broken, are called judgments, because in-flicted by the justice of God, and statutes, because he gave orders concerning them, and commanded desolations, as sometimes he had commanded deliveries, and afflicted Israel's plagues, as he had done in Egypt. When, (Deut. xxxii. 21.) he said, I would consume them in a moment, (Numb. xvi. 21.) when he said, Take the heads of the people, and hang them up, (Numb. xxv. 4.) when he threatened them with the curse, and obliged them to say, Amen to every curse, (Deut. xxv. 27.) then he gave them judgments by which they should not live; more is implied than is express; they are judgments by which they should die. They that will not be bound by the precepts of the law, shall be bound by the sentence of it; for one way or other the world of God will take hold of men, Zech. i. 6.

Spiritual judgments are the most dreadful; and these God punished them with; the statutes and judgments which the heathen observed in the worship of their idols, were not judged in nature; they were not evil, as such, but they were sin, and such sin as was heathen to be punished; they made his sin to be their punishment; gave them up to a reproachful mind, as he did the Gentile idolaters, (Rom. i. 24, 26.) gave them up to their own hearts' lust, (Ps. lxxxix. 12.) punished them for those superstitions customs which were against the written law, by giving them up to them as wicked, and the very light and law of nature; he left them to themselves to be guilty of the most impure idolatries, as in the worship of Baal-peor; (he polluted them, he permitted them to pollute themselves, in their own gifts, v. 26.) and of the most barbarous idolatries, as in the worship of Moloch, when they caused their children, especially the first-born, (which God had challenged a special property in, The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me,) to pass through the fire, to be sacrificed to their idols; that thus he might make them desolate, not only that he might justly do it, but that he might do it by their own hands; for this must needs be a great weakening to their families, and a diminution of the number and strength of their country. Note, God sometimes makes sin to be its own punish-ment, and yet is not the Author of sin; and there needs no more to make men miserable than to give them up to their own vile appetites and passions. Let them be put into the hand of their own counsels, and they will ruin themselves, and make themselves desolate. And thus God makes them know that he is the Lord, and that he is a righteous God, and that they themselves will be compell'd to own, when they see how much their willful transgressions con-trIBUTE to their own desolations. Note, Those who will not acknowledge God as the Lord their Ruler, shall be made to acknowledge him as the Lord their Judge when it is too late.

27. Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Ye in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. 28. For when I had brought them into the land, for which I lifted up my hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering; there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink-offerings. 29. Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. 30. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers, and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? 31. For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day: and shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you. 32. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Here the prophet goes on with the story of their rebellions, for their further humiliation, and shows, 1. That they that had persisted in them after they were settled in the land of Canaan. Though God had so many times testified his displeasure against their wicked courses, Yet in this, in the very same thing, your fathers have blasphemed me, continued to affront me, that they also have transgressed a tres-pass against me, v. 27. Note, It is a great aggravation of sin, when men will not take warning by the mischievous consequences of sin in those that have gone before them; this is blaspheming God, it is speaking reproachfully of his judgments, as if
they were of no significance, and were not worth regarding.

(1.) God had made good his promise; I brought them into the land that I had sworn to give them. Though their unbelief and disobedience had made the performance slow, and much retarded it, yet it did not make the promise of no effect. They were often very near being cut off in the wilderness, but a step between them and ruin, and yet they came to Canaan at last. Note, Even God's Israel get to heaven by hell-gates; so many are their transgressions, and so strong their corruption, that it is a mercy of mercy when they are happy at last, as hypocrites go to hell by heaven-gates. *The righteous scarcely are saved. Per tota discretionis rerum ten
dimus ad caelum—Ten thousand dangers fill the road to heaven.*

(2.) They had broken his precept by their abominable idolatries. God had appointed them to destroy all the monuments of idolatry; that they might not be tempted to desert his sanctuary; but, instead of defacing them, they fell in love with them, and when they saw every high hill whence they had the most delightful prospects, and all the thick trees where they had the most delightful shades, the former to show forth their pompous idolatries, the latter to conceal their shameful ones, they offered their sacrifices, and made their sweet savour, which showed the deceit of their hearts. *There they presented the provocation of their offering, (v. 28.) their offerings, which, instead of pacifying God, or pleasing him, were highly provoking; sacrifices, which, though costly, yet, being misplaced, were an abomination to the Lord.*

(3.) They obstinately persisted herein, notwithstanding all the admonitions that were given them; (v. 29.) *Then I told them, by my servants the prophets, told them where the high place was, to which they went not, I put them upon considering it, and asking their own consciences concerning it, by putting this question to them, Which is the high place wherein unto you go? What do you find there so inviting, that you will leave God's altars, where he requires your attendance, to frequent such places as he has forbidden you to worship in?* Do you not know that those high places are of a heathenish and idolatrous nature? God by his servants sacrificed they sacrificed to devils, and not to God? Did not Moses tell you so? Deut. xxiii. 17. And will you have fellowship with devils? What is that high place to which you go when you turn your back on God's altars? O foolish Israelites, who or what has bewitched you, that you will forsake the Fountain of life for broken cisterns, that worship which God appoints, and will accept, for his, he forbids, which he abhors, and which he will punish?* And yet the same is called Bemah unto this day; they will have their way, let God and his prophets say what they please to the contrary; they are wedded to their high places; even in the best reigns those were not taken away: you could not prevail to take away the name of Bemah, the high place, out of their mouths, but still they would have their high places. *The sin and the sinner are with difficulty parted.*

2. That generation, after they were unsettled, continued under the dominion of the same corrupt inclinations to idolatry, v. 30. He must say to the present house of Israel, some of whose elders were now sitting before him, *Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers?* After all that God has said against them by a succession of prophets, only done against you by a series of judgments, yet will you take no warning? Will you still be as bad as your fathers were, and commit the same abomina-
tions that they committed? I see you will; you are bent upon returning to the old abominations; you offer your gifts in the high places, and you make your sons to pass through the fire, either you actually do it, or you do it in purpose and imagination, so that your fathers did. Now the elders seem now to have been projecting a coalition with the heathen; their hearts they will reserve for the God of Israel, but their knees they will be at liberty to bow to the gods of the nations among whom they live, that they may have the more respect and the fairer quarter among them. Now the prophet here orders to tell these who are forming the scheme, to this end, regarding the matter between God and Israel, that they should have no comfort nor benefit from either. (1.) They should have no benefit by their consulting in private with the prophets of the Lord; for, because they were hearkening after idols, God would have nothing to do with them; (v. 31.) *As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you; what he had said before, (v. 5.) having largely showed how just it was, he here repeats, as that which he would abide by. Let them not think that they honoured him by their inquiries, nor expect an answer of peace from him, as long as they continued in love and league with their idols. Note, Those reap no benefit by their religion, that are not entire and sincere in it; nor can we have any comfortable communion with God in ordinances of worship unless we be inward and upright with him. We make nothing of our profession, if it be but a profession. Nay, (2.) They should have no benefit from their conforming in public to the practice of their neighbours; (v. 32.) *That which comes into your mind as a piece of refined politics in the present difficult juncture, and which you would be advised to for your own preservation, and that you may not by being singular expose yourselves, and those whom you have occasioned to be exposed to no account to you. You say, We will be as the heathen, we will join with them in worshipping their gods, though at the same time we do not believe them to be gods, but wood and stone, and then we should be taken as the families of the countries, they will not know, or in a little while will have forgotten, that we are Jews, and will allow us the same privileges with their own citizens. Tell them, said God, that this project shall never prosper. Either their neighbours will not admit them to join with them in their worship, or, if they do, will think never the better, but the worse, of them for it, and will look upon them as dissolvers, and not fit to be trusted, who are thus false to their God, and put a cheat upon their neighbours.* Note, There is nothing yet by sinful compliances; and the carnal projects of hypocrites will stand them in no stead. It is only integrity and uprightness that will preserve men, and recommend them to God and man.

33. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; 34. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out; 35. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. 36. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. 37. And I will cause you to pass under the
red; and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: 33. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 39. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. 40. For in my holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the first-fruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. 41. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. 42. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up my hand to give it to your fathers. 43. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils that ye have committed. 44. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name’s sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God. The design which was now on foot among the elders of Israel was, that the people of Israel, being scattered among the nations, should lay aside all their peculiarities, and conform to those among whom they lived; but God had told them that the design should not take effect, v. 32. Now, in these verses, he shows particularly how it should be frustrated. They aimed at the mingling of the families of Israel with the families of the countries; but it will prove in the issue, That the wicked Israelites, notwithstanding their compliances, shall not mingle with them in their prosperity; but shall be distinguished from them for destruction; for idolatrous Israelites, that are apostate from God, shall be sooner and more sorely punished than idolatrous Babylonians that never knew the way of righteousness. Read and tremble at the doom here passed upon them: it is backed with an oath not to be reversed; As I live, saith the Lord God, thus and thus will I deal with you. They think to make both Jerusalem and Babylon their friends by uniting between two; but God threatens that neither of them shall serve for a rest or refuge for them.

1. Babylon shall not protect them, nor any of the countries of the heathen; for God will cast them out of his protection; and then what prince, what people, what place, can serve to be a sanctuary to them? God was Israel’s King of old, and had they continued his loyal subjects, he would have ruled over them with care and tenderness for their good, but now with a stretched-out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over them, v. 33. That power which should have been exercised for their protection, shall be exerted for their destruction. Note, There is no shaking off God’s dominion, rule he will, either with the golden sceptre or with the iron rod; and once that will not yield to the power of his grace, shall be made to sink under the power of his wrath. Now when God is angry with them, though they may think that they shall be lost in the crowd of the heathen among whom they are scattered, they will be disappointed; for (v. 34.) I will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered; and when the rebels are dispersed in battle, those that have been among the scattered, and brought together out of all the places whether they were scattered, to be punished by the sword of justice. They shall be brought into the wilderness of the people, (v. 35.) either into Babylon, which is called a wilderness, (ch. xix. 13.) and the desert of the sea, (Isa. xxi. 1.) or into some place, which, though full of people, shall be to them as the wilderness of Egypt to Israel; a place where God will plead with them face to face, as he pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness of Egypt; (v. 36.) where their cases shall fall, and where he will swear concerning them, that they shall never return to Canaan, as he swore concerning their fathers, that they should never return from Canaan; whereby he will avenge the breach of his law with as much terror as he gave it in the wilderness of Sinai. Note, God has a good action against apostates, and will find not only time, but a proper place to plead with them in upon that action, a wilderness even in the midst of the people for that purpose.

2. Israel shall be no more able to protect them than Babylon could; nor shall their relations to God; people stand them in any more stead for the other world, than their compliance with idolaters shall for this world; nor shall they stand in the congrega- tion of the righteous any more than in the congregation of evil-doers; for there will come a distinguishing day, when God will separate between the precious and the vile: he will cause them, as the shepherd doth his sheep, to separate the flocks from the goats, when he tithes them, (Lev. xxvii. 32.) that he may mark which is for God. God will take particular notice of each of them, one by one, as sheep are counted, and he will bring them into the bond of the covenant, (v. 37.) he will try them, and judge of them, according to the tenour of the covenant, and the difference made between some and others by the blessings and curses of the covenant. Or, it may refer to those among them that repented and reformed; he will cause them to pass under the rod of affliction, and, having done them good by it, he will bring them again into the bond of the covenant, will be to them a God in covenant, and use them again as heirs of promise.

He will purge out the wicked from among them; (v. 38.) I will purge out among you the rebels, who have been a grief and scandal to you, and who have by their rebellions brought all these calamities upon you. The judgments of God shall find them out, and their naming of the name of Israel shall be no shelter to them. They shall be brought out of the countries where they sojourn, and shall not have that rest in them which they promised themselves. But they shall not enter into the land of Israel, nor enjoy the benefit of that rest which God has promised to his people. Note, Though godly people may share with wicked in the calamities of the world, yet wicked people shall have no share with the godly in the heavenly Ca-
more we shall see of the odious nature of sin. There ye shall bathe yourselves in your own sight.

Note, Ingenious evangelical repentance makes people believe the God of their salvation,

6. (5.) He will give them the knowledge of himself; They shall know by experience, that he is the Lord; that he is a God of almighty power and in

exhaustible goodness; kind to his people, and faith ful to his covenant with them. Note, All the favours we receive from God should lead us to a

more intimate acquaintance with him. (6.) He will do all this for his own sake, without standing their undeserving and ill-deserving; (v. 44.) he has wrought with them, wrought for them, wrought in favour of them, wrought in concurrence with them, they doing their endeavour, he has wrought with them purely for his name's sake.

His reasons were all fetched from himself. Had he dealt with them according to their wicked ways and their corrupt doings, though they were the better and sounder part of the house of Israel, he had left them to be scattered and lost with the rest; but he recovered and restored them for the sake of his own name, not only that it might not be polluted, (v. 14.) but that he might be sanctified in them before the heathen, (v. 41.) that he might sanctify himself so the word is, and think of him by his own name. He will do well for his people, that he may have the glory of it; that he may manifest himself to be a God pardoning sin, and so keeping promise; that his people may praise him, and that their neighbours may likewise take notice of him, as they did when God turned again their captivity, Ps. cxvii.

5. Then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them.

45. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 46. Son of man, set the face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field; 47. And say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree; the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein. 48. And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.

49. Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Dost he not speak parables?

We have here a prophecy of wrath against Judah and Jerusalem, which should more fitly have begun in the next chapter, but we are to conclude that God has no dependence on what goes before, but that which follows in the beginning of the next chapter is the explication of it, when the people complained that this was a parable which they understood not. In this parable,

1. It is a forest that is prophesied against, the forest of the south field, Judah and Jerusalem.

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the earth by the river of God, which drops upon the pastures of the wilderness, (Ps. lxxv. 12.) and which is south land more especially calls for, Josh. xv. 19. Judah and Jerusalem are called forests, not only because they had been full of people, as a wood of trees, but because they had been empty of fruit, for fruit-trees grow not in a forest; and a forest is put in opposition to a fruitful field, Isa. xxxii. 15. Those that should have been as the garden of the Lord, and his vineyard, were become like a forest, all overgrown with briers and thorns; and those that are so, that bring not forth the fruits of righteousness, God's word prophesies against.

2. It is a fire kindled in his forest, that is prophesied of a judgment, wherein all sinners are consumed; and which consumed both the city and the country, sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, are signified by this fire. (1.) It is a fire of God's own kindling; I will kindle a fire in thee, the breath of the Lord is not as a drop, but as a stream of brimstone to set it on fire, Isa. xxxx. 33. He that had been himself a protecting Fire about Jerusalem, is now a Consuming Fire in it. All flesh shall see by the fury of this fire, and the desolations it shall make, especially when they compare it with the sins which had made them fuel for this fire, that it is the Lord that has kindled it, (v. 48.) as a just Avenger of his own injured honour. (2.) This conflagration shall be general; all orders and degrees of men shall be devoured by it: young and old, rich and poor, high and humble, of whatever nation, which does not repent, shall easily upon, shall be devoured by this fire; even good people shall some of them be involved in these calamities; and if this be done in the green trees, what shall be done in the dry? The dry trees shall be as tinder and touchwood to this fire. All houses, all that covers the face of the earth, from the north to the south, and from Lebanon to the land of Dam, shall be burnt therein. (3.) The fire shall not be quenched, no attempts to give check to the dissolusion shall prevail. When God will rain a nation, who or what can save it?

Now observe, [1.] The people's reflection upon the prophet, on occasion of this discourse. They said, Dost he not speak parables? This was the language of the people of Babylon, (Isa. xi. 1.) who had been ignorant of the just, of plain truths were always parables to them,) or of their malice and ill will to the prophet. Note, It is common for those who will not be wrought upon by the word, to pick quarrels with it; it is either too plain, or too obscure; too fine, or too homely; too common, or too singular; something or other is amiss in it. [2.] The prophet's complaint to God; Oh Lord God! they say so and so of me. Note, It is a comfort to us, when people speak ill of us unjustly, that we have a God to complain to.

CHAP. XXI.

In this chapter, we have, 1. An exposition of the prophecy in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the fire which should come upon the land, by which all shall be laid waste; and this expressed very emphatically. v. 8.-17. III. A prospect given of the king of Babylon's approach to Jerusalem, and how he was disappointed by division of it. v. 18-24. IV. Sentence passed upon Zedekiah king of Judah, v. 25.-27. V. The destruction of the Ammonites by the sword foretold, v. 28.-32. Thus is this chapter all threatening.

1. AND the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and propheesy against the land of Israel. 3. And say to the land of Israel. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. 4. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north; 5. That all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more. 6. Sigh, therefore, thou son of man, with the breaking of thy jaws; and with bitterness shall the sight before their eyes. 7. And it shall be, when they say unto thee, Whereforeighest thou? that thou shalt answer. For the tidings, because it cometh: and every heart shall melt, and all hands shall be feeble, and every spirit shall faint, and all knees shall be weak as water: behold, it cometh, and shall be brought to pass, saith the Lord God.

The prophet had faithfully delivered the message he was intrusted with in the close of the foregoing chapter, in the terms wherein he received it, not daring to add his own comment upon it; but when he complained that the people found fault with him for speaking parables, the word of the Lord came to him again, and gave him a key to that figurative discourse, with that he might let the people into the meaning of it, and so silence that objection. For all men shall be rendered inexcusable at God's bar, and every mouth shall be stopped. Note, He that speaks with tongues, should pray that he may interpret, 1 Cor. xiv. 13. When we speak to people about their souls, we should study plainness, and express ourselves as we may be best understood.

Christ expounded his parables to his disciples, Mark iv. 10. The prophet is here more plainly directed against whom to level the arrow of this prophecy He must drop his word toward the holy places, (v. 2.) toward Cæsarea the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, the temple, the holy house. These were highly dignified above other places; but when they polluted them, that word which used to drop in the holy places, shall now drop against them; Prophecy against the land of Israel. It was the honour of Israel, that it had prophets and prophecy; but these, being despised by them, are turned against them. And justly is Zion battered with her own artillery, which used to be employed against her adversaries, seeing she knew not how to value it.

2. He is instructed, and is to instruct the people in the necessity of the fire; for the fire was threatened to consume the forest of the south; it signified a sword drawn, the sword of war which should make the land desolate; (v. 5.) Behold, I am against thee, O land of Israel. There needs no more to make a people miserable than to have God against them; for as, if he be for us, we need not fear, whoever are against us; so if he be against us, we cannot hope, whoever are for us. And God's professing people, when they revolt from him, set him against them, who used to be for them. Was the fire there of God's kindling? The sword here is his sword, which he has prepared, and which he will give commission to; it is he that will draw it out of its sheath, where it had lain hid, and threatened no harm. Note, When the sword is unsheathed among the
nations, God's hand must be eyed and owned in it. Did the fire devour every green tree and every dry tree? The sword in like manner shall cut off the right hand of them which have offended in the common calamities of the nation; the righteous were cut off from the land of Israel, when they were sent captives in Babylon, though perhaps few or none of them were cut off from the land of the living; and it was a threatening omen to the land of Israel, that in the beginning of its troubles such excellent men as Daniel and his fellows, and Ezekiel, the very Last, must answer God, and Babylon. But though the sword cut off the righteous and the wicked, (for it devours one as well as another, 2 Sam. xi. 25.) yet far be it from us to think that the righteous are as the wicked, Gen. xviii. 25. No, God's graces and comforts make a great difference when his providence seem to make none. The good figs are sent into Babylon for their good, Jer. xxiv. 5, 6. It is only in outward appearance that there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, Eccl. ix. 2. But it speaks the greatness of God's displeasure against the land of Israel. Well might it be said, His eye shall not spare, when it shall not spare, no, not the righteous in it. Since there are not righteous men sufficient to save the land, to make the justice of God the more illustrious, the few that are, shall suffer with it, and God's name shall not be said to come off gloriously. Did the fire burn up all the faces from the south to the north? The sword shall go forth against all flesh from the south to the north; shall go forth, as God's sword, with a commission that cannot be contested, with a force that cannot be resisted. Were all flesh made to know that God kindled the fire? They shall be made to know that he has drawn forth that sword, v. 3. And, lastly, Shall the fire that is kindled never be quenched? So when this sword of the Lord is drawn against Judah and Jerusalem, the scabbard is thrown away, and it shall never be sheathed; it shall not return any more, till it has made a full end.

3. The prophet is ordered, by expressions of his own grief and concern for these calamities that were coming on, to try to make impressions of the like upon the people. When he has delivered his message, he must sigh, (v. 6.) must fetch many deep sighs, with the breaking of his heart; he must sigh as if his heart would burst, sigh with bitterness, with other expressions of bitter sorrow, and this publicly, in the sight of those to whom he delivered the foregoing message, that this might be a sermon to their eyes, as that was to the people of Judah; and it will be well if both would work upon them. The prophet must sigh, though it was painful to himself, and made his breast sore; and though it is probable that the refrain among the people would ridicule him for it, and call him a whining, canting preacher. But if we be beside ourselves, it is to God; and if this be to be vile, we will be yet more so. Note, Ministers, if they would affect others with the things they have to say, they must speak earnestly and sincerely in the greatest sincerity affected with them, and must submit to that which may create uneasiness to themselves, so that it will promote the ends of their ministry. The people, observing the prophet to sigh so much, and seeing no visible occasion for it, would ask, Wherefore sighst thou? These sighs have some mystical meaning; let us know what it is that makes the prophet sigh. Upon the tidings, the heavy tidings, that we shall hear shortly; the tidings come, the judgments come, which we hear the tidings of, they come; and then you will all sigh: nay, that will not serve, every heart shall melt, and every spirit fail; your courage will all be gone, and you will have no animating considerations to support yourselves with; and when heart and spirit fail, it will follow of course, that all hands will be feeble and unable to fight, and all knees will be weak as water and unable to flee, or to stand their ground. Those who have God, and when they have them, when flesh and heart fail, have him to be the Strength of their heart; but those who have God against them, have no cordial for a fainting spirit, but are as Belshazzar when his thoughts troubled him, Dan. v. 6. But some people are worse frightened than hurt; may not the case be so here, and the event prove better than likely? No, behold, it is the sword, and shall be brought to pass. It is not a bugbear that they are frightened with, but according to the fear so is the wrath, and more grievous than is feared.

3. Again, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 9. Son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord; Say, A sword, a sword is sharpened, and also furnished: 10. It is sharpened to make a sore slaughter: it is furnished that it may glister; should we then make mirth? it containeth the rod of my son, as every tree. 11. And he hath given it to be furnished, that it may be handled: this sword is sharpened, and it is furnished, to give it into the hand of the slayer. 12. Cry and howl, son of man; for it shall be upon my people, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel: terrors, by reason of the sword, shall be upon my people: smite therefore upon thy thigh. 13. Because it is a trial, and what if the sword contemn even the rod? it shall be no more, saith the Lord God. 14. Thou, therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thy hands together, and let the sword be doubled the third time, the sword of the slain: it is the sword of the great men that are slain, which entereth into their privy chambers. 15. I have set the point of the sword against all their gates, that their heart may faint, and their reins be multiplied. Ah! it is made bright, it is wrapt up for the slaughter. 16. Go thee one way or other, either on the right hand, or on the left, whithersoever thy face is set. 17. I will also smite thy hands together, and I will cause my fury to rest: I the Lord have said it.

Here is another prophecy of the sword, which is delivered in a very affecting manner; the expressions here used are somewhat intricate, and perplex the interpretation. And yet this may be found in the forgoing verses, here it is fitted up to do execution, which the prophet is commanded to lament. Observe, 1. How the sword is here described. (1.) It is sharpened, that it may cut and wound and make a sore slaughter. The wrath of God will put an edge upon it; and whatever instruments God shall please to use, in executing his judgments, he will fill them with strength, courage, and fury, according to the service they are employed in. Out of the mouth of Christ goes a sharp sword, Rev. xix. 15. (2.) It is furnished, that it may glister, to the terror of those against whom it is drawn. It shall be a kind of flaming sword. If it have rested in the scabbard for want of use, it shall be rubbed and brightened; for
though the glory of God's justice may seem to have been eclipsed for awhile, during the day of his patience, and the delay of his judgments, yet it will shine out again, and be made to glitter. (3.) It is a victorious sword, nothing shall stand before it; (v. 16.) It containeth the rod of my son as every tree. Israel, said God once, is my son, my firstborn. The government of that people was called the rod, Isa. xi. 2. He is righteous in all his judgments. \\

1. How the sword is directed, and against whom it is set; (v. 12.) It shall be upon my people, and shall fill by this sword; it is repeated again, as that which is scarcely credible, that the sword of the heathen shall be upon God's own people. Nay, it shall be upon all the princes of Israel; their dignity and power as princes shall be no more their security than their profession of religion as princes of Israel. But if the sword be at any time upon God's people, or the church of God, it is not sufficient to arm them against every thing in it that is frightful? Yes, they have, while they conduct themselves as becomes his people; but these had not done so, and therefore terrors, by reason of the sword, shall be upon those that call themselves my people. Note, While good men are quiet, not only from evil, but from the fear of it, wicked men are disturbed not only with the sword, but with the terrors of it. Though they have furnished themselves with places of retirement, places of concealment, where they flatter themselves with hopes that they shall be safe, they will find that the sword will enter into their secret chambers, and find them out there, as the frogs, when they were one of Egypt's plagues, found admission into the chambers of their kings. The sword, the breath of God's mouth, is directed against their gates, against all their gates, (v. 13.) against all those things with which they thought to keep it out, and fortify themselves against it. Note, The strongest gates, though they be gates of brass, ever so well barred, ever so well guarded, are no fence against the point of the sword of God's judgments. But when that is pointed against sinners, (1.) They are ready to fear the worst; their hearts faint, so that they are not able to make any resistance. (2.) The worst comes; whatever resistance they make, it is to no purpose, but they are ruined, and their ruins are multiplied. But what need have we to observe the particular directions of this sword, when it has been so uniformly directed? It is a running warrant; (v. 16.) "Go thee, one way or other, which way thou wilt, turn to the right hand, or to the left, thou wilt find those that are obnoxious, for there are none free from guilt; and then hast authority against them, for there are none exempt from punishment; and therefore, whithersoever thy sword is set, that wherein thou proceed, and, like a running sword, from the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, thou shalt never return empty." 2 Sam. i. 22. Note, So full is the world of wicked people, that, which way soever God's judgments go forth, they will find work, will find matter to work upon. That fire will never go out on this earth for want of fuel. And such various methods God has taken and will still take for using and employing that sword. It is still as it was at first, when it flamed in the hand of the cherubims, it turns every way, Gen. iii. 24.

4. What is the nature of this sword, and what are the intentions and limitations of it as to the people of God, v. 13. It is a correction; it is designed to be so; the sword to others is a rod to them. This is a comfortable word which comes in at the midst of a great murrain, and is a rod to them, a comfort to them, that is as eyes of comfort, when they are in a state of utter darkness. \\

5. Here the prophet and the people must show themselves affected with these judgments threaten-
The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying, 19. Also, thou son of man, appoint thee two ways, that the sword of the king of Babylon may come: both twain shall come forth out of one land; and choose thou a place, choose it at the head of the way to the city. 20. Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced. 21. For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver. 22. At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort. 23. And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken. 24. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. 25. And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end; 26. Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. 27. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him. The prophet, in the verses before, had showed them the sword coming; he here shows them that sword coming against them, that they might not flatter themselves that by some means or other it should be diverted a contrary way. 1. He must see and show the Chaldean army coming against Jerusalem, and determined by a supreme power so to do. The prophet must appoint him two ways, he must put a paper draw out two roads, (v. 19) as sometimes is done in maps: and he must say, appointing the one of them to Babylon, and placing the roads for, there they will make a stand. They both come out of the same land, but when they come to the place where one road leads to Rabbah, the head city of the Ammonites, and the other to Jerusalem, he makes a pause; for though he is resolved to be the ruin of both, yet he is not determined which to attack first; here his politics and his policy leaves him at a loss. The sword must go either to Rabbah, or to Judah in Jerusalem. Many of the inhabitants of Judah had now taken shelter in Jerusalem, and all the interests of the country were bound up in the safety of the city, and therefore it is called Judah in Jerusalem the defended; so strongly fortified was it, both by nature and art, that it was thought impregnable, Lam. iv. 11. The prophet must describe these things, viz. the king of Babylon is at; (v. 21) for the king of Babylon stood: he shall stand considering what course to take, at the head of the two ways. Though he was a prince of great foresight and great resolution, yet, it seems, he knew neither his own interest nor his own mind. Let not the wise man then glory in his wisdom nor the mighty man in his arbitrary power, for even those that may do what they will, seldom know what to do for the best. Now observe, 1. The method he took to come to a resolution; he
and divination, applied him to a higher and insubstantial power, perhaps to the determination of Providence by a lot, in order to which he made his arrows bright, that were to be drawn for the lots, in honour of the solemnity. Perhaps Jerusalem was written on one arrow, and Rabbah on the other, and that which was first drawn out of the quiver he determined to attack first. Or, he applied himself to the direction of some pretended oracle; he consulted with images or Teraphim, expecting to receive audible answers from them. Or, to the observations which the augurs made upon the entrails of the sacrifices, he looked in the liver, whether the position of that pretended good or ill luck. Note, It is a mortification to the pride of the wise men of the earth, that in difficult cases they have been glad to make the sacrifice of a few of their arrows, that they may have such ridiculous ways of doing it; when in cases proper for an appeal to Providence, it is sufficient that the lot be cast into the lap, with that prayer, Give a perfect lot, and a firm belief that the disposal thereof is not fortuitous, but of the Lord, Prov. xvi. 33. 2. The resolution he was hereby brought to. Every one of these suitors perhaps served his own purposes, and directed him to go to Jerusalem, v. 22. The divination for Jerusalem happened to be at his right hand, which, according to the rules of divination, determined him that way. Note, What services God designs men for, he will be sure in his providence to lead them to, though perhaps they themselves are not aware what guidance the Divine Providence, being the mark it up, the campaign is presently opened with the siege of that important place. Captains are appointed for the command of the forces to be employed in the siege, who must open the mouth in the slaughter, must give directions to the soldiers what to do, and make speeches to animate them. Orders are given to provide every thing necessary for carrying on the siege with vigour; batteries must be prepared, and forts built. Of what pains, what cost, are men at to destroy one another!

II. He must show both the people and the prince that they bring this destruction upon themselves by their own sin.

1. The people do so, v. 23, 24. They slight the notices that are given them of the judgment coming. It is prophesied to them a false divination; they are sent to or weakened to repentance. When they hear that Nebuchadnezzar by his divisions is directed to Jerusalem, and assured of success in that enterprize, they laugh at it, and continue secure, calling it a false divination; because they have sworn oaths, they have joined in a solemn league with the Egyptians, and they depend upon the promise they have made them to raise up, or upon the assurance which the false prophets have given them, that it shall be raised. Or, it may refer to the oaths of allegiance they had sworn to the king of Babylon, but had violated; for which treachery of theirs God had given them up to a judicial blindness, so that the fairest warnings given them were slighted by them as false divinations. Note, It is not strange if those who make a jest of the signs, sacred oaths, can make a jest likewise of the most sacred oracles: for where will a profane mind stop? But shall their unbelief invalidate the counsel of God? Are they safe because they are secure? By no means; nay, the contempt they put upon divine warnings is a sin that brings to remembrance their other sins, and they may thank themselves if they be not remembered against them. (1. ) Their present wickedness is discovered. Now that God is contending with them, so perverse and obstinate are they, that, whatever they offer in their own defence, docs but add to their offences; they never conducted themselves so ill as they did now that they had the loudest call given them to repent and reform; so that in all your doings your sins do appear. Turn you which way you will you show a black side. This is too true of every one of us; for not only there is none that lives and sins not, but there is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not. Our best services have such iahis of weakness, and folly, and imperfection, and so much evil is present with us, that even when we do good, we must be accounted with sorrow and shame. In all our doings, and in all our sayings too, our sins do appear, and witness against us, so that if we were under the law we were undone. (2. ) This brings to mind their former wickedness; "You have made your iniquity to be remembered, not by yourselves but it might be repented of; but a just cause for punishment is now made to be reckoned for." Your sins make them the targets of your fathers to be remembered against you, which otherwise you should never have smarted for." Note, God remembers former iniquities against those only who by the present discoveries of their wickedness show that they do not repent of them. (3. ) That they may suffer for all together, they are surrounded, or hemmed in, to the destruction, that they may be taken; (v. 25. ) "Ye shall be taken with the hand that God had appointed to seize you and to hold you, and out of which you cannot escape." Men are said to be God's hand, when they are made use of as the ministers of his justice, Ps. xvii. 4. Note, Those who will not be taken with the word of God's grace, shall at last be taken by the hand of his wrath.

2. As some of the princes, had yet had grace himself. Zedekiah is the prince of Israel, to whom the prophet here, in God's name, addresses himself; and if he had not spoken in God's name, he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? (1. ) He gives him his character, v. 25. Thou profane and wicked prince of Israel! He was not so much a prince as a prince, because he had so many predecessors, lid yet had had grace himself. Zedekiah is the prince of Israel, to whom the prophet here, in God's name, addresses himself; and if he had not spoken in God's name, he would not have spoken so boldly, so bluntly; for is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? (2. ) He renders him his doom. His iniquity has an end, the measure of it is full, and therefore his day is come, the day of his punishment, the day of divine vengeance. Note, Though they who are wicked and profane may flourish awhile, yet their day will come to full. The sentence here passed is, (1. ) That Zedekiah shall be defended; he has forfeited his crown, and he shall no longer wear it; he has by his professedness profaned his crown, and it shall be cast to the ground; (v. 26. ) Remove the diadem. Crowns and diadems are laceable things; it is only in the other world that there is a crown of glory that fades not away; a kingdom that cannot be removed. The Chaldee Paraphrase expands it thus, Take away the crown from Zedekiah the chief-built, and I will take away the crown from Zedekiah the king; neither this nor that shall abide in his place, but shall be removed. This shall not be the same; not the same he has been; this not this; so the word is. Profane and wicked perhaps he is as he has been, but not prince of Israel as he has been. Note, Men lose their dignity by their iniquity. Their profaneness and wickedness remove their diadem, and take off their crown, and make them the reverse of what they were. (2. ) That great confusion and disorder in the state shall follow hereupon; every thing shall be turned upside down. The conqueror shall take a pride in excelling him that is low, and abusing
him that is high, preserving some, and degrading others, at his pleasure, without any regard either to right or merit. [3.] Attempts to re-establish the government shall be blasted, and come to nothing; Gedaliah's, particularly, and Ishmael's, who was of the seed-royal, (to which the Chaldean Paraphrase refers this,) neither of them shall be able to make any thing of it. I will overturn, overturn, overturn first one project, and then another; for who can build up what God will throw down? [4.] This monarchy will never be restored, till it is fixed for perpetuity in the hands of the Messiah. There shall be no more kings of the house of David after Zedekiah, till Christ comes, whose right the kingdom is, and of David, no prince was to have its full accomplishment, and I will give it him. He shall have the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. Immediately before the coming of Christ there was a long eclipse of the royal dignity, as there was also a failing of the spirit of prophecy, that his shining forth in the fulness of time both as King and Prophet might appear the more illustrious. Note, Christ has an inconceivable title to the dominion and sovereignty both in the church and in the world; the kingdom is his right. And having the right, he shall in due time have the possession; I will give it him; and there shall be a general overturning of all, rather than he shall come short of his right; and a certain overturning of all the opposition that stands in his way, to make room for him, Dan. iv. 35. This is mentioned here for the comfort of those who feared that the promise made in David would fail for evermore. "No," says God, "that promise is sure, for the Messiah's kingdom shall last for ever."

23. And thou, son of man, prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord God concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn; for the slaughter it is furnished, to consume because of the glittering; 29. While they see vanity unto thee, while they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end. 30. Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. 31. And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee; I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath; I will burn up the fire of my wrath against thee, it shall burn with the utmost vehemence. Then shalt thou be fuel to this fire, v. 32. Note, With the sword men make themselves a terror; but God's wrath they are very confirmed by it, and it is inflamed by them. (2.) It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow. The sword, the sword is drawn; v. 28. (compare v. 9, 10,) it is drawn to consume because of the glittering, because it is brandished and glitters, and is to be made use of. Gods executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, shall not return into its sheath (v. 50,) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn, it does not return till God causes it to return, and he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose? (3.) The persons employed in it are brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Men of bad judgment as this have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts; human reason, which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy; though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes they are made use of to serve God's purposes; God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's people. We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be prayed for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, (2 Thess. iii. 2,) men that seem made for doing mischief. (4.) The place where they should thus be reckoned with; "I will judge thee there where thou wast created, where thou wast put upon themselves when they hearkened to their false prophets, (for such it seems there were among them as well as among the Jews,) who pretended to foretell their perpetual safety in the midst of the desolations that were made of the countries round about them; "They see vanity unto thee, and divine a lie, v. 28. They flatter thee with promises of peace, and the truth shall not be imposed upon them, and to encourage them therein by giving credit to them." Note, These that fed themselves with a self-conceit in the day of their prosperity, prepare matter for a self-reproach in the day of their calamity. (2.) The reproach they put upon the Israel of God, when they triumphed in their afflictions, and thereby added affliction to their people, was not without reason, but it was for the glory of God, and the instruction and encouragement of his people. For the reproach of the people of God resteth upon them when their iniquity had an end, when the measure of it was full; we shall meet with this again, ch. xxv. 3, &c. Note, These are repining apace for misery, who trample upon the people of God in their distress, whereas they ought to tremble when judgment begins at the house of God. The utmost triumphs of the Ammonites threateneth. For the reproach cast on the church by her neighbours will be returned into their own bosom, Ps. lxxix. 12. Let us see how terrible the threatening is, and the destruction will be. (1.) It shall come from the wrath of God, who resents the indignities and injuries done to his people as done to himself; (v. 21,) I will pour out my indignation upon them. I will bring upon them fire of bruised and humbled upon them; the least drop of divine indignation and wrath will create tribulation and anguish enough to the soul of man that doth evil; what then would a full stream of that indignation and wrath do? "I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath; I will blow up the fire of my wrath against thee, it shall burn with the utmost vehemence." Then shalt thou be fuel to this fire, v. 32. Note, With the sword men make themselves a terror; but God's wrath they are very confirmed by it, and it is inflamed by them. (2.) It shall be effected by the sword of war; to them he must cry, as before to Israel, because they had triumphed in Israel's overthrow. The sword, the sword is drawn; v. 28. (compare v. 9, 10,) it is drawn to consume because of the glittering, because it is brandished and glitters, and is to be made use of. Gods executions will answer his preparations. This sword, when it is drawn, shall not return into its sheath (v. 50,) till it has done the work for which it was drawn. When the sword is drawn, it does not return till God causes it to return, and he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Who can change his purpose? (3.) The persons employed in it are brutish men, and skilful to destroy. Men of bad judgment as this have the wit of men to do the work of wild beasts; human reason, which makes them skilful, but no human compassion, which makes them skilful only to destroy; though they are the scandal of mankind, yet sometimes they are made use of to serve God's purposes; God delivers the Ammonites into the hands of such, and justly, for they themselves were brutish, and delighted in the destruction of God's people. We have reason to pray, as Paul desired to be prayed for, that we may be delivered from wicked and unreasonable men, (2 Thess. iii. 2,) men that seem made for doing mischief. (4.) The place where they should thus be reckoned with; "I will judge thee there where thou wast created, where thou wast
first formed into a people, and where thou hast been settled ever since, and therefore where thou seest to have taken root: the land of thy nativity shall be the land of thy destruction.” Note, God can bring ruin upon us there where we are most secure; and turn us out of that land which we thought we had a title to not to be disputed, and a possession of not to be disturbed; Thy blood shall be shed not only in thy borders, but in the midst of thy land. Lastly, it shall be an irreparable ruin: “Though thou mayest think to recover thyself, it is in vain to think of it, thou shalt be no more remembered with any respect,” Ps. ix. 6. Justly is their name blotted out, who would have Israel’s name for ever lost.

CHAP. XXII.

Here are three several messages which God inflicts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purport, to show them their sins, and the judgments that were coming upon them for these sins. 1. Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame, and for which God would bring them to ruin, v. 1. 16. II. They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire, v. 17. 22. III. All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place, and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of, v. 23. 31.

1. MOREOVER, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city? yea, thou shalt shew her all her abominations. 3. Then say thou, Thus saith the Lord God, The city sheddeth blood in the midst of it, that her time may come; and maketh idols against herself to defile herself. 4. Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed; and hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made; and thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years: therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the heathen, and a mocking to all countries. 5. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, which art infamous and much vexed. 6. Behold, the princes of Israel, every one were in thee to their power to shed blood. 7. In thee have they set light by father and mother; in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger; in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow. 8. Thou hast despised my holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths. 9. In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood; and in thee they eat upon the mountains; in the midst of thee they commit lewdness; 10. In thee have they discovered their father’s nakedness; in thee have they humbled her that was set apart for pollution. 11. And one hath committed abomination with his neighbour’s wife; and another hath lewdly defiled his daughter-in-law; and another in thee hath humbled his sister, his father’s daughter. 12. In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion, and hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God. 13. Behold, therefore, I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. 14. Can thy heart endure, or can thy hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it. 15. And I will scatter thee among the heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee. 16. And thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself in the sight of the heathen, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

In these verses, the prophet by a commission from Heaven is set as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her hand as a prisoner at the bar; and if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God’s nation, Jer. i. 10. This prophet is authorized to judge the bloody city; the city of blood. Jerusalem is so called, not only because she had been guilty of the general sin of bloodshed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes, (ch. vii. 23.) such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two things Ezekiel is to do to Jerusalem; 1. He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is billa vera—a true bill; so he writes upon it, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. He must show her all her abominations, (v. 2.) that God may be justified in all the desolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with; and they are all exceedingly abominable.

1. Murder: The city shedeth blood, not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but in the midst of it, where, one would think, the magistrates would, if any where, be vigilant. Even there people were murdered either in duels or by secret assassinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers, according to the law. (Gen. ix. 6.) no, nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder, (Deut. xxii. 1.) and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed, v. 4. This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem’s mea- sure, the filling sin, which is said to be that which the Lord would not pardon, 2 Kings xxiv. 4. (1.) The princes of Israel, who should have been the protectors of injured innocence, every one were to their power to shed blood, v. 6. They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were sure to feel it; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to find none. (2.) There were those who carried tales to shed blood, v. 9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to excite them against them; or betrayed what passed in private conversation, to make mischief among neighbours, and set them together by the ears, to bite, and devour, and worry one another, even to death. Note, Those who, by giving injudicious characters, and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow
discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be for all the hurt it does. (3.) There were those who took gifts to shed blood, (v. 12.) who were hired with money to swear a man out of his life, or, if they were upon a jury, would be bribed to give a false verdict. While this monstrous, bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem, we may well conclude, [1.] That men's consciences were become so wickedly profligate and scared, and their hearts hardened; for they would stick at no wickedness, which would not stick at this. [2.] That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away with, whereby as the guilt of the city is increased, so the number of the temple should have stood, if they had, to turn away the wrath of God, was diminished. 2. Idiocy; She makes idols against herself to destroy herself, v. 3. And again, (v. 4.) Thou hast defiled thyself in thine idols which thou hast made. Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves, and prepare destruction for themselves; besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even their mind and conscience are defiled, so that to them nothing is pure. Those who did not make idols themselves, were not found guilty of eating upon the mountains, or high places, (v. 9.) in honour of the idols, and in communion with idolaters. 3. Disobedience to parents; (v. 7.) In thee have the children set light by their father and mother, mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them, which was a sign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder. Isa. iii. 5. They that set light by their parents, are in the high way to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; whereas, those who defied them, or opposed them, were both subject to the civil law, and bound to observe the laws of the land. 4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves, they wronged the poor; (v. 7.) They dealt by oppression and deceit with the stranger, taking away his land, and defrauding him of his wages. They dealt contrary to those laws and customs of the country. In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, they vexed the fatherless and widows by unreasonable demands and impositions, and troublesome law-suits, in which might prevail against right; Thou hast taken usury and increase; (v. 12.) not only there are those in thee that do it, but thou hast done it. It was an act of the city or community, the public money, which had been employed in public charity, is put out to usury, with extortion. Thou hast greedily gained of the neighbours by violence and wrong. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but those who are greedy of gain will not be held within the rules of equity. 5. Profanation of the Sabbath. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here stand indicted; (v. 8.) Thou hast despised mine holy days, holy oracles, holy ordinances, the rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary, they despised them, and therefore were found of the customs of the heathen. Note, Impurity and dishonesty are commonly found joined together; who are religious in the worship of God, Thou hast profaned not sabaths. There was not in Jerusalem that face of sabhath-sacriligion that one would have expected in the holy city. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their own ruin as any thing. 6. Uncleanliness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of these vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives up men, to punish them for their idolatry and profaneness. (v. 13.) They have not abhorred his word, but now in the midst of it they commit lewdness; (v. 9.) it goes barfaced, though in the most scandalous instances; as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the discovery of the father's nakedness, (v. 10.) and is a sin not to be named among Christians without the utmost detestation, (2 Cor. v. 1.) and was made a capital crime by the Levitical law. Those who are now the time to refrain from embracing has not been observed, Ex. fcir iii. 6. For they have humbled her that was set apart for her pollution. They made nothing of committing lewdness with a neighbour's wife, with a daughter-in-law, or a sister, v. 11. and shall not God visit for these things? 7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness; (v. 12.) Thou hast forgotten me, else thou wouldst not have done thus. Note, Sinners do that which provokes God, because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is, which they make themselves unfit for; and how formidable his wrath, which they make themselves obnoxious to. That they forget their ways, forget the Lord their God, Jer. iii. 21. II. He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes. 1. Let her know that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and that her sins are such as forbid delays, and call for speedy vengeance. She has made her time to come, (v. 3.) her days to draw near; and she is come to her years of maturity for punishment, (v. 4.) as an heir that is come to age, and is ready for his inheritance. God would have been longer with them, but they were arrived at such a pitch of impudence in sin, that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing. And when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow overmuch wicked, they die before their time, (Ex. vii. 17.) and are cut off in their unprofitable lives. 2. Let her know that she has exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her, to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours; (v. 4.) I have made thee a reproach to the heathen, both they who are near, who are eye-witnesses of Jerusalem apostacy and degeneracy; and those afar off, who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of, (v. 5.) inasmuch as they shall all mock thee. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God, it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach. But now that they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, The Lord is righteous. They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very great, and because she was profaned in name, and has quite lost her credit; and because her punishment is very grievous, she is much vexed, and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those who vex most at their troubles, have commonly those about them who will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them. 3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased especially with the city and does and will witness against it; (v. 13.) I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain. God, both by his precepts, and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteous-
Note, the oppressions they were guilty of, though they got by them, and their murders, the blood which has been in the midst of thee; and all their other sins. Note, God has sufficiently discovered how great a part of his people; and that they may not say that they have not had fair warning, he strikes his hands against the sin before he lays his hand upon the sinner. And this is a good reason why we should despise dishonest gain, even the gain of oppression, and shake our hands from holding of bribes, because these are sins against God, which God shakes his hands from, Isa. xxxviii. 15.

Let us know the wickedness of our sin, and as shew she is no match for God's judgments, v. 14. (1.) She is assured that the destruction she has deserved will come; The Lord have spoken it, and will do it. He that is true to his promises, will be true to his threatenings too, for he is not a man that he should repent. (2.) It is supposed that she thinks herself able to contend with God, and to stand a siege against his judgments; she bode defiance to the day of the Lord, Isa. v. 19. But, (3.) She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him; Can thine heart endure, or can thine hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Thou thinkest thou hast to do only with men like thyself, but shalt be made to know thou art as dust in the balance, living God. Observe here, [1.] There is a day coming when God will deal with them in the midst of their day of visitation. He deals with some, to bring them to repentance, and there is no resisting the force of convictions when he sets them on; he deals with others, to bring them to ruin; he deals with sinners in this life, when he brings upon them his sore judgments. But the day of eternity are especially the day of God; and God will deal with them then; when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture. [2.] The wrath of God against sinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable and irresistible. There is no heart stout enough to endure it; it is none of the ordinances which the spirit of a man will sustain; damned sinners can neither forget nor despise their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to cover their eyes, and bind them up like samsons. There are no hands strong enough either to ward off the strokes of God's wrath, or to break the chains with which sinners are bound over to the day of wrath. Who knows the power of God's anger?

Let her know that, since she has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their ways; that therefore she shall have enough of them; (v. 15.) "I will not only send thee among the heathen, out of thine own land, but I will scatter thee among them, and disperse thee in the countries, to be abused and insulted by strangers." And since her filthiness and filthy ones continued in her, notwithstanding all the methods God had taken to refine her, (she was a vessel of clay,) he turns her into dross; thus his judgments contaminate her filthiness out of her; he will destroy those that were incurably bad, and reform those that were inclined to be good.

6. Let her know that God has disowned her, and cast her off; he had been her Heritage and Portion; but now, (v. 16.) "Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself, and shift for thyself, make the best haste thou canst to take away what there was of thine inheritance, that I may take it out of thy hands." Note, Those that give themselves to be ruled by their lusts, will justly be given up to be portioned by them. They that resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other comfort and happiness than what their own hands can furnish them with, and a miserable portion it will prove; Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. Thou in thy lifetime receivest the good things. These are the same with this, Thou shalt take thine inheritance in thyself, and when it is too late; and own it in the sight of the heathen, that I am the Lord, who alone am a portion sufficient for my people." Note, Those that have lost their interest in God, will know how to value it.

17. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. 20. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. 21. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. 22. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you.

The same melancholy string is still harped upon; and various turns given to it, to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here show, or at least it is here shown, that the whole house of Israel is become as dross, and that as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world, is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now that it is corrupt and degenerate; (Ps. cxix. 119.) Thou forgavest all the wicked of the earth like dross.

1. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state, in David's and Solomon's time, had been a head of gold; when the kingdoms were divided, it was as the arms of silver. But now, (1.) It is degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was. They are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead; which some make to signify divers classes of sinners among them; their being brass denotes the impudence of some in their wickedness, they are brass-faced, and cannot blush; their shells had been iron and brass, (Deut. xxxiii. 25.) but now their brow is so, (Isa. xlvii. 4.) Their being tin denotes the hypocritical profession of piety, with which many of them are covered; their being iron denotes the most cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the iron age. Their being lead denotes their dulness, softness, and stupidity; though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not moveable to good. How is the gold become dross? How is the most fine gold changed? (Isa. lxiv. 9.) Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, Lam. iv. 1. Yet this is not the worst; these metals, though of less value, are yet of good use. But, (2.) The house of Israel is become dross to me. So she is in God's account, whatever she is in her own and her neighbours' account. They were silver, but now they are even the dross of silver; the word signifies all the dirt, and rubbish, and worthless stuff; that are separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it. Note,
Simmers, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account as dross; vile, and contemptible, and of no account, as the evil figs which could not be eaten, they were so evil. They are useless and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves, and no service to man.

25. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. 26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. 27. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. 28. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. 29. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. 30. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. 31. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.

Here is,

1. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it, and how much it needed these judgments to re-store it. Let us prophesy that plainly. 'Thou art the land that is not cleansed, not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace; means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art not rained upon in the day of indignation.' This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he withheld the rain from them, Jer. xxi. 4. "When thou art under the tokens of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art not rained upon; thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to descend as the rain." Or, "When thou art corrected, thou art not cleansed, thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a day of indignation with thee, yet thy filthiness, which should be done away, is become more offensive, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon." Or, "Thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with in the day of indignation; thou art not rained upon by divine consolations." So the rich man in torment had not a drop of water, or rain, to cool his tongue.

II. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shows that they had all helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing toward the emptying of it; they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one corrupted his way, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue, were ringleaders in iniquity and patterns of vice.

23. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. 25. There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. 26. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned my holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.
which is found among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret conspiracy against the truth. Satan is not divided against himself. The prophets are in conspiracy with the murderers and oppressors, to patronize and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may conceal their names. For the war is like a roaring lion ravishing the prey; they thunder out threats against them whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters. Note, They was a difference, their pretensions were so far from being acknowledged by the people, as they imagined. [1.] Of their lives; They have devoured souls, have been accessory to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made many to become sorrowful widows, and forsakeable wives. They have persecuted those to death, who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy, and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission. Or, They devoured souls by flattering sinners into a false peace and a vain hope, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who drew men to wickedness, and encouraged them in it, and so were the means of their destruction, would be accursed, both as to soul and body. [2.] Of their estates; when Nabath is slain, they take possession of his vineyard; They have seized the treasure and precious things, as forfeited; some ways or other they had of devouring the widows' houses, as the Pharisees, Matt. xxviii. 14. Or, They got this treasure, and all these precious things, as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for they were used, as says Mic. iii. 5. It was sad with Jerusalem, when such men as these passed for prophets.

(2.) The priests, who were teachers by office, and the custodians of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they. v. 26. [1.] They violated the law of God, which they should have observed, and taught others to observe; they made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly brake it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phinehas. They did what they had a mind, with an express non obstante— notwithstanding, to the word of God. And how should they teach the people their duty, who lived in contradiction to their own? [2.] They profaned God's holy things, about which they were to minister, and which were set apart for the service of God, from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things, who were unqualified by the law, the table of the Lord was contempibie with them; by dealing in holy things with such unhallowed hands they did themselves profane them. [3.] They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [4.] They hid their eyes from God's ban and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [5.] They hid their eyes from God's ban and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [6.] They hid their eyes from God's ban and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too. [7.] They hid their eyes from God's ban and the unclean, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but lived at large themselves, and encouraged the people to do so too.

(3.) The princes, who should have interposed with their authority to redress these grievances, were as daring transgressors of the law as any other; (v. 27.) They are like wolves ravishing the prey; for such is power without justice and goodness to direct it. All their business was to gratify, [1.] Their own pride and ambition, by making themselves princes and masters of the land. [2.] Their own malice, and revenge, by shedding blood, and devorinig souls, sacrificing to their cruelty all those that stood in their way, or had in any thing disoblige them. [3.] Their own avarice, all they aim at, is to get dishonest gain, by crushing and oppressing their subjects; Lucrè bonus est odor ex quæ qualibet. Rem, rem, quæcunque modo rem.—Sweat is the odour of gain, from whatever substance it ascends. Money, made by false and bloody means, is not the sweat of all. But though they had not power sufficient to carry them on in their oppressive courses, yet how could they answer it both to their credit and to their consciences? We are told how, (v. 28.) The prophets doubted them with untempered mortar; told them, in God's name, (horrid wickedness!) that there was no harm in what they did, they might make use of the laws and the blood, and they pleased, and could do no wrong; nay, that in prosecuting such and such whom they had marked out, they did God service; and thus they stopped the mouth of their consciences; they also justified what they did, to the people, nay, and magnified it as if it were all for the public good, and so saved their reputation, and kept their oppressed subjects from murmuring. Note, Doubting prophets are the great supporters of ravening princes, but will prove at last their great deceivers, for they deal with untempered mortar which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long, that is built up with it. They pretend to be seers, but they are vanity; they pretend to be diviners, but they divine lies; they pretend a warrant from Heaven for what they say, and all the while they were saying, Thus saith the Lord God, but it is all a sham, for the Lord has not spoken any such thing.

(4.) The people that had any power in their hands, learned of their princes to abuse it, (v. 29.) They that should have complained of the oppression of the subject, and have put in a claim of rights on behalf of the injured, that should have stood up for their own and their property, were themselves invaders of it; The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery. The rich oppress the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and sellers will find some way to oppress one another: this is such a sin as, when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatened as such; (Isa. iii. 5.) They shall go down and shall be found among the nations, each one by his neighbour. It is an aggravation of the sin, that they have vexed the poor and needy, whom they should have relieved, and have oppressed the stranger, and deprived him of his right, to whom they ought to have been not only just, but kind. Thus was the apostacy universal, and the disease epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an intercessor for them, (v. 30.) I sought for a man among them, that should stand in the gap, but I found none. Note, (1.) Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people, at which good
things run out from them, and evil things pour in upon them; a gap by which God enters to destroy them. (2.) There is a way of standing in the gap, and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel to turn away the wrath of God, Ps. cxlv. 23. (3.) When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them, he expects some to intercede, and make up the breach of his people, so that he sees; so much is it his desire and delight to show mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him, and be well-pleased with him. (4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that not one is found, that will either give them a good word, or speak a good word for them. (5.) If it is so, what can be expected but utter ruin? (v. 31.) Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, have given it full scope, that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet, whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is their own way that is therein recompensed upon their heads, and God deals with them no worse, but even much better, than their iniquity deserves.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This long chapter (as before, ch. 16. and 20.) is a history of the apostacies of God's people from him, and the agony and distress of the apostacies under them, both by the infidelity of whoredom and adultery. Here the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, the ten tribes and the two, with their capital cities, Samaria and Jerusalem, are considered distinctly. Here is, 1. The apostacy of the ten tribes from God, (v. 1-8.) and their ruin for it, v. 9. 10. II. The apostacy of Judah and Jerusalem from God, (v. 11. 21.) and sentence passed upon them, that they shall be destroyed as the wicked shall be destroyed, v. 9, 35. 11. The joint wickedness of them both together, (v. 36. 44.) and the joint ruin of them both, v. 45. 49. And all that is written for warning against the sins of idolatry, and confidence in an arm of flesh, and sinful leagues and confederacies with wicked people, (which are the sins here meant by committing whoredom,) is, that others may hear and fear, and not sin after the similitude of the transgressions of Israel and Judah.

1. THE word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; 3. And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth; there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity. 4. And the names of them were Aholah the elder, and Aholibah her sister; and they were mine, and they bare sons and daughters. Thus were their names, Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah. 5. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine; and she sinned on her lovers, on the Assyrians her neighbours. 6. Which were clothed with blue, captains and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses. 7. Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them who were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she sinned; with all their idols she defiled herself. 8. Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her. 9. Wherefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she sinned. 10. These discovered her nakedness; they took her sons and her daughters, and slew her with the sword; and she became famous among women; for they had executed judgment upon her.

God had often spoken to Ezekiel, and by him to the people, to this effect, but now his word comes again; for God speaks the same thing once, yea, twice, yea, many a time, and all little enough, and too little, for man perceives it not. Note, To convince sinners of the evil of sin, and of their misery and danger by it, there is need of a phrase after phrase, line after line, so that we are to know the worst of ourselves. The sinners that are here to be exposed, are, two women, two kingdoms, sister kingdoms, Israel and Judah, daughters of one mother, having been for a long time but one people. Solomon's kingdom was so large, so populous, that immediately after his death it divided into two. Observe, 1. The number of them when they were one; (v. 3.) They committed whoredoms in Egypt, for there they were guilty of idolatry, as we read before, ch. xx. 8. The representing of those sins which are most provoking to God and most ruining to a people, by the sin of whoredom, plainly intimates what an exceeding sinful sin uncleanliness is, how offensive how destructive. Doubtless it is itself one of the worst of sins, for the worst of other sins are compared to it here, and often elsewhere; which should increase our detestation and dread of all manner of fleshly lusts, all appearances of them, and approaches to them, as warring against the soul, intoxicating sinners, bewitching them, alienating their minds from God and all that is good, debauching conscience, rendering them odious in the eyes of the pure and holy God, and drowning them at last in destruction and perdition.

2. Their names when they became two, v. 4. The kingdom of Israel is called the elder sister, because that first made the breach, and separated from the family both of kings and priests that God had appointed; the greater sister, (so the word is,) for ten tribes belonged to that kingdom, and only two to the other. God says of them both, They were mine; that is, they were the seed of Abraham his friend, and of Jacob his chosen; they were in covenant with God, and carried about with them the sign of their circumcision, the seal of the covenant. They were mine; and therefore their apostasy was the highest injustice. It was alienating God's property, it was the basest ingratitude to the best of Benefactors, and a pernicious, treacherous violation of the most sacred engagements. Note, Those who have been, in profession, the people of God, but have revolted from him, have a great deal to answer for more than those who never made any such profession. They were mine, they were espoused to me, and to me they bare sons and daughters; there were many among them that were devoted to God's honour and employed in his service, and were the strength and glory of the church; but now theyREN with the names of Holy Tabernacle: because the places of worship which that kingdom had, were of their own devising, their own choosing, and the worship itself their own invention; God never owned it, her tabernacle to herself; (so some render it,) nor did he own it, her tabernacle to herself; it was her own, she did it for herself, not to please God. Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah bear the name of Aholah—my tabernacle is in her, because
her temple was the place which God himself had chosen to put his name there. He acknowledged it to be his, and honoured them with the tokens of his presence in it. Note, Of those that stand in relation to God, and make profession of his name, some have greater privileges and advantages than others, and as those who have greater, are thereby rendered the more inexcusable if they revolt from God; so those who have lesser, will not thereby be rendered excusable.

3. The treacherous departure of the kingdom of Israel from God; (v. 5.) Aholah played the harlot when she was mine. Though the ten tribes had deserted the house of David, yet God owned them for his still; though Jeroboam, in setting up the golden calves, sinned, and made Israel to sin, yet, as long as they worshipped the God of Israel only, though by images, he did not quite cast them off. But the way of sin is down-hill. Aholah played the harlot, brought in the worship of Baal, (1 Kings xvi. 31.) set up that other god, that dung-hill-god, in competition with Jehovah, (1 Kings xviii. 21.) as a vile adulterous dotes on her lovers, because they are well dressed and make a figure, because they are young and handsome, (v. 6.) clothed with blue, captains and rulers, desirable young men, gentled, and that pass for men of honour. So she doted upon her neighbours, particularly the Assyrians, who had extended their conquests near them; she admired the splendour of their festivals, and the pomp of their courts and their military strength, and courted alliances with them upon any terms, as if their own God were not sufficient to be depended upon. We find one of the kings of Israel giving a thousand talents to the king of Assyria, to engage him in his interests, 2 Kings xv. 19. She doted on the Assyrians as the heathens do on their idols, and she was thus trusted and employed in the service of the state, (v. 7.) and on all their idols with which she defile herself. Note, Whatever creature we dote upon, pay homage to, and put a confidence in, we make an idol of that creature; and whatever we make an idol of, we defile ourselves with. And now again, the conviction looks back as far as the original of their nation; Neither left she her whoredoms which she brought from Egypt, v. 8. Their being idolaters in Egypt was a thing never to be forgotten; that they should be in love with Egypt's idols, even then when they were continually in fear of Egypt's tyrants and taskmasters! But (as some have observed) therefore, at that time, when Satan boasted of his having walked through the earth as all his own, and [danced] his pretensions, God did not say, Hast thou considered my people Israel in Egypt? (For they were become idolaters, and were not to be boasted of;) but, Hast thou considered my servant Job in the land of Uz? And this corrupt disposition in them, when they were first formed into a people, is an emblem of that original corruption which is born with us, and is woven into our constitutions; a strong temptation to the flesh, like that in the Israelites toward idolatry; it was bred in the bone with them, and was charged upon them long after, that they left not their whoredoms brought from Egypt; it would never be out of the flesh, though Egypt had been a house of bondage to them; thus the corrupt affections and inclinations which we brought into the world with us, we have not been able to get rid of; and though the iniquity we were born in was the source of all the calamities which human life is liable to.

4. The destruction of the kingdom of Israel for their apostacy from God. (v. 9, 10.) I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers. God first justly gave her up to her lust, (Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone,) and then gave her up to her lovers. The neighbouring nations, whose idolatries she had conformed to, and whose friendship she had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made use of as the instruments of her destruction. The Assyrians, on whom she doted, soon spied out the nakedness of the land, discovered her blind side, in which to attack her, stripped her of all her armaments and all her defences, and so uncovered her, and made her naked and bare; carried her sons and daughters into captivity, slew her with the sword, and quite destroyed that kingdom, and put an end to it. We have the story at large, 2 Kings xvii. 6, &c. where the cause of the ruin of that once flourishing kingdom by the Assyrians is showed to be their forsaking of the God of Israel, fearing other gods, and walking in the statutes of the heathens; it was for this that God was very angry with them, and removed them out of his sight, v. 18. And that the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, should be employed in executing judgments upon them was very remarkable, and shows how God, in a way of righteous judgment, often makes that a scourge to sinners, which they have inordinately set their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a tormentor to those impenitent sinners who now hearken to him and comply with him as a tempter.

Thus Samaria became famous among women, or infamous rather; she became a name; (so the word is.) not only she came to be the subject of discourse, and much talked of, as the desolations of cities and kingdoms may be, but she was thus ruined for her idolatries in terrorem—for warning to all people to take heed of doing likewise; as the public execution of notorious malefactors makes them such a name, such an ill name, as may serve to frighten others from those wicked courses which have brought them to a miserable and shameful end. Deut. xxxi. 21. All Israel shall hear and fear.

10. And when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt in her inordinate love than she, and in her whoredoms more than her sister in her whoredoms. 12. She doted upon the Assyrians her neighbours, captains and rulers clothed most gorgeously, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men. 13. Then I saw that she was defiled, that they took both one way; 14. And that she increased her whoredoms; for when she saw men pourtrayed upon the wall, the images of the Chaldeans pourtrayed with Vernon. 15. Girded with girdles upon their loins, exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads, all of them princes to look to, after the manner of the Babylonians of Chaldea, the land of their nativity.

16. And, as soon as she saw them with her eyes, she doted upon them, and sent messengers unto them into Chaldea. 17. And the Babylonians came to her into the bed of love, and they defiled her with their whoredoms; and she was polluted with them, and her mind was alienated from them. 18. So she discovered her whoredoms, and discovered her nakedness; then my mind was alienated from her, like as my mind was alienated from her sister. 19. Yet she multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein
she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt. 20. For she doted upon their paramours, whose flesh is as the flesh of asses, and whose issue is like the issue of horses.

21. Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth.

The prophet Hosea, in his time, observed that the two tribes retained their integrity in a great measure, when the ten tribes had apostatized; (Hos. xi. 12.) Ephraim indeed compasseth me about with lies, but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints; and this was justly expected from them; (Hos. v. 15.) They that believed not in the Lord have been come to naught, yet let not Judah offend. But this lasted not long; by some unhappy matches made between the house of David and the house of Ahab, the worship of Baal had been brought into the kingdom of Judah, but had been by the reforming kings worked out again; and at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes, which was in the reign of Hezeciah, things were in a good posture: but it lasted not long; in the time of the house of Eliakim, when King Hezeciah had seen the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, they became more corrupt than Israel had seen, in their inordinate love of idols, v. 11. Instead of being made better by the warning which that destruction gave them, they were made worse by it, as if they were displeased because the Lord had made that breach upon Israel; and for that reason they were so disposed to rebellion. Instead of being made to stand in awe of him as a jealous God, they therefore grew strange to him, and liked those gods better, that would admit of partners with them. Note, Those may justly expect God's judgments upon themselves, who do not take warning by his judgments upon others; who see in others what is the end of sin, and yet continue to make a light matter of it. But it is bad indeed with those who are made worse by that which should make them better, and have their lusts irritated and exasperated by that which was designed to suppress and subdue them. Jerusalem grew worse in her whoredoms than her sister Samaria had been in her whoredoms. This was observed before; (ch. xvi. 51.) Neither has Samaria committed any thing like this, nor shall Jerusalem, that had been a faithful city, became a harlot, Isa. xi. 21. She also doted upon the Assyrians, (v. 12.) joined in league with them, joined in worship with them; grew to be in love with their captains and rulers, and cried up them as finer and more accomplished gentlemen than any that ever the land of Israel produced: "See how richly, how Newly, they are dressed, (thither must goers shew; how well they sit a horse, they are horsermen riding on horses; how charmingly they look, all of them desirably young men." And thus they grew to affect every thing that was foreign, and to despise their own nation; and even the religion of it was mean and homely, and not to be compared with the curiosity and gaiety that was in the heathen temples. This was now the case; they were in all league, with the Chaldeans. Hezeciah himself was faulty this way, when he was proud of the court which the king of Babylon made to him, and complimented his ambassadors with the sight of all his treasures, Isa. xxxix. 2. And the humour increased; (v. 14.) She doted upon the pictures of the Babylonian captains, (v. 15. 16.) what with her with that kingdom, invited them to come and settle in Jerusalem, that they might refine the genius of the Jewish nation, and make it more polite; nay, they sent for patterns of their images, altars, and temples, and made use of them in their worship; thus was she polluted with her whoredoms, (v. 17.) and thereby she discovered her own whoredom, v. 18. her own strong inclination to idolatry. And when she had enough of the Chaldeans, and grew tired of them, and disposed to break her league with them, as Jechoniam and Zedekiah did, her mind being alienated from them, she courted the Egyptians, doted upon their paramours, (v. 19.) she was come to naught, and broken her alliance with them, and, to strengthen the alliance, would join with them in their idolatries, and then depend upon them to be their protectors from all other nations; for so wise, so rich, so strong, was the Egyptian nation, and came to such perfection in idolatry, that there is no nation now which they can take such satisfaction in as in Egypt, according to the remembrance the lewdness of their youth, (v. 19.) the lewdness of her youth, v. 21. (1.) They pleased themselves with the remembrance of it. When they began to set their affections upon Egypt, they encouraged themselves to put a confidence in that kingdom, because of the old acquaintance they had with it, as if they still retained the lust and relish of the leeks and onions they had enjoyed there, and for a season were not monuments of prison and captivity. It lasted not long, but, when they had been a while in Egypt, they learned there, and brought up with them from thence. When they began an acquaintance with Egypt, they remembered how merrily their fathers worshipped the golden calf, what music and dancing they had at that sport, which they learned in Egypt; and hoped they should now have a fair pretence to come to that again. Thus she multiplies her whoredoms, v. (2.) They called it God's remembrance, and provoked him to remember it against them. God had said indeed that he would reckon with them for the golden calf, that idol of Egypt; (Exod. xxxii. 34.) but such was his patience, that he seemed to have forgotten it, till they, by their league now with the Egyptians against the Chaldeans, did, as it were, put him in mind of it; and he is now come to the day of visitation, when he will visit, and make such an end of it as he said, visit for that. It is very observable how this adulteress changes her lovers; she dotes first on the Assyrians, then she thought the Chaldeans finer, and courted them; after awhile her mind was alienated from them, and she thought the Egyptians more powerful, (v. 26.) and she must contract an intimacy with them; which shows the folly, [1.] Of fiercely lusts, when they are indulge, they grow haughty and sly, are soon surfeited, but never satisfied, they must have variety; and what is loved one day is loathed the next. Unius adulterii matrimonium vacat, as Seneca observes. [2.] Of idolatry, Those who think one God too little, will not think a hundred sufficient, but will still be for trying more, as finding all insuffi- cient. [3.] The same thing may very well be true of others. If we stretch our hand to a strange god, shall not God search this out? Ne
doubt he shall, and when he has found it, can he be pleased with it? No, (v. 18.) Then my mind was alienated from her, as it was from her sister. How could the pure and holy God any longer take delight in such a degraded generation? Note, Sin alienates God's mind from the sinner, and, justly, for it is the alienation of the sinner's mind from God, but not, and only a thousand ways, to those from whom God's mind is alienated; for whom he turns from he will turn against.

22. Therefore, O Aholiah, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will raise up thy lovers against thee, from whom thy mind is alienated, and I will bring them against thee on every side; 23. The Babylonians, and all the Chaldeans, Pekod, and Shoal, and Koah, and all the Assyrians with them: all of them desirable young men, captains and rulers, great lords and renowned, all of them riding upon horses. 24. And they shall come against thee with chariots, wagons, and wheels, and with an assembly of people, which shall set against thee buckler, and shield, and helmet, round about: and I will set judgment before them, and they shall judge thee according to their judgments. 25. And I will set my jealousy against thee, and they shall deal furiously with thee: they shall take away thy nose and thine ears; and thy remnant shall fall by the sword: they shall take thy sons and thy daughters; and thy residue shall be devoured by the fire. 26. They shall also strip thee out of thy clothes, and take away thy fair jewels. 27. Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt: so that thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them, nor remember Egypt any more. 28. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will deliver thee into the hand of them whom thou hatest, into the hand of them from whom thy mind is alienated: 29. And they shall deal with thee hatefully, and shall take away all thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare; and the nakedness of thy whoredoms shall be discovered, both thy lewdness and thy whoredoms. 30. I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after the heathen, and because thou art polluted with their idols. 31. Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister; therefore will I give her cup into thy hand. 32. Thus saith the Lord God, Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large: thou shalt be laughed to scorn and had in derision; it containedh much. 33. Thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria. 34. Thou shalt even drink it, and suck it out, and thou shalt break the sherds thereof, and pluck off thine own breasts: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. 35. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast forgotten me, and cast me behind thy back, therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms.

Jerusalem stands indicted by the name of Aholiah for that she, as a false traitor to her sovereign Lord the God of heaven, not having his fear before her eyes, but moved by the instigation of the devil, had revolted from her allegiance to him, had compassed and imagined to shake off his government, had kept up a correspondence, and shown a confederacy, with his enemies, and the pretenders to a still contempt of his crown and dignity: to this indictment she has pleaded, Not guilty; I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim. But it is found against her by the notorious evidence of the fact, and she stands convicted of it, nor has any thing material to offer why judgment should not be given, and executing the warrant and commandment of law. In these verses, therefore, we have the sentence.

1. Her old confederates must be her executioners; and those whom she had courted to be her leaders in sin, are now to be employed as instruments of her punishment; (v. 22.) "I will raise up thy lovers against thee; the Chaldeans, whom formerly thou didst so much admire, and coveted an acquaintance with, and been under a contract from whom thy mind is since alienated, and with whom thou hast perjured a broken covenant. They are called thy lovers, (v. 22.) and yet, (v. 28.) them whom thou hatest. Note, It is common for sinful love soon to turn into hatred; as Amon's to Tamar. Those of headstrong and unreasonable passions are often very hot against these persons and things, that a little before they were as hot for. Fearful run to extremes; nay, and wise men may see cause to change their sentiments. And therefore as we should rejoice and weep as if we rejoiced not and wept not; so we should love and hate as if we loved not and hated not. Ita am a tuquam omnis—Love as one who may have cause to feel aversion.

2. The execution to be done upon her is very terrible. 22. They should come against her on every side; (v. 22.) those of the seven nations that constituted the Chaldean army, (v. 23.) all of them great lords and renowned, whose pomp and grandeur and splendid appearance made them look the more amiable, when they came as friends to protect and patronise Jerusalem, but the more formidable when they came to chastise its treacherous, and aimed at no less than its ruin. (1.) They shall come with a great deal of military force, (v. 24.) with chariots and wagons, furnished with all necessary provisions for a camp, with arms and ammunition, bag and baggage, with a vast army, and well armed. (2.) They shall have justice on their sides; "I will set judgment before them;" (they shall have right with them as well as might: for, the king of Babylon had just cause to make war upon the king of Judah, because he had broken his league with him); "and therefore they shall judge thee, not only according to God's judgments, as the instruments of his justice, to punish thee for the indignities done to him, but according to their judgments, according to the law of nations, to punish thee for thy pernicious dealings with them." (3.) They shall execute the war with a great deal of fury and resentment; it being more of revenge than war, they shall deal with thee hatefully, v. 29. This will make the execution the more severe, that their words will be dipped in poison. Thou hatest them,
and they shall deal hatefully with thee; those that hate, will be hated, and hatefully dealt with. (4.) God himself will lead them on, and this anger shall be upon them. (v. 24.) They shall deal hatefully against thee, that shall kindle this fire; and then they shall deal furiously with thee. If men deal ever so hatefully, ever so furiously, with us, if we have God on our side, we need not fear them, they can do us no real hurt. But if men deal furiously with us, and God set his jealousy against us too, what will become of us?

The particulars of the sentence here passed upon this notorious adulteress are, [1.] That all she has shall be seized on. The clothes and the fair jewels, with which she had endeavoured to recommend herself to her lovers, these she shall be stripped of. (v. 25.) All those things that were the ornaments of their state, shall be taken away; "They shall take away all thy labour, all that thou hast gotten by thy labour, and shall leave thee naked and bare," (v. 29.) Both city and country shall be impoverished, and all the wealth of both swept away. [2.] That her children should go into captivity; "They shall take thy sons and thy daughters, and make slaves of them, (v. 25.) for they are children of whoredoms, unworthy the dignity and privileges of Israelites," H. S. ii. 4. [3.] That she shall be stigmatized and deformed; "They shall take away thy nose and thy lips, and shall make thee barren, and naked, and bare, nude, and bald, and defiled, for ever odious," (v. 25.) This intimates the many cruelties of the Chaldean soldiers toward the Jews that fell into their hands; whom, it is probable, they used barbarously. Some will have this to be understood figuratively; and by the nose they think is meant the kingly dignity, and by the ears that of the priesthood. [4.] That she shall be exposed to shame; Thy lewdness and thy whoredoms shall be discovered; (v. 29.) as when a malefactor is punished, all his crimes are ripped up, and repeated to his disgrace; what was secret then comes to light, and what was done long since is then called to mind. [5.] That she shall be quite cut off and ruined; "The remnant of thy people that have escaped the famine and pestilence, shall fall by the sword; and the residue of thy houses that have not been battred, shall go into captivity by the sword of the fire," (v. 35.) And this shall be the end of Jerusalem.

3. Because she has trod in the steps of Samaria's sins, she must expect no other than Samaria's fate. It is common, in giving judgment, to have an eye to precedents; so has God, in passing this sentence on Jerusalem; (v. 31, &c.) Thou hast walked in the way of thy sister, notwithstanding the warning thou hast had given thee, by the fatal consequences of her wickedness; and therefore I will give her cup, her portion of miseries, into thy hand, the cup of the Lord's fury, which will be to thee a cup of trembling." Now, (1.) This cup is said to be deep and large, and to contain much, (v. 32.) abundance of God's wrath, and abundance of miseries, (v. 35.) and a cup that shall make thee feel, as that which we read of, Jer. xxv. 15, 16. The cup of divine vengeance holds a great deal, and so they will find, into whose hand it shall be put. (2.) They shall be made to drink the very dregs of this cup, as the wicked are said to do; (Ps. lxxx. 8.) "Thou shalt drink it and suck it out, not because it is pleasant, but because it is forced upon thee; (v. 34.) they shall drink the dregs of this cup, dregs only of their own bases, for indignation at the extreme bitterness of this cup, being full of the fury of the Lord," (Isa. lii. 20.) as men in great anguish tear their hair, and throw every thing from them. Finding there is no remedy, but it must be drank, (for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God,) thou shalt have no manner of patience in the drinking of it." (3.) They shall be intoxicated by it, made sick, and be at their wits' end, as men in drink are, staggering, and stumbling, and ready to fall; (v. 37.) Thou shalt be filled with the cup of fury. Note, Drunkenness has sorrow attending it, to such a degree, that the utmost confusion and astonishment are here represented by it. Who would think that that which is such a force upon nature, such a scandal to it, which deprives men of their reason, disorders them to the last degree, and is therefore expressive of the greatest misery, we should yet be able with many a beloved sin; that they should damn their own souls, to distemper their own bodies? Who has wo and sorrow like them? Prov. xxiii. 29. (4.) Being so intoxicated, they shall become as drunkards deserve to be, a laughing-stock to all about them; (v. 32.) Thou shalt be laughed to scorn, and had in derision, as acting ridiculously in every thing thou goest about. When God is about to ruin a people, he makes their judges fools, and yours contempt on their princes, Job xii. 17, 21.

4. In all this God will be justified, and by all this they will be reformed; and so the issue even of this will be God's glory and their good. (1.) They have been bad, very bad, and that justifies God in all that is brought upon them; (v. 30.) I will do these things unto thee, because thou hast gone a whoring after other gods, and have not kept the covenant of God that brought thee out of Egypt. (2.) Some that are thus hardened, I have forgotten; (v. 34.) To whom I had made a covenant, and brought them out of Egypt; Who has wo and sorrow like them? But this will not be so, my thou shall not be forgotten, and cast me behind thy back. Note, Forgetfulness of God, and a contempt of him, of his eye upon us, and authority over us, are at the bottom of all our treacherous and adulterous departures from him. Therefore men wander after idols, because they forget God, and their obligations to him; nor could they look with so much desire and delight upon the baits of sin, if they did not forget God behind their back, as not worthy to be regarded. And those who put such an affront upon God, how can they think but that it should turn upon themselves at last? Therefore bear thou also thy lewdness and thy whoredoms; that is, thou shalt suffer the punishment of it, and then alone must bear the blame. Men need no more to sink them than the weight of their own sins; and they who will not part with them, will never be beloved; and if they do not bear them, (2.) They shall be better, much better, and this fire, though consuming to many, shall be refining to a remnant; (v. 27.) Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee. The judgments which were brought upon them by their sins, parted between them and their sins, and taught them at length to say, What have we to do any more with idols? Observe, [1.] How inexpressive the change was; Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt. Their disposition to idolatry was early and innate, their practice of it was ancient, and had gained a sort of prescription by long usage. [2.] How complete the cure was, notwithstanding; "Though it has taken root, yet it shall be made to cease, to the end that they shall not so much as lift up their eyes;" Observe, [1.] How inexpressive the change was; Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt. They "shall not make any more idols;" Observe, [1.] How inexpressive the change was; Thy whoredoms were brought from the land of Egypt. They "shall not make any more idols." They shall avoid the occasions of this sin, for they shall not so much as look upon an idol, lest their hearts should unawares walk after their eyes. And they shall abandon all inclinations to it; They shall not remember Egypt, they shall not retain any of that affection for idols, which they had from the very infancy of their nation; but, though their captivity, their bondage in Egypt, and lost it through the grace of God, in their captivity in Babylon, which this was the blessed fruit of, even the taking away of sin; of that sin; so that whereas, before the captivity, no nation (all things considered) was more inopportunely bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that captivity, no nation was more
36. The Lord said moreover unto me, Son of man, wilt thou judge Aholah and Ahollibah? yea, declare unto them their abominations; 37. That they have committed adultery, and blood is in their hands, and with their idols have they committed adultery; and have also caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass for them through the fire, to devour them. 38. Moreover, this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. 39. For when they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of my house. 40. And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger was sent; and, lo, they came; for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thine eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments, 41. And sattest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. 42. And a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her: and with the men of the common sort were brought Sabeans from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. 43. Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, Will they now commit whoredoms with her, and she with them? 44. Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman that playeth the harlot; so went they in unto Aholah and unto Ahollibah, the lewd women. 45. And the righteous men, they shall judge them after the manner of the adulteresses, and after the manner of women that shed blood; because they are adulteresses, and blood is in their hands. 46. For thus saith the Lord God, I will bring up a company upon them, and will give them to be removed and spoiled. 47. And the company shall stone them with stones, and despacht them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn up their houses with fire. 48. Thus will I cause lewdness to cease out of the land, that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness. 49. And they shall recompense your lewdness upon you, and ye shall bear the sins of your idols: and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

After the ten tribes were carried into captivity, and that kingdom was made quite desolate, the remains of it by degrees incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and gained a settlement (many of them) in Jerusalem; so that the two sisters were in effect become one again: and therefore, in these verses, the prophet takes those to task jointly, who were thus conjoined; "Wilt thou judge Aholah and Ahollibah together?" v. 36. Wilt thou go about to excuse them? Thou seest the matter is so bad as not to bear an excuse." Or, rather, "They shall now be employed, in God's name, to judge them, ch. xx. 4. The matter is rather worse than better since the union."

1. Let them be made to see the sins they are guilty of; declare unto them openly and boldly their abominations.

2. They have been guilty of gross idolatries; here called adultery; With their idols they have committed adultery, (v. 37,) have broken their marriage-covenant with God; have lusted after the gratifications of a carnal, sensual mind in the worship of God. This is the first and worst of the abominations he is to charge them with.

3. They have committed the most barbarous murders, in slaughtering their children to Moloch, a sin so unnatural, that they deserve to bear of it on all occasions; Blood is in their hands, innocent blood, the blood of their own children, which they have caused to pass through the fire, (v. 37,) not that they might be dedicated to the idols, but that they might be devoured; a sign that they loved their idols better than that which was dearest to them in the world.

3. They have profaned the sacred things with which God had dignified and distinguished them; this they have done unto me, this indignity, this injury, v. 38. Every contempt put upon that which is holy, reflects upon him who is the Fountain of holiness, and from a relation to whom whatever is called holy has its denomination. God had set up his sanctuary among them, but they defiled it, by making it a house of merchandise, a den of thieves; nay, and much worse, there they set up their idols, and worshipped them, and there they shed the blood of God's prophets. God had revealed to them his holy sabbaths, but they profaned them, by doing all manner of servile work therein, or perhaps by sports and recreations on that day, not only practised, but encouraged, by authority. They defiled the sanctuary, and the sabbath-day also, by what they profaned sabbath. To defile the sanctuary was bad enough on any day, but to do it on the sabbath-day was an aggravation. We commonly say, the better day, the better deed; but here, the better day, the worse deed. God takes notice of all circumstances of sin, which add to the guilt. He shows (v. 39,) the shame which was theirs for so long as both of the sanctuary and of the sabbath. They slew their children, and sacrificed them to their idols, to the great dishonour both of God and of the human nature; and then came, the same day, their hands imbored with the blood of their children, and their clothes stained with it, to attend in God's sanctuary; not to ask pardon for what they had done, but to present themselves before him, and tell him, "We do thee homage, we accept the sacrifice, we are reconciled to thee, and we are reconciled to our sins.""But the Lord knew their thoughts. They did not repent, but continued to do evil; and consequently he waited upon them with anger only, and punished them with vengeance.

Note. 1. It is a punishment of God's solemn ordinances, when those that are grossly and openly profane and violate, impudently and ineptly so intrude upon the services and privileges of them. Give not that which is holy unto dogs. Friend, how camest thou in hither?
4. They have courted foreign alliances, being proud of them, and repose a confidence in them. This also is represented by the sin of adultery, for it was a departure from God, not only to whom alone they ought to pay their homage, and to whom alone their applause, but in whom alone they ought to put their trust, and not in creatures. Israel was a peculiar people, must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations; and they profane their crown, and by their honour in the dust, when they covet to be like them, or in league with them. But this they have now done; they have entered into strict alliances with the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians, the most renowned and potent kingdoms at that time; but they scorned alliances with the petty kingdoms and states that lay near them, which yet might have been of more real service to them.

Note, Affecting an acquaintance and correspondence with great people has often been a snare to good people. Let us see how Jerusalem courts her high allies, thinking thereby to make herself considerable.

(1.) She privately requested that a public embassy might be sent to her; (v. 40.) You sent a messenger for men to come from far. It seems, then, that the neighbours had no desire to come into a confederacy with Jerusalem, but she thrust herself upon them, and sent underhand to desire them to court her; and, if, they came. The wisest and best men in the world have been known to have been in favor to work and conversation with profane and wicked people; but it is no sign either of wisdom or goodness to covet an intimacy with such, and to court it.

(2.) Great preparation is made for the reception of these foreign ministers, for their public entry and public audience; which is compared to the pains that an adulteress takes to make herself look handsome in Jezebel-like, that Jezebel-like, thouaintedst thy face, and deckest thyself with ornaments. 8. Jews and princes made themselves new clothes, fitted up the rooms of state, beautified the furniture, and made it look fresh. Thou satest upon a stately bed, (v. 41.) a stately throne; a table was prepared, wherewith thou hast set mine oil and mine incense.

This was either, [1.] A feast for the ambassadors, a public treat, agreeable to the other preparations. They were at a sense and concert, and oil to anoint their heads. Or, [2.] An altar already furnished for the ambassadors use in the worship of their idols; let them know that the Israelites were not so strait-laced but that they could allow foreigners the free exercise of their religion among them, and furnish them with chapels, yea, and complimented them so far as to join with them in their devotions; though the law of their God was another; yet they could easily dispense with themselves to oblige a friend. The oil and incense God calls his, not only because they were the gift of his providence, but because they should have been offered at his altar; which was an aggravation of their sin in serving idols and idolaters with them. See Hos. ii. 8.

(3.) There was great joy at their coming, as if it were the common sorrow, and the common sadness, and the common grief to Jerusalem; for you before; (v. 42.) a voice of a multitude being at ease was with her. The people were very easy, for they thought themselves very safe and happy now that they had such powerful allies; and therefore attended the ambassadors with loud huzzas and acclamations of joy. A great confluence of people there was to the court upon this occasion. The men of the common sort were there to grace the solemnity, and to increase the crowds; and with them were brought Sabians from the wilderness. The margin reads it drunken from the wilderness, that would drink healths to the prosperity of this grand alliance, and force them upon others, and be most noisy in shouting upon this occasion. Who
ever they were, in honour of the ambassadors, they put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads, which made the cavalcade appear very splendid.

(4.) God by his prophets warned them against making their foreign alliances with foreign nations; (v. 43.) Then said I unto her that was old in adulteries, that from the first was fain of leagues with heathens, (Judg. iii. 6.) and afterward of making alliances with their kingdoms; and, though often disappointed therein, would never be dissuaded from it; (This was the adultery she was old in.) I said, Will they then commit whoredoms with her, and live? Surely experience and observation will by this time have convinced both them and her, that an alliance between the nations of the Jews and a heathen nation can never be for the advantage of either. They are iron and clay that will not mix, nor will God bless it, or smile upon it. But, it seems, her being old in these adulteries, instead of weaning her from them, as one would expect, does but make her the more impudent and insolent in them; for though she was thus admonished of the folly of it, yet they went in unto her, v. 44. A bargain was soon clapped up, and a league made, first with this, and then with the other, foreign state. Samaria did so, Jerusalem did so, like lewd women. They could not rest satisfied in the embraces of God's laws and statutes, and the assurance of protection he gave them; they could not think he could secure them with them security enough. But they must by treaties and leagues, politic ones (they thought) and well concerted, throw themselves into the arms of foreign princes, and put their interests under their protection. Note, These hearts go a whoring from God, that take a complacency in the pomp of the world, and put a confidence in its wealth, and in an arm of flesh.

II. Let them be made to foresee the judgments that are coming upon them for these sins; (v. 45.) The righteous men, they shall judge them. Some make the instruments of their destruction to be the righteous men that shall judge them. The Assyrians that destroyed Samaria, the Chaldeans that destroyed Jerusalem, those were comparatively righteous, had a more regard for justice between man and man, and were more abundantly justly represented the treachery of the Jewish nation; however, they executed God's judgments, which, we are sure, are all righteous. Others understand it of the prophets, whose office it was, in God's name, to judge them, and pass sentence upon them. Or, we may take it as an appeal to all righteous men, to all that have a sense of equity; they shall be judged concerning these things, and agree in their verdict, that, forsooth as they have been notoriously guilty of adultery and murder, and the guilt is national, therefore they ought to suffer the pains and penalties which by law are inflicted upon women in their personal capacity, that shed blood, and are adulteresses. Righteous men will say, "Why should bloody, filthy cities escape any better than bloody, filthy persons? Judge, I pray thee," Isa. v. 3.

This judgment being given by the righteous men, the righteous God will award execution. See here,

1. What the execution will be, v. 46, 47. The same as before, v. 25, &c. God will bring a company of enemies upon them, who shall be made to serve his holy purposes, even then when they are serving their own sinful appetites and passions. These enemies shall easily prevail, for God will give them into their hands to be removed and spoiled; this company shall stone them with stones as male factors; shall single them out, and despatch them with their swords; and, as was sometimes done in severe executions, (witness of Achan,) they
shall slay their children, and burn their houses. 2. What will be the effects of it. (1.) Thus they shall suffer for their sins; Their lewdness shall be recompensed upon them; (v. 49.) and they shall bear the sins of their idols, v. 35, 49. Thus God will assart the honour of his broken law and injured government, and let the world know what a just and jealous God he is. (2.) Thus shall they suffer, 1. From God: I will cause lewdness to cease out of the land, v. 27, 48. The destruction of God's city, like the death of God's saints, shall do that for them which ordinances and providences before could not do, it shall quite take away their sin; so that Jerusalem shall rise out of its ashes a new lump, as gold comes out of the furnace, purified from its dross. (2.) Thus shall they suffer, 2. From enemies: I will give them up to the hands of the heathen, and nations, and restless enemies, shall bring upon them blindness, so as to blind them, and make them mad; blindness shall lie upon them, from the least of them even to the greatest, v. 49. They shall be as one that treadeth upon a snare; they shall stumble and fall, and it shall be the hand of the Lord that shall bring it upon them, v. 50.

CHAP. XXIV.

Here are two sermons, in this chapter, preached on a particular occasion, and they are both from mount Sinai, the mount of terror, both from mount Hesh, the mount of curses; both speak the approaching fate of Jerusalem. The occasion of them was the king of Babylon's laying siege to Jerusalem, and the design of them is to show that in the day of God's purpose, that he shall be not only master of the place, but destroyer of it. 1. By the sign of flesh boiling in a pot over the fire, are showed the miseries that Jerusalem should suffer during the siege, and justly, for her filthiness, v. 1-14. 2. By the sign of Ezekiel's apt mourning for the death of his wife, is showed that the calamities coming upon Jerusalem were too great to be lamented, so great that they should sink down under them into a silent despair, v. 15-27.

1. AGAIN, in the ninth year, in the tenth month, of the day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this same day; the king of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day. 3. And utter a parable unto the rebellious house, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it: 4. Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. 5. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein. 6. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Wo to the bloody city! I will even make the pile for fire great. 10. Heap on wood, kindle the fire, consume the flesh, and space it well, and let the bones be burnt. 11. Then set it empty upon the coals thereof, that the brass of it may be hot, and may burn, and that the filthiness of it may be molten in it, that the scum of it may be consumed. 12. She hath wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her; her scum shall be in the fire. 13. In thy filthiness is lewdness: because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused mine fury to rest upon thee. 14. I the Lord have spoken it; it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent: according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God. 15. We have here, 1. The notice God gives to Ezekiel in Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to Jerusalem, just at the time when he was doing it; (v. 2.) "Son of man, take notice, the king of Babylon, who is now abroad with his army, thou knowest not where, set up a sign board against Jerusalem this same day." It was many miles, it was many days' journey, from Jerusalem to Babylon; perhaps the last intelligence they had from the army was, that the design was upon Rabbath of the children of Ammon, and that the campaign was to be opened with the siege of that city. But God knew, and could tell the prophet. This day, at this time, Jerusalem is invested, and the Chaldean army is set down before it. Note, As all times, so all places, even the most remote, are present with God, and under his view. He tells it the prophet, that the prophet might tell it the people, that so, when it proved to be punctually true, as they would find by the public intelligence in a little time, it might be a confirmation of the prophet's mission, and they might infer that, since he had right news, he was so in his predictions, for he owed both to the same correspondence he had with Heaven. 2. The notice which he orders him to take of it. He must enter it in his book, memorandum, that in the ninth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, (for thence Ezekiel dated, ch. i, 2, which was also the ninth year of Zechariah's reign,) for he began to reign when Jehoiachin was carried off; in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem; and the date here agrees exactly with the date in the history, 2 Kings xxv. 1. See how God reveals things to his servants the prophets, especially these things which serve to confirm their word, and so to confirm their own faith. Note, It is good to keep an exact account of the times and seasons of God's dealings, in order sometimes to contribute to the manifesting of God's glory so much the more in them, and the explaining and confirming of scripture-prophecies. Known unto God are all his works. 3. The notice which he orders him to give to the people thereupon, the purport of which is, that he should lay siege to Jerusalem, now begun, will infallibly end in the ruin of it. This he must say to the rebellious house, to those of them that were in Babylon, to be by them communicated to those that were
yet in their own land. A rebellious house will soon be a ruinous house.

1. He must show them this by a sign; for that stupid people needed to be taught as children are. The comparison made use of is that of a boiling pot. This agrees with Jeremiah's vision many years before, when he first began to be a prophet, and, probably, was designed by God. (Jer. ii. 11.) And a weeping pot, with the face toward the north; and the explanation of it, (v. 15.) makes it to signify the besieging of Jerusalem by the northern nations. And as this comparison is intended to confirm Jeremiah's vision, so also to confront the vain confidence of the princes of Jerusalem, who had said, (ch. xi. 5.) This city is the caldron, and we are the flesh; meaning, We are safe, hemmed in, surrounded with walls of brass. "Well," says God, "it shall be so, you shall be boiled in Jerusalem, as the flesh in the caldron, boiled to pieces; let the pot be set on with water in it; (v. 4.) let it be filled with the flesh of the choice of the flock, (v. 5.) with the choice pieces, (v. 4.) and the marrow-bones, and let the other bones serve for fuel, that, one way or other, all might be consumed. Nay, in the place of the pot will be burnt; and yet there was no getting out of it, but they must be forced to abide by it, as the flesh in a boiling pot.

2. He must give them a comment upon this sign. It is to be construed as a wo to the bloody city, v. 6. And again, (v. 9.) being bloody, let it go to pot, to be boiled, it is the fittest place for it. Let us here see,

(1.) What is the cause God takes with it. Jerusalem, during the siege, is like a pot boiling over the fire, all in a heat, all in a hurry. [1.] Care is taken to keep a good fire under the pot, which signifies the cleseness of the siege, and the many vigorous attacks made upon the city by the besiegers, and especially the continued wrath of God burning against them; (v. 9.) I will make the fire for great. Commission is given to them, (v. 10.) to heap on wood, and kindle the fire; to make Jerusalem more and more hot to the inhabitants. Note, The fire which God kindles for the consuming of impious sinners, shall never abate, much less go out, for want of fuel. Tophet has fire and much wood. Isa. xxx. 33. [2.] The meat, as it is boiled, is taken out, and given to the Chaldeans for them to feast upon. "Consume the flesh, let it be thoroughly boiled; fire it well, and make it savoury, for those that will feed sweeterly upon it; let the bones be burnt;" (either the bones under the pot, let them be consumed with the other fuel, or, as some think, the bones in the pot;) "let it boil so furiously, that not only the flesh may be sodden, but even the bones softened; let all the inhabitants of Jerusalem be, by sickness, sword, and famine, destroyed, boiled to rage; spew it to all;" (v. 6.) "Bring it out piece by piece; let every man be delivered into the enemy's hand, to be either put to the sword, or made a prisoner. Let them be an easy prey to them, and let the Chaldeans fall upon them as eagerly as a hungry man devours upon a good dish of meat, when it is set before him. Let no lot fall upon it; every piece in the pot shall be fetched out, and devoured, first or last, and therefore it is no matter for casting lots which shall be fetched out first."

It was a very severe military execution, when David measured Moab with two lines to put to death, and one full line to keep alive, 2. Sam. vii. 2. But here is no line, no lot of mercy, made use of; all goes one way, and that is to destruction. [3.] When all the broth is boiled away, the pot is set empty upon the coals, that it may burn too, which signifies the setting of the city on fire, v. 11. The scum of the land, the scum of the pot, is that all the rest of the meat, is so got into the pot, that there is no making it clean by washing or scouring it, and therefore it must be done by fire; so let the fierceness be burnt out of it, or, rather, molten in it, and burnt with it. Let the vipers and their nest be consumed together.

(2.) What is the quarrel God has with it. He would not take these severe methods with Jerusalem, but that he is provoked to it; she deserves to be thus dealt with, for,

[1.] It is a bloody city; (v. 7, 8.) Her blood is in the midst of her. Many a barbarous murder has been committed in the very heart of the city; and, they have a disposition to cruelty in their hearts; they inwardly delight in bloodshed, and so it is in the midst of them. Nay, they commit their murder by the destruction of the walls, the fortifications, and the seats of power, and then they did not avail them, in defence of the justice both of God and man. She did not pour out the blood she shed upon the ground, to cover it with dust, as being ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment. She did not look upon it as a filthy thing, proper to be concealed, (Dent. xxviii. 13.) much less dangerous, Nay, she poured out the innocent blood she shed, after a rood up, and take vengeance, n. 8. It could not be avoided, but that God must in anger visit for these things, his soul must be avenged on such a nation as this. If such impudent murders as these, that even dare divine vengeance, go unpunished, it will be said that God has forsaken the earth. It is absolutely necessary that such a bloody city as this should have blood given her to drink, for she is worthy, for the vindicating of the honour of divine justice. And the crime being public and notorious, it is fit that the punishment should be so too; I have set her blood on the top of a rock. Jerusalem was to be made an example, and therefore was made a spectacle, to the world; God dealt with her according to the law of retaliation. It is fit that those who sin before all, should be rebuked before all; and that their reputation should not be consulted by the condignity of their punishment. But, for this, they were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin.

[2.] It is a filthy city. Great notice is taken, in this explanation of the comparison, of the scum of this pot, which signifies the sin of Jerusalem, working up and appearing when the judgments of God were upon her. It is the potstave scum is therein, (v. 10.) out of the meat, or, as some think, out of the water. It is the scum that went not forth out of her, (v. 12.) that stuck to the pot when all was boiled away, and was molten in it; (v. 11.) some of this runs over into the fire, (v. 12.) inflames that, and makes it burn the more furiously, but it shall all be consumed at last, v. 11. When the hand of God was gone out against them, instead of humbling themselves under it, repenting and reforming, and according the punishment of their impiety, they grew more impudent and outrageous in sin; quarrelled with God, persecuted his prophets, were fierce to one another, enraged to the last de-
gree against the Chaldeans, scarcely at the stone, gnawed: their chain, and were like a wild bull in a net. This was their scour; in their distress they trespassed yet more against the Lord; like that king Ahaz, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. There is little hope of those who are made worse by that which should make them better; whose corruptions are excised and exasperated by those rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God, whom they despised and of the suppressing and subduing of them; or of those whose scour boiled up once in convictions, and confessions of sin, as if it would be taken off by reformation, but afterward returned again in a revolt from their good overtures; and the heart that seemed softened is hardened again. This was Jerusalem's case. She has sworn with lies, wearied God with purposes and promises of amendment, which she never stood to, swear'd herself with her carnal confidences, which have all deceived her, v. 12. Note, Those that follow lying vanities, weary themselves with the pursuit. Now see her doom, v. 13, 14. Because she is incurably wicked, she is abandoned to ruin, without remedy. First, Methods and means of reformation were to be used, v. 13. Do thy fitness in weakness; thou art become obstinate and impudent in it; then hast got a habit of it, which is confirmed by frequent acts. In thy fitness there is a rooted lewdness; as appears by this, I have hurst thee, and thou wast not hurst. I have given thee medicine, but it has done thee no good. I have used the means of cleansing thee, but they have been ineffectual; the intention of them has not been answered. "No. It is sad to think how many there are on whom ordinances and providences are all lost. Secondly, It is therefore resolved that no more such methods shall be used; Thou shalt not be hurst from thy fitness any more. The fire shall no longer be a refining fire, but a consuming fire, and therefore shall not be mitigated and shortened; it has been, but shall be continued in extremity, till it has done its destroying work. Note, Those that will not be healed, are justly given up, and their case adjudged desperate. There is a day coming when it will be said, He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Thirdly, Nothing remains then but to bring them to utter ruin; I will cause my fiery rage to come upon them, and consume them. Those of the common sort are cast in the midst of the Jew's wrath, that wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thess. ii. 16. They deserve it; According to thy doings they shall judge thee, v. 14. And God will do it. The sentence is bound on with repeated ratifications, that they might be awakened to see how certain their ruin was; "If the Lord have spoken it, who am able to make good what I have spoken; it shall come to pass, nothing shall prevent it, for I will do it myself, I will not go back upon any entreaties, the decree is gone forth, and I will not spare in compassion to them, neither will I repent." He will neither change his mind nor his way. Hereby the prophet was forbidden to intercede for them, and they were forbidden to flatter themselves with hopes of an escape. God hath said it, and he will do it. Note, The declarations of God's wrath against sinners are as inviolable as the assurances he has given of favour to his people; and the case of such is sad indeed, who have brought it to this issue, that either God must be false, or they must be damned. 15. Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 16. Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke; yet shall not thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. 17. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thy head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. 18. So I spoke unto the people in the morning; and even my wife died; and I did in the morning as I was commanded. 19. And the people said unto me, Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou doest so? 20. Then I answered them, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 21. Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the excellency of your strength, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitteth; and your sons and your daughters whom ye have left shall fall by the sword. 22. And ye shall do as I have done; ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. 23. And your tires shall be upon your heads, and your shoes upon your feet; ye shall not mourn nor weep; but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one towards another. 24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do; and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God. 25. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that wherupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters, 26. That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears! 27. In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him which is escaped, and thou shalt speak, and be no more dumb; and thou shalt be a sign unto them; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 28. These verses conclude what we have been upon all along from the beginning of this book, to wit, Ezekiel's prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem; for, after this, though he prophesied much concerning other nations, yet he said no more concerning Jerusalem, till he heard of the destruction of it, almost three years after, ch. xxxiii. 21. He had assured them, in the former part of this chapter, that there was no hope at all of the preventing of the trouble; here he assures them that they should not have the ease of weeping for it. Observe here, 1. The sign by which this was represented to them, and were a sign that cost the prophet very dear; the more shame for them, that when he, by a divine appointment, was at such an expense to affect them with what he had to deliver, yet they were not affected by it. 1. He must lose a good wife, that should suddenly be taken from him by death. God gave him notice of it before, that it might be the less surprize to him; (v. 16.) Behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke. Note, (1.) A married state may very well agree with the prophetic office; it is honourable in all, and therefore not sinful in ministers. (2.) Much of the comfort of human life lies in agreeable relations: no doubt, Ezekiel found a
prudent, tender yoke-fellow, that shared with him in his griefs and cares, to be a happy companion in his captivity. (3.) Those in the conjugal relation must be to each other not only a covering of the eyes, (Gen. xx. 16.) to restrain wandering looks after others; but a desire of the eyes, to engage pleasing looks on one another. A beloved wife is the desire of the eyes, which find not any object more grateful. (4.) That is least safe which is most dear. Our masters, if we have lost our own, they may be removed from us, and may become the sorrow of our hearts; which is a good reason why those who have wives, should be as though they had none, and those who rejoice in them, as though they rejoiced not. 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Death is a stroke which the most pious, the most useful, the most amiable, are not exempted from. (5.) When the desire of our eyes is taken away with a stroke, we must see and own the hand of God in it; it takes from us the desire of thine eyes. He takes our creature-comforts from us when and how he pleases; he gave them to us, but reserved to himself a property in them; and may he not do what he will with his own? (6.) Under afflictions of this kind, it is good for us to remember that we are sons of men; for so God called the prophet here. If thou art a son of Adam, thou art liable to man's infirmities, and therefore a dying creature. It is an affliction which the children of men are liable to; and shall the earth be forsaken for us? According to this prediction, he tells us, (v. 18.) I spoke unto the people in the morning: for God sent his prophets, rising up early, and sending them; then he thought, if ever, they would be disposed to hearken to him. Observe, [1.] Though God had given Ezekiel a certain prospect of this affliction coming upon him, yet it did not take him off from his work, but he resolved to go on in that. [2.] We may the more easily bear an affliction, if it find us in the way of our duty; for nothing can hurt us, nothing come amiss to us, while we keep ourselves in the love of God.

2. He must deny himself the satisfaction of mourning for his wife, which would have been both an honour to her and an ease to the oppression of his own spirit. He must not use the natural expressions of sorrow. v. 16. He must not give vent to his passion by weeping, or letting his tears run down; though tears are a tribute due to the dead, and, when the body is gone, it is fit that it should thus be watered. But Ezekiel is not allowed to do this; though he thought he had as much reason to do it as any man, and as much occasion to do it as any man, as his friends, the morning before the day of his wife's death, desired (v. 15,) that if he did it not, much less might he use the customary formalities of mourners. He must dress himself in his usual attire, must bind his turban on him, here called the targe of his head, must put on his shoes, and not go barefoot, as was usual in such cases; he must not cover his lips, nor throw a veil over his face, (as mourners were wont to do, Lev. xvi. 29.) must not be as a mourner, nor sit upon ashes, nor sit upon sackcloth, nor fast, Matt. xvi. 18. He must not eat the bread of men, nor expect that his neighbours and friends should send him in provisions, as usually they did in such cases, presuming the mourners had no heart to provide met for themselves; but, if it were sent, he must not eat of it, but go on in his business as at other times. It could not but be some sacrifice to him to refrain from flesh and blood, not to lament the death of his wife too much: (v. 16.) But I did in the morning as I was commanded. He appeared in public, in his usual habit, and looked as he used to do, without any signs of mourning. (1.) There was something peculiar, and Ezekiel, to make himself a sign to the people, must put a force upon himself, and exercise an extraordinary piece of self-denial. Note, Our dispositions must always submit to God's directions, and his command must be obeyed, even in that which is most difficult and displeasing to us. (2.) Though mourning for the dead is a severe duty, it must always be kept under the government of religion and right reason, and we must not sorrow as those that have no hope, nor lament the loss of any creature, even the most valuable, and that which we could worst spare, as if we had lost our God, or as if all our happiness were gone with it; and of this overreverence in mourning, ministers, when it is their case, ought to take care. They must carefully reserve a due time to study in all the affliction, to accommodate ourselves to it, and to get our acquaintance with the other world increased, by the removal of our dear relations, and learn with holy Job to bless the name of the Lord, even when he takes as well as when he gives.

II. The explication and application of this siege. The people inquire the meaning of it: (v. 19.) Will thou not tell us what these things are to us, that thou dost not? They knew that Ezekiel was an affectionate husband, that the death of his wife was a great affliction to him, and that he would not appear so unconcerned at it but for some good reason, and for instruction to them; and perhaps they were in hopes that it had a favourable signification, and that they might be comforted by it, and that they might be comforted again according to the time he had afflicted them, and make them look pleasant again. Note, When we are inquiring concerning the things of God, our inquiry must be, "What are those things to us? What are we concerned in them? What conviction, what counsel, what comfort, do they speak to us? Wherein do they reach our case?" Ezekiel answers them an answer verbatim, as he had received it from the Lord, who had told him what he must speak to the house of Israel.

1. Let them know that as Ezekiel's wife was taken from him by a stroke, so would God take from them all that which was dearest to them, v. 21. If this were done to the green trees, what shall be done to the dry? If a faithful servant of God was thus afflicted only for his trial, shall such a generation of rebels against God go unpunished? By this awakening providence God showed that he was in earnest in his threatenings, and inexorable. We may suppose that Ezekiel prayed that, if it were the will of God, his wife might be spared to him, but God would not hear him; and should he be heard then in his intercessions for this provoking people! No, it is determined; God will take away the desire of your eyes. Note, The removal of what is most to us, shows us that we should awaken us to think of parting with ours too; for are we better than they? We know not how soon the same cup, or a more bitter one, may be put into our hands, and should therefore weep with them that weep, as being ourselves also in the body. God will take away that which their soul delights in, of which they say, What profit is it to them? that it should be cut off from among the living; that God should take away the desire of their eyes. (so some read it;) ye shall lose that which you most dread the loss of. And what is that? (1.) That which was their public pride, the temple; "I will profane my sanctuary, by giving that into the enemy's hand, to be plundered and burnt." This was signified by the death of a wife, a dear wife, to teach us that God's sanctuary should be dearer to us, and that we should look upon the desire of our eyes as nothing compared to it, as the monuments of the earth are set to keep for whatsoever. Christ's church, that is his spouse, should be ours too. Though these people were very corrupt, and had themselves profaned the sanctuary, yet it is called the desire of their eyes. Note, Many that are destitute of the power of godliness, are yet very fond of the form of it; and it is just with God to punish them for their hypocrisy by depriving them of that too. The sanctuary is here called the excellence of their strength; they had many strong
olds and places of defence, but the temple excelled them all; it was the pride of their strength; they prided in it as their strength, that they were the temple of the Lord, Jer. vii. 4. Note, The church-privileges that men are proud of, are profaned by their sins, and it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. And with these God will take away, (2.) That which they prided in, their temple; for none of them, as they looked upon with delight; “Your sons and your daughters (which are the dearer to you, because they are but a few left of many; the rest having perished by famine and pestilence) shall fall by the sword of the Chaldeans.” What a dreadful spectacle would it be to see their own children, pieces, pictures of themselves, whom they had taken such pains to build up; and whose very names they had loved as their own souls, sacrificed to the rage of the merciless conquerors! This, this was the punishment of sin.

2. Let them know that as Ezekiel wept not for his affliction, so neither should they weep for theirs. He must say, Ye shall do as I have done, v. 22. Ye shall not mourn nor weep, v. 23. Jeremiah had told them the same, that men shall not lament for the dead, nor cut themselves; (Jer. xvi. 6.) not that there shall be any such merciful circumstances without, or any such degrees of wisdom and grace within, as shall mitigate and moderate the sorrow; but they shall not mourn for, (1.) Their grief shall be so great, that they shall be quite overwhelmed with it, their passions shall stifle them, and they shall have no outward tokens of it by giving vent to it. (2.) Their calamities shall cause them more sorrow when one is upon the neck of another, that by long custom they shall be hardened in their sorrows, (Job vii. 10.) and perfectly stufified, and moped (as we say) with them. (3.) They shall not dare to express their grief, for fear of being deemed disaffected to the conquerors, who would take their lamentations as an advantage to disturbance to their triumphs. (4.) They shall neither have hearts, nor time, nor money, whereby to put themselves in mourning, and accommodate themselves with the ceremonies of grief; “You will be so entirely taken up with solid, substantial grief, that you will have no room for the shadow of it.” (5.) Particular mourners shall not need to distinguish themselves by covering their lips, and laying aside their ornaments, and going bare-footed (as in the times of the captivity) or with a sad or sorrowful aspect (as in the times of the captivity); Ezekiel shall know when and how to be a mourner. (6.) There shall be none of that sense of their affliction and sorrow for it, which would help to bring them to repentance, but that only which shall drive them to despair; so it follows, “Ye shall flee away for your iniquities, with scared consciences and reprovable minds, and ye shall mourn, not to God in prayer and confession of sin, but one toward another.” mourning, and from complaining of God, thus making their burthen heavier and their wound more grievous, as impatient people do under their afflictions, by mingling their own passions with them.

III. An appeal to the event, for the confirmation of all this; (v. 24.) “When this comes, as it is foretold, when Jerusalem, which is this day besieged, is quite destroyed and laid waste, which now you may not believe will ever be, then ye shall know that I am the Lord God, who have given you this fair warning of it. Then you will remember that Ezekiel was to you a sign.” Note, Those who regard not the threatenings of the word when they are foretold, will be made to remember them when that which they were told will come to pass. 1. The great desolation which the siege of Jerusalem should end in; (v. 25.) In that day, that terrible day, when the city should be broken up, I will take from them. (1.) That which they depended on; their strength, their walls, their treasures, their for-

EZEKIEL, XXV. 705
thy face against the Ammonites, and prophecy against them; 3. And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God, Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity: 4. Behold, therefore, I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. 5. And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching-place for flocks; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 6. For thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast clapped thy hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy desire against the land of Israel; 7. Behold, therefore, I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen, and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.

Here,

1. The prophet is ordered to address himself to the Ammonites, in the name of the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel, who is also the God of the whole earth. But what can Chemosh, the god of the children of Ammon, say, in answer to it? He is bidden to set his face against the Ammonites, for he is God's representative as a prophet, and thus he must signify that God set his face against them, for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, Ps. xxxiv. 16. He must speak with boldness and assurance, as one that knew whose errand he went upon, and that he should be borne out in delivering it. He must therefore set his face as a flint, Isa. 1. 7. He must show his displeasure against these proud enemies of Israel, and face them down, though they were very impudent and proud men. He must show his displeasure so much and so long against Israel, yet still he was for Israel, and, while he witnessed against their corruptions, adhered to, and gloried in, God's covenant with them. Note, Those are miserable that have the preaching and praying of God's prophets against them; against whom their faces are set.

2. He is directed what to say to them. Ezekiel is now a captive in Babylon, and has been so many years in the midst of the state of his own nation, much less of the nations that were about it; but God tells him both what they were doing, and what he was about to do with them. And thus by the spirit of prophecy he is enabled to speak as pertinently to their case as if he had been among them.

1. He must upbraid the Ammonites with their insolent and barbarous triumphs over the people of Israel in their calamities. The Ammonites said, when all went against the Jews, Aha, so would we have it. They were glad to see, (1.) The temple burned, the sanctuary profaned by the victorious Chaldeans; this is put first, to intimate what was the cause of the controversy; they had an enmity to the Jews for the sake of their religion, though it was only some poor remains of the profession of it that were to be found among them. (2.) The nation ruined. They rejoiced when the land of Israel was made desolate, the cities burnt, the count; wasted, and both depopulated, and when the house of Judah went into captivity. When they had not power to oppress God's Israel themselves, they were pleased to see the Chaldeans oppress them; partly because they envied their wealth and the good land they enjoyed, partly because they feared their growing power, and partly because they hated their religion, and the divine oracles they had been accustomed to repeat. (v. 6.) They clapped with their hands, to irrigate the rage of the Chaldeans, and to set them on as dogs upon the game; or, they clapped their hands in triumph, attended this tragedy with their Plaudite—Give us your applause, thinking it well acted; never was there anything more diverting or entertaining to them. They stamped with their feet, ready to leap and dance for joy upon this occasion; they not only rejoiced in heart, but they could not forbear showing it; though every one that had any sense of honour and humility would cry shame upon them for it. Especially considering that they rejoiced thus, not for anything they got by Israel's fall; if so, they had been the more excusable, Most people are for themselves. But this was purely from a principle of malice and enmity; Thus he rejoiced, &c. and they themselves were again scourged the same time, when he was scourged, he gloried in it; Ps. xlii. 7. and it is the Lord's angry hand that smites against the land of Israel. Note, The people of God have always had a great deal of ill-will borne them by this wicked world; and their calamities have been their neighbours' entertainments. See to what unnatural instances of malice the enmity that is in the seed of the serpent against the seed of the woman, will carry them. The Ammonites, of all people, should not have reared their heads in Jerusalem's ruin, but should rather have trembled, because they themselves had such a narrow escape at the same time; it was but cross or pile, which should be besieged first, Rabbah or Jerusalem, ch. xxxi. 20. And they had reason to think that the king of Babylon would set upon them next. But thus were their hearts hardened to their ruin, and their insolence against Jerusalem was to them an evident token of perdition. Phil. i. 28. It is a very wicked thing to be glad at the calamities of any, especially of God's people, and a sin that God will surely reckon for; such delight has God in showing mercy, and so backward is he to punish, that nothing is more pleasing to him than to be stopped in the ways of his judgments by intercessions, nor any thing more provoking than to hear of them. And so the Ammonites, ch. xxi. 12. Note, The king of Babylon, though at present victorious, yet he had reason to fear from God's hand to be brought to a stop and overthrown; and the Ammonites, as he then was, were to be the means of his destruction. And so the Ammonites, as he then was, were to be the means of his destruction.

2. He must threaten the Ammonites with utter ruin, for this insolence which they were guilty of. God turns away his wrath from Israel against them, as is said, Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. God is jealous for his people's honour, because his own is so nearly interested in it. And therefore they that shall be made to know that they touch the apple of his eye. He had before predicted the destruction of the Ammonites, ch. xxxi. 28. Had they repented, that had been revoked; but now it is ratified. (1.) A destroying enemy is brought against them; I will deliver thee to the men of the east, first to the Chaldeans, who came from the north-east, and whose army, under the command of Nebuchadnezzar, destroyed the country of the Ammonites, about five years after the destruction of Jerusalem, into which place these relations, ch. xiv. 25. and then to the Egyptians, who were properly the children of the east, who, when the Chaldeans had made the country desolate, and quitted it, came and took possession of it for themselves, probably with the consent of the conquerors: shepherds' tents were their palaces, these they set up in the country of the Ammonites.

* A game, in which it is put to chance whether the side of a coin which bears the cross, or that which bears the reverse, shall be uppermost. —Eo.
then they made their dwellings, v. 4. They enjoyed the products of the country; They shall eat thy fruit, and drink thy milk; and the milk from the cattle is the fruit of the ground at second-hand. They made use even of the royal city for their cattle; (v. 5.) I will make Rabbah, that was a nice and splendid city, to be a stable for camels; for its new masters, whose wealth lies all in cattle, will not think they can put the palaces of Rabbah to a better use. Rabbah had been a hand of destruction to others when joy was the rule; God's hand stretched out against the Ammonites will not only deliver them for a spoil to the heathen, so that their neighbours shall prey upon them, but will cut them off from the people, and make them perish out of the countries, so that there shall be no remains of them in that place. Compare with this, Jer. xxxix. 1, &c. What can sound more terrible than that resolution, (v. 7.) For I will deliver those to whom I will give them; the Lord God is neither both to save and to destroy, and it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Both the threatenings here, (v. 5. and v. 7.) conclude with this, Ye shall know that I am the Lord. For, (1.) Thus God will maintain his own honour, and will make it appear that he is the God of Israel, though he suffers them for a time to be captives in Babylon. (2.) Thus he will bring his people and all his nations into an acquaintance with him, and it will be a blessed effect of their calamities. Better know God, and be poor, than be rich, and ignorant of him.

8. Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; 9. Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Beth-jeshimoth, Baal-mone, and Kiriatamu. 10. Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. 11. And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 12. Thus saith the Lord God, Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; 13. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, I will also stretch out my hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword. 14. And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger, and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God. 15. Thus saith the Lord God, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despitful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; 16. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out my hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Chereethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coast. 17. And I will execute great vengeance upon them with burning rebusks; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall lay my vengeance upon them.

Three more of Israel's ill-natured neighbours are here arraigned, convicted, and condemned to destruction, for contributing to, and triumphing in, Jerusalem's fall. 1. The Moabites. Seir, which was the seat of the Edomitians, is joined with them, (v. 8.) because they said the same as the Moabites; but they were afterward reckoned with by themselves, v. 12. Now observe, 1. What was the sin of the Moabites; they said, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen. They triumphed, (1.) In the apostacies of Israel, were pleased to see them forsake their God, and worship idols, and hoped that in a while their religion would be quite lost and forgotten, and the house of Judah would be as the heathen, perfect idolaters. Thus when that profession of religion is adopted by a part of their profession, they encourage the enemies of religion to hope that it will in time sink, and be run down, and quite abandoned; but let the Moabites know that though there are those of the house of Judah who have made themselves like the heathen, yet there is a remnant that retain their integrity, the religion of the house of Judah shall recover itself, and its peculiarities shall be preserved; it shall not lose itself among the heathen, but distinguish itself from them, till it deliver itself honourably into a better institution. (2.) They triumphed in the calamities of Israel. They said, The house of Judah is like all the heathen, in as bad a state as they; their God is no more able to deliver them from this overflowing scourge of these parts of the world, than the gods of the heathen are to deliver them. Where are the promises they gloried in, and all the wonders which they and their fathers told us of? What the better are they for the covenant of peculiarity, upon which they so much valued themselves? They that looked with so much scorn upon all the heathen, are now set upon a level with them, or rather sunk below them. 2. Note, Those who judge only by outward and apparent things are ready to conclude that the people of God have lost all their privileges, when they have lost their worldly prosperity; which does not follow, for good men, even in affliction, in captivity among the heathen, have graces and comforts within, sufficient to distinguish them from all the heathen. Though the event seem one to the righteous and wicked, yet indeed it is vastly different. 2. What might be the punishment of Moab for this sin; because they triumphed in the overthrow of Judah, their country shall be in like manner overthrown with that of the Ammonites, who were guilty of the same sin; (v. 9, 10.) I will open the side of Moab, will uncover its shoulder, will take away all its defences, that it may become an easy prey to any that will make a prey of it. (1.) See here how the punishment of Moab for that was its strength and guard, shall be demolished by the Chaldean forces, and laid open. Some of the cities are here named, which are said to be the glory of the country, which they trusted in, and boasted of, as impregnable; these shall decay, be deserted, or betrayed, or fall into the enemy's hand, that Moab may lie exposed, and whoever will, may penetrate into the heart of the country. Note, Those who glory in any other defence and protection than that of the divine power, providence, and
promise, will, sooner or later, see cause to be ashamed of their glorying. (2.) See here to whom it shall be exposed; The men of the east, when they come to take possession of the heaps of the Ammonites, shall see some of the Moabites too; God, the Lord of all lands, will give them that land; for the kingdoms of men he gives to whosoever he will. The Arameans, who are shepherds, and live quietly, plain men dwelling in tents, shall by an overruled Providence be put in possession of the land of the Moabites, who are soldiers, men of war, and cunning hunters, that live turbulently. The Chaldeans of Babylon shall get it by war; and the Arameans shall enjoy it in peace. Concerning the Ammonites it is said, They shall no more be remembered among the nations, (v. 10.) for they had been necessary to the murder of Gedaliah, Jer. xl. 14. But of the Moabites it is said, I will execute judgments upon Moab; they shall feel the weight of God's displeasure, but perhaps not to that degree that the Ammonites shall; however, so far as that, they shall know that I am the Lord; that the God of Israel is a God of power, and that his covenant with his people is not broken.

II. The Edomites, the posterity of Esau, betwixt whom and Jacob there had been an old enmity. And here is,

1. The sin of the Edomites, v. 12. They not only triumphed in the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, as the Moabites and Ammonites had done, but they took advantage from the present distressed state to which the Jews were reduced, to do them some real mischief; probably, made inroads upon their frontiers, and plundered their country; Edom has dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance. The Edomites had of old been tributaries to the Jews, according to the sentence that the elder should serve the younger; and though they afterwards revolted; Amaziah severely chastised them, (2 Kings xiv. 7.) and for this they took vengeance; now they would pay off all the old scores; and not only incensed the Babylonians against Jerusalem, crying, Raze it, raze it, (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.) but cut off those that escaped; as we find in the prophecy of Obadiah, which is wholly directed against Edom, v. 15. And we find here revenging a revenging a revenging, which intimated that they were not only eager upon it, but very cruel in it, and recompensed to the Jews more than double. Herein he has greatly offended. Note, It is a great offence to God for us to revenge ourselves upon our brother; for God has said, Vengeance is mine. We are forbidden to revenge, or to bear a grudge. Suppose Judah had been hard upon Edom formerly, it was a base thing for the Edomites now, in revenge for it, to smite them secretly; but the Jews had a divine warrant to reign over the Edomites, for that therefore they ought not to have made reprisals; and it was the more disingenuous for them to retain the old enmity, when God had particularly commanded his people to forget it, (Deut. xxix. 7.) Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite.

2. The judgments threatened against them for this sin, v. 13. (1.) The Aramazians are severity; (v. 11.) I will stretch out my hand upon Edom. Their country shall be desolate from Teman, which lay in the south part of it; and they shall fall by the sword unto Dedan, which lay north; the desolations of war should go through the nation. (1.) They had taken vengeance, and therefore God will lay his vengeance upon them; (v. 14.) They shall know my vengeance; the Chaldeans shall not leave it to God to take vengeance on them, may expect that he will take vengeance on them; and that will not believe and fear his vengeance, shall be made to know and feel his vengeance; they shall be dealt with according to God's anger, and according to his fury, not according to the weakness of the instruments that are employed in it, but according to the strength of the arm that employs them. (2.) They had taken vengeance on Israel, and God will take his vengeance on them by the hand of his people Israel; they suffered much by the Chaldeans, which seems to be referred to, Jer. xxxix. 8. But beside that there were savours to come upon mount, Zion, who should judge the mount of Esau, (Obad. 21.) and Israel's Redeemer comes with dyed garments from Pozrath, (Isa. lxiii. 1.) this implies a promise that Israel should recover itself again, to that degree as to be in a capacity of curbing the insolence of her enemies. And we find (Mal. 1. 5.) that Judas Maccabaeus fought against the children of Esau in Idumea, gave them a great overthrow, abated their courage, and took their spoil. And Josephus says (Antiq. li. 13. cap. 17.) that Hircanus made the Edomites tributaries to Israel. Note, The equity of God's judgments is to be observed, when he not only avenge injuries upon those that did them, but by these against whom they were done.

III. The Philistines. And, 1. Their sin is much the same with that of the Edomites; They have dealt by revenge with the people of Israel, and have taken vengeance with a despicable heart, not to disturb them only, but to destroy them, for the old hatred, (v. 15.) the old grudge they bore them, or, as the margin has it, with perfidious hatred, a hatred that began long since, and which they were not solved to continue; the anger was implacable, they dealt by revenge, traded in the acts of malice; it was their constant practice, and their heart, their spiteful heart, was upon it. 2. Their punishment likewise is much the same, v. 16. They were for destroying God's people, shall themselves be cut off and destroyed. And (v. 17.) they were not avenging themselves to execute great vengeance upon them. This was fulfilled when that country was wasted by the Chaldean army, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is foretold, Jer. xlvii. It was strange that these nations, which bordered upon the land of Israel, were not alarmed by the success of the Chaldean army, and made to tremble in the apprehensions of their own danger; and when God was determined to make a great overthrow it was time to look to their own; but their impious and malice made them forget their politics, till God by his judgments convinced them that the cup was going round, and they were not the less safe for their being secure.

CHAP. XXVI.

The prophet had soon done with those four nations that he set his face against in the foregoing chapters; for they were not at that time very considerable in the world, nor would their fall make any great noise among the nations, nor any figure in history. But the city of Tyre is next set to the bar, which, being a place of vast trade, was known all the world over; and therefore here are three whole chapters, this and the two that follow, spent in the prosecution of the destruction of the sea-kingdom, the beloved of Tyre, Isa. xxviii. It is but just mentioned in Jeremiah, as sharing with the natives in the common calamity, ch. xxv. 22.—xxviii. 3.—xlvi. 1. But Ezekiel is ordered to bring large upon that head. In this chapter, we have, I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was, triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 2. II. The destruction of Tyrus itself foretold. 1. The extremity of the destruction of Tyre, v. 3. 2. The instruments of this destruction; many nations, v. 3. and the king of Babylon by name with his vast victorious army, 7. 11. 3. The great surprise, that they should lay upon that head. In this chapter, we have, I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was, triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 2. II. The destruction of Tyrus itself foretold. 1. The extremity of the destruction of Tyre, v. 3. 2. The instruments of this destruction; many nations, v. 3. and the king of Babylon by name with his vast victorious army, 7. 11. 3. The great surprise, that they should lay upon that head. In this chapter, we have, I. The sin charged upon Tyre, which was, triumphing in the destruction of Jerusalem, v. 2.
saying, 2. Son of man, because that Ty- 
urus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste: 3. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. 4. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. 5. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God; and it shall become a spoil to the nations. 6. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 7. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will bring upon Tyre Nebuchadrezzar king of Babyl- 
on, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horse- 
men, and companies, and much people. 8. He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field; and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee. 9. He shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers. 10. By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee: thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach. 11. With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets: he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground. 12. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise; and they shall break down thy walls, and de- 
stroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust, in the midst of the water. 13. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. 14. And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

This prophecy is dated in the eleventh year, which was the year that Jerusalem was taken, and in the first day of the month, but it is not said what month; some think the month in which Jerusalem was taken, was the fourth month, others the month after; or perhaps it was the first month, and so it was the first day of the year. Observe here, I. The pleasure with which the Tyrians looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem. Ezekiel was a great way off, in Babylon, but God told him what Tyrus said against Jerusalem; (v. 2.) Aha, she is broken, broken to pieces, that was the gates of the people, to whom there was a great resort, and where there was a general rendezvous of all nations, some upon one account, and some upon another, and I shall get by it; all the wealth, power, and interest which Jerusalem had, it is hoped, shall be turned to Tyre; and God saith, I am against thee, is the expression of God's displeasure. We do not find that the Tyrians had such a hatred and enmity to Jerusalem and the sanctuary as the Ammonites and Edomites had, or were so spiteful and mischievous to the Jews; they were men of business, and of large acquaintance and free conversation, and therefore were not so bigotted, and of such a persecuting spirit, as the narrow souls for whom the temple was purposed, and by whose care the care was to get estates, and enlarge their trade, and they looked upon Jerusalem not as an enemy, but as a rival. Hiram, king of Tyre, was a good friend to David and Solomon, and we do not read of any quarrels the Jews had with the Tyrians; but Tyre promised herself that the fall of Jerusalem would be an advantage to her in respect of trade and commerce; they shall be thy merchants, and the great men from all parts that used to come to Jerusalem for the accomplishing of them- selves, and to spend their estates there, will now come to Tyre, and spend them there; and whereas many, since the Chaldean army became so formidable in these parts, had retired into Jerusalem, and brought their estates thither for safety, as the Re- 
chites did, now they will come to Tyre, which, being in a manner surrounded with the sea, will be thought a place of greater strength than Jerusalem; and thus the prosperity of Tyre will rise out of the ruins of Jerusalem. Note, To be secretly pleased with the death or decay of others when we are likely to get by it, with their fall when we may thrive upon it, is a sin that does most easily beset us, but is not thought to be such a bad thing, and so provoking to God, as really it is. We are apt to say, when those who stand in our light, in our way, are removed, when they break, or fall into disgrace, "We shall be replenished, now that they are laid waste." But this comes from a selfish, covetous principle, and a desire to be placed alone in the midst of the earth, as if we grudged that any should live by us. This comes from a want of that love to our neighbor, which is the true spirit of God so expressively requires, and from that inordinate love of the world as our happiness, which the love of God so expressly forbids. And it is just with God to blast the designs and projects of those who thus contrive to raise themselves upon the ruins of others; and we see they are often disappointed. II. The displeasure of God against them for it. The providence of God had done well for Tyre; Tyre was a pleasant and wealthy city, and might have continued so, if she had, as she ought to have done, sympathized with Jerusalem in her calamities, and sent her an address of condolence; but when, instead of that, she showed herself pleased with her neighbor's fall, and perhaps sent an ad- 
dress of congratulation to the conquerors, then God says, Behold, I am against thee, Tyre, v. 3. And let her not expect to prosper long, if God be against her. 1. God will bring formidable enemies upon her; Many nations shall come against thee; an army made up of many nations, or one nation that shall be as strong as many. Those that have God against them, may expect all the creatures against them; for what people can they have, with whom God is at war? They shall come pouring in as the waves of the sea, one upon the neck of another, with an
irresistible force. The person is named that shall bring this army upon them; Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, that had many kings tributary to him, and dependants on him, beside those that were his captives, Dan. ii. 37, 38. He is that head of gold. He shall come with a vast army, horses and chariots, &c. all land forces; we do not find he had any naval force, or any thing where with he might attack it by sea. But the attempt the more difficult, as we find, ch. xxix. 18. where it is called a great service which he serv\-ed against Tyre. He shall besiege it in form, (v. 8.) make a fort, and cast a mount, and (v. 9.) shall set engines of war against the walls. His troops shall be so numerous as to raise a dust that shall cover the city, v. 10. They shall make a noise that shall even shake the walls, and shall not be of any used when they enter a city that is broken up; the horses shall prance with so much fury and violence, that they shall even tread down the streets though ever so well paved.

2. They shall do terrible execution. (1.) The enemy shall make themselves masters of all their fortifications, shall destroy the walls, and break down the towers, v. 4. For what walls are strong among the desolations of the judgments of God? Her strong garrisons shall go down to the ground, v. 11. And the walls shall be broken down, v. 12. The city held out a long siege, but it was taken at last. (2.) A great deal of blood shall be shed; Her daughters which are in the field, the cities upon the continent, which were subject to Tyre as the mother city, the inhabitants of them shall be slain by the sword, v. 6. The invaders begin with them that come first in their way. And, (v. 11.) he shall stay thy people with the sword; not only the soldiers that are found in arms, but theburghers, shall be put to the sword, the king of Bab\-ylon being highly incensed against them for holding out so long. (3.) The wealth of the city shall all become a spoil to the conqueror; (v. 12.) They made a fire of the merchandise; it was in hope of the plunder, that the city was set upon with so much vigour. See the vanity of riches, that they are kept for the owners to their hurt; entice and re\-compense thieves, and not only cease to benefit those who took pains for them, and were duly enti\-led to them, but are made to serve their enemies, who were thereby put into a capacity of doing them so much the more mischief. (4.) The city itself shall be laid waste: All the palaces of the princes shall be destroyed; (v. 12.) such as were pleasantly situated, beautified, and furnished, shall become a heap of rubbish. Let none please themselves too much in their pleasant houses, for they know not how soon they may see the desolation of them. Tyre shall be utterly ruined; the enemy shall not only pull down the houses, but shall carry away the stones and the timber, which might seem to the rebuilding of them in the midst of the wa\-ter, not to be recovered, or ever made use of again.

Nay, (v. 4.) I will scrape her dust from her; not only shall the loose dust be blown away, but the very ground it stands upon shall be torn up by the enraged enemy, carried off, and laid in the midst of the wa\-ter, v. 12. The foundation is in the dust, that dust shall be all taken away, and then the city shall go down with them. As Tyre was pro\-\ntroyed, it was ploughed like a field, Mic. iii. 12. But the destruction of Tyre is carried further than that; the very soil of it shall be scraped away, and it shall be made like the top of a rock, (v. 4, 14.) pure rock that has no earth to cover it; it shall only be a place for the spreading of nets, (v. 5, 14.) it shall serve fishermen to dry their nets upon, and mend them. (5.) There shall be a full period to all its mirth and joy; (v. 13.) I will cause the noise

of the songs to cease. Tyre had been a joyous city, (Isa. xxvi. 7.) with her songs she had courted cus\-tomers to deal with her in a way of trade; but now farewell all her profitable commerce and pleasant conversation; Tyre is no more a place either of bus\-iness or of sport. Lastly, It shall be built no more, (v. 14.) not built any more as it had been, with such state and magnificence; nor built any more in the same place, but shall be built a new city, (v. 15.) a place of a long time; the present inhabitants shall be de\-stroyed or dispersed, so that this Tyre shall be no more. For God has spoken it, (v. 5, 14.) and when what he has said is accomplished, they shall know thereby that he is the Lord, and not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent.

15. Thus saith the Lord God to Tyre: Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee? 16. Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their broderied garments; they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee, 17. And they shall take upon a la\-mentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed that wast inhabited of sea\-\rning men, the renowned city which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it! 18. Now shall the isles trem\-ble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy de\-parture. 19. For thus saith the Lord God, When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; 20. When I shall bring thee down with them that de\-scend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited; and I shall set glory in the land of the living; 21. I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more; though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.

The utter ruin of Tyre is here represented in very strong and lively figures, which are exceed\-ingly affecting.

1. See how high, how great Tyre had been, how little likely ever to have come to this. The re\-membrance of men's former grandeur and plenty is a great place, with all of the sea, present in any where and at any time. Tyre was a renowned city, (v. 17.) famous among the nations, the crowning city, (so she is called, Isa. xxxii. 8.) a city that had crowns in her gift, honoured all she smiled upon, crowned herself and all about her; she was inhabited of seas, of those that trade at sea, of those who from all parts came thither by sea, bringing with them the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand. She was strong in the sea; easy of access to her friends, but to her enemies inaccessible; fortified by a wal.
of water, which made her impregnable. So that she with her pomp, and her inhabitants with their pride, caused their terror to be on all that haunted that city, and upon any account frequented it. It was well fortified, and formidable in the eyes of all that acquainted themselves with it. Every body stood in awe of the Tyrians, and was afraid of disobliging them. Note, Those who know their strength are too apt to cause terror, to pride themselves in frightening those they are an over-match for.

2. See how low, how little, Tyre is made, v. 19, 20. This renowned city is made a desolate city, is no more frequented as it has been, there is no more resort of merchants to it, it is like the cities not inhabited, which are no cities, and, having none to keep them in repair, will go to decay of themselves. Tyre shall be like a city overflowed by an inundation of waters, which cover it, and upon which the deep is brought up. As the waves had formerly been its defence, so now they shall be its destruction. She shall be brought down with them that descend into the pit, with the cities of the old world that were under water, and with Sodom and Gomorrah, their iniquities, and all the cities of the same, having been, shall be in the condition of those who have been long buried, of the people of old time, who are old inhabitants of the silent grave, who are quite rotted away under ground, and quite forgotten above ground; such shall Tyre be, free among the dead; set in the lower parts of the earth, humbled, mortified, reduced. It shall be like the places desolate of old, as it is now, they having been, as other cities that have formerly been in like manner deserted and destroyed. It shall not be inhabited again; none shall have the courage to attempt the rebuilding of it upon that spot, so that it shall be no more; the Tyrians shall be lost among the nations, so that people will look in vain for Tyre in Tyre; Thou shalt be sought for and never find it again. New persons may build a new city upon a new spot of ground hard by, which they may call Tyre, but Tyre, as it is, shall never be any more. Note, The strongest cities in this world, the best fortified and best furnished, are subject to decay, and may in a little time be brought to nothing. In the history of our own island, many cities are spoken of as in being when the Romans were here, and many that are scarcely known where to look for, and of which we can find no more evidence, than Roman urns and coins dug up there sometimes accidentally. But in the other world we look for a city that shall stand for ever, and flourish in perfection through all the ages of eternity.

3. See what a distress the inhabitants of Tyre are in; (v. 15.) There is a great slaughter made in the midst of thee, many slain, and great men; it is probable, when the city was taken, that the generality of the inhabitants were put to the sword; then did the wounded cry, and they cried in vain, to the pitiless conquerors; they cried quarter, but it would not be given them; the wounded are slain without mercy, or, rather, that is the only mercy that is showed them, that the second blow shall rid them of their pain.

4. See what consternation all the neighbours are in, upon the fall of Tyre. This is elegantly expressed here, to show how astonishing it should be. (1.) The islands shall shake at the sound of thy fall, v. 15. As when a great merchant breaks all, that he deals with are shocked by it, and begin to look about them; perhaps they had effects in his hands, which in his fall shall lose. Or, When they see one fall and become bankrupt of a sudden, in debt a great deal more than he is worth, it makes them afraid for themselves, lest they should do so too. Thus the isles, which thought themselves safe in the embraces of the sea, when they see Tyrus fall, shall tremble, and be troubled, saying, "What will become of us?" And it is well if they make this good use of it, to take warning by it not to be secure, but to stand in awe of God and his judgments. The sudden fall of a great tower shakes the ground round about it; thus all the islands in the Mediterranean sea shall feel themselves sensible of the terror of Tyre, it being a place that had the mariners, and such interests in, and such a constant correspondence with. (2.) The princes of the sea shall be affected with it, who ruled in these islands; or, the rich merchants, who live like princes, (Isa. xxxii. 8.) and the masters of ships, who command like princes, these shall conclude the fall of Tyre, in a most compassionate manner; (v. 16.) They shall come down from their thrones, neglecting the business of their thrones, and despising the pomp of them; they shall lay away their robes of state, their brodered garments, and shall clothe themselves all over with wrinkles, with sackcloth that will make them shiver. Or, They shall by their own act and deed make themselves to tremble, and shall be supported in their trembling, by the terror of God. They shall be in the ground in shame and sorrow; they shall tremble every moment at the thought of what has happened to Tyre, and for fear of what may happen to themselves; for what island is safe if Tyre be not? They shall take up a lamentation for thee, shall have elegies and mournful poems penned upon the fall of Tyre, v. 17. How art thou destroyed! [1.] It shall be a great grief to God, and they shall be affected with wonder, that a place so well fortified by nature and art, so famed for politics, and so full of money, which is the sinews of war, and that held out so long and with so much bravery, should be taken at last; (v. 21.) I make thee a terror. Note, It is just with God to make those a terror to their neighbours, by the suddenness and strangeness of their punishment, who make themselves a terror to their neighbours by the abuse of their power. Tyre had caused her terror, (v. 17.) and now is made a terrible example. [2.] It shall be a great affliction to them, and they shall be affected with sorrow; (v. 17.) they shall take up a lamentation for Tyre, as thinking it a thousand pityes that such a rich and splendid city should be thus laid in ruins. If Tyre be destroyed, then Jerusalem, who once, was a city, is destroyed, there were no such lamentation for it. What is the thing to them that passed by; (Lam. i. 12.) but when Tyre, the trading city, fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note, Those who have the world in their hearts, lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men. [3.] It shall be a loud alarm to them; They shall tremble in the day of their fall, shall have cause to think that their own turn will be next. If Tyre fall, who can stand? Howl, fir-trees, if such a cedars be shaken. Note, The fall of others should awaken us out of our security. The death or decay of others in the world is a check to us, when we dream that our mountain stands strong, and shall not be moved. 5. See how the irreparable ruin of Tyre is aggravated by the prospect of the restorations to Israel. Thus shall Tyre sink, when I shall set glory in the land of the living, v. 20. Note, (1.) The holy land is the land of the living; for none but holy souls are properly living souls; where living sacrifices are offered to the living God, and where the lively oracles are, there the land of the living is; there David hoped to see the goodness of the Lord, (Ps. lxxvii. 15.) That was a type of heaven, which is indeed the land of the living. (2.) Through this land of the living may for a time lie under disgrace, yet God will again set glory in it; the glory that is departed shall return; and the restoration of what
they had been deprived of shall be so much more their glory. God will himself be the Glory of the lands that are the lands of the living. (5. It will aggravate the misery of those that have their position in the land of the dying, of those that are for ever dying, to behold the happiness of those, at the same time, that shall have their everlasting portion in the land of the living. When the rich man was himself in torment, he saw Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham, and glory set for him in the land of the living.

CHAP. XXVII.

Still we are attending the funeral of Tyre, and the lamentation due to the fall of that renowned city. In this chapter, we have, 1. A large account of the dignity, wealth, and splendour of Tyre, while it was in its strength, the vast trade it drove, and the interest it had among the nations, (v. 1, 25.) which is designed to make its ruin the more lamentable. 2. A prediction of its fall and ruin, and the confusion and consternation which all its neighbours shall thereby be put into, v. 26.-36. And this is intended to stain the pride of all worldly glory and, by setting the one over against the other, to let us see the vanity and uncertainty of the riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, and what little reason we have to place our happiness in them, or to be content with the conversation of them; so that all this is written for our learning.

1. THE word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyre; 3. And say unto Tyrus, O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles. Thus saith the Lord God, O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty. 4. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. 5. They have made all thy ship-boards of fir-trees of Senir; they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee. 6. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars: the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim. 7. Fine linen, with broidered work from Egypt, was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail: blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was that which covered thee. 8. The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners: thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee were thy pilots. 9. The ancients of Gebal, and the wise men thereof, were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea, with their mariners, were in thee to occupy thy merchandise. 10. They of Persia, and of Lud, and of Phint, were in thine army thy men of war: they hanged the shield and helmet in thee; they set forth thy comeliness. 11. The men of Arvad, with thine army, were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadins were in thy towers: they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about; they have made thy beauty perfect. 12. Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches: with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs. 13. Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants: they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market. 14. They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses, and horsemen, and mules. 15. The men of Dedan were thy merchants: many isles were the merchantism of thy hand: they brought thee for a present, horns of ivory and ebony. 16. Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making: they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate. 17. Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants: they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith and Pannam, and honey, and oil, and balm. 18. Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. 19. Dan also and Javan, going to and fro, occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and camals, were in thy market. 20. Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots, 21. Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats; in these were thy merchants. 22. The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spaces, and with all precious stones, and gold. 23. Haren, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chibir, were thy merchants. 24. These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar, among thy merchandise. 25. The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market; and thou wast replenished, and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

Here,

1. The prophet is ordered to take up a lamentation for Tyrus, v. 2. It was yet in the height of its prosperity, and there appeared not the least symptom of its decay; yet because its prosperity is its snare, is the cause of its pride and security, which will make its fall the more grievous. Even those that live at ease are to be lamented, if they are not preparing for trouble. He must lament it because its ruin is hastening on space, it is sure, it is near; and though the prophet foretell it, and justify God in it, yet he must lament it. Note, We ought to lament the mercies of other nations, as well as of our own, out of an affection for mankind in general; it is a part of the honour we owe to all men to bewail their calamities, and those which they have brought upon themselves by their own folly.

II. He is directed what to say, and to say it in the name of the Lord Jehovah, a name not unknown in Tyre, and which shall be better known, ch. xxvi. 6.

1. He must upbraid Tyre with her pride; O
Tyre, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty, (v. 3.) of universal beauty, (so the word is,) every way accomplish'd, could be the more every where admired. Zion, that had the beauty of holiness, is called indeed the perfection of beauty, (Ps. I. 29.) that is the beauty of the Lord. But Tyre, because well built, and well filled with money and trade, will set up for a perfect beauty. Note, It is the folly of the children of this world to value themselves on the ornament and pleasure they live in, to the hindrances beauty is chargeable to, for all their self-excellence, or for, if these they excel others, to think themselves perfect. But God takes notice of the vain conceits men have of themselves in their prosperity, when the mind is lifted up with the condition, and often, for the humbling of the spirit, finds ways to bring down the estate. Let none reckon themselves beautified any further than they are sanctified, nor say that they are of perfect beauty till they come to heaven.

2. He must uphold Tyre with her prosperity, which was the matter of her pride. In elegies, it is usual to insert encomiums of those whose fall we lament; the prophet, accordingly, praises Tyre for all that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her public justice; the only distinction he finds interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade; and all the trading part of mankind made court to her. The prophet must describe her height and magnificence, that God may be the more glorified in her fall, as the God who looks upon every one that is proud, and abases them, hides them in the dust for many generations; (Ps. LXX.)

(1.) The city of Tyre was advantageously situated, at the entry of the sea. (v. 3.) having many commodious harbours each way, not as cities seated on rivers, which the shipping can come but one way to. It stood at the end of the Mediterranean, very convenient for trade by land into all the Levant parts; so that she became a merchant of the people for many isles; lying between Greece and Asia, it became the great emporium, or mart-town, the rendezvous of merchants from all parts: Thy borders are in the heart of the seas, v. 4. It was surrounded with water, which was a great advantage to its trade; the darling of the sea, lield in its bosom, in its heart. Note, It is a great convenience, upon many accounts, to live in an island; seas are the masts which support them, not which our fathers have set, but the God of our Fathers, and which cannot be removed as other landmarks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily dwell alone, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations, has often a hand to dwell for us.

(2.) It was curiously built, according as the fashion then was; and, being a city on a hill, it made a glorious show, and tempted the ships that sailed by into her parts; (v. 4.) Thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have so improved in architecture, that nothing appears in the builders of Tyre that can be found fault with; and yet it will be observed, they were not such as our fathers have set, but the God of our Fathers, and which cannot be removed as other landmarks may, nor so easily got over. The people so situated may the more easily dwell alone, if they please, may the more easily traffic abroad, and keep a correspondence with the nations. We therefore of this island must own that he who determines the bounds of men's habitations, has often a hand to dwell for us.

(3.) It had its haven replenished with abundance of gallant ships, Isa. xxxiii. 21. The ship carpenters did their part, as well as the house carpenters theirs. The Tyrians are thought to be the first that invented the art of navigation; at least, they improved it, and brought it to so a perfect perfection as to supply the Lord's use. They made the boards, or planks, for the bulk of the ship, of fir-trees fetched from Senir, a mount in the land of Israel, joined with Hermon, Cant. iv. 8. Planks of fir were smooth and light, but not so lasting as our English oak. (2.) They had cedars from Lebanon, and gums from Bashan, v. 5. (3.) They had oaks from Bashan, (Isa. ii. 13.) to make ours of; for it is probable that their ships were mostly galleys, that go with oars. The people of Israel built few ships for themselves, but they furnished the Tyrians with timber for ship-building. Thus one country uses what another produces, and so are they serviceable one to another, and contribute to the wealth and prosperity of each other. Thus magnificence did they affect in building their ships; that they made the very boughs of ivory, which they fetched from the islands of Chittim, from Italy or Greece, and had workmen from the Ashurites or Assyrians to make them; so rich would they have their state-rooms in their ships to be. (3.) So very prodigal were they, that they made their sails of fine linen fetched from Egypt, and that embroidered too, v. 7. Or, it may be meant of their flags, (which they hoisted to that the city they belonged to,) which were very costly. The word signifies a banner as well as a sail. (6.) They hung those rooms on ship-board with blue and purple, the richest cloths and rich-marble, which a merchant could get from the isles they traded with. For through Tyre were fetched blue and purple, which is therefore called the Tyrian dye, yet they must have that which was so-fetched.

(4.) These gallant ships were well manned, by men of great ingenuity and industry. The pilots and masters of the ships, that had command in their fleets, were of their own city, such as they could partake confidence in; (v. 8.) Thy wise men, O Tyre, that went in there, were thy pilots. But for common sailors, they had them from other countries; The inhabitants of Arvad and Zidon were thy mariners; these came from cities near them; Zidon was sister to Tyre, not two leagues off, to the northward; there they bred able seamen, which it is the interest of the maritime powers to support, and give all the encouragement they can to. They sent to Gebal in Syria for carkers, or strengtheners of the cloths, or chinks, to step them when the ships came home, after long voyages, to be repaired. To do this, they had the ancients, and wise men, v. 9. For there is more need of wisdom and prudence to repair what is gone to decay than to build anew. In public matters there is occasion for the ancients and wise men that have been in the breaches, and the restorers of paths to dwell in the vineyards. The countries they traded with were at their service, and were willing to send men into their pay, or to fix their youths as apprentices in Tyre, or to put them on board their fleets; so that all the ships in the sea, with their mariners, were ready to occupy thy merchandise. These that give good wages, will have hands at from Syria, Ned, and Phut. (5.) Their city was guarded by a military force that was very considerable, v. 10, 11. The Tyrians were themselves wholly given to trade; but it was necessary that they should have a good army on foot, and therefore they took these of other states into their pay, such as were fittest for service; though they had them from afar, (which perhaps was their all to advantage,) but there was the guards of them. These bore their arms, when there was occasion, and in time of peace hanged up the shield and buckler, in the armoury, as it were to proclaim peace, and let the world know that they had at present no need of them; but they were ready to be taken down whenever there was occasion for them. Their walls were guarded by the men of Arvad, Tharshish, and the虑vocarum people; these were stout men, that had a great deal of strength in their arms; yet the vulgar Latins renders them fugitives, men no longer than one's arm. They hung
their shields upon the walls in their magazines, or places of arms; or hang them out upon the walls of their cities, to be visible to all that see them, and so the time they are ready, seeing how well provided they were with all things necessary for their own defence. Thus they set forth thy comeliness, (v. 10,) and made thee beauty perfect, v. 11. It contributed as much as any thing to the glory of Tyre, that it had those of all nations about in its service, except of the land of Israel, (though it far next them,) which furnished them with some of what was needful and that it furnishes them with men; that would have trenched upon the liberty and dignity of the Jewish nation, 2 Chron. ii. 17, 18. It was also the glory of Tyre that it had such a militia, so fit for service, and in constant pay; and such an armoury, like that in the tower of David, where hung the shields of mighty men, Cant. iv. 4. It is observable, that there and here the armours are said to be furnished with shields and helmets, defensive arms, not with swords and spears, offensive, though it is probable that there were such; to intimidate that the military force of a people must be intended only for their own protection, and not to invade and annoy their neighbours; to secure their own right, not to encroach upon the rights of others.

(6.) They had a vast trade, and a correspondence with nations upon earth, as well as upon the sea. Some nations they dealt with in one commodity, and some in another, according as either its products or its manufactures were, and the fruits of nature or art were: with which it was blessed. This is very much enlarged upon here, as that which was the principal glory of Tyre, and which supported all the rest. We do not find any where in scripture so many nations associated together as are here; so that this chapter, some think, gives much light to the first account we have of the settlement of the nations after the flood, Gen. x. The critics have abundance of work here to find out the several places and nations spoken of; concerning many of them their conjectures are different, and they leave us in the dark, and at much uncertainty; it is well that it is not material; modern surveys come short of explaining the ancient geography; and we will not amuse ourselves here with a particular enquiry, either concerning the traders, or the goods they traded in; we leave it to the critical expositors, and observe that only which is improvable.

[1.] We have reason to think that Ezekiel knew little, of his own knowledge, concerning the trade of Tyre; he was a priest, carried away captive far enough from the neighbourhood of Tyre, we may suppose when he was young, there he had been eleven years. And yet he speaks of the particular merchandises of Tyre as nicely as if he had been comptroller of the custom-house there; by which it appears that he was divinely inspired in what he spoke and wrote. It is God that saith this, v. 3.

[2.] This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us, that God does not take any notice of what they do when they are employed in their worldly business; not only when they are at church, praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling; which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings keep a conscience void of offence; and have our eye always upon him who sees our actions.

[3.] We may here observe the wisdom of God, and his goodness, as the common Father of mankind, in making one country to abound in one commodity, and another in another, and all more or less serviceable either to the necessity, or to the comfort and ornament, of human life. Non omnis fret omnia tellus—One land does not supply all the varieties of produce. Providence dispenses its gifts variously, some to each, and all to none, that they may be a mutual commerce among those whom God has made partakers of his grace. As they are all called on all the face of the earth, Acts xix. 26. Let every nation therefore thank God for the productions of its country; though they be not so rich as those of others, yet there is use for them in the public service of the world.

[4.] See what a blessing trade and merchandise are to mankind, especially when followed in the fear of God, and are a regular, not only a private advantage, but to a common benefit. The world is full of God's riches, Ps. civ. 24. There is a multitude of all kind of riches in it, (as it is here, v. 12,) gathered off its surface, and dug out of its bowels. The earth is also full of the fruits of men's ingenuity and industry, according as their genius leads them; now by exchange and barter these are made more extensively useful; thus what can be spared is helped off, and what is wanted is fetched in, in lieu of it, from the most distant countries. Those that are not traders themselves, have reason to thank God for tradesmen and merchants, by whom the productions of other countries are brought to our hands, as those of our own are by our husbandmen.

[5.] Beside the necessaries that are here traded in, there whose abundance of things are here mentioned, that only serve to please fancy, and are made valuable only by men's humour and custom; and yet God allows us to use them, and trade in them, and part with these things for them, which we can spare, that are of an intrinsic worth much beyond them. Here are horns of ivory and ebony, (v. 13,) that are brought for a present, exposed to sale, and offered in exchange; or, as some think, presented to the city, or the great men of it, to obtain their favour. Here are emeralds, coral, and agate, (v. 16,) all precious stones and gold, (v. 22,) which the world could better be without than iron and common stones. Here are, to please the taste and smell, the chief of all spices, (v. 22,) cassia and calamus, (v. 19,) and, for ornament, purple, broidered work, and fine linen; (v. 15,) precious cloths for chariots, (v. 20,) blue cloth, (which Tyre was famous for,) broidered work, and chests of rich apparel, bound with rich cords, and made of cedar, a sweet wood to perfume the garments kept in them, v. 24. Upon the review of this invoice, or bill of parcels, we may justly say, What a great many things are here that we have no need of, and can live very comfortably without. It is observable that Judah and the land of Israel were merchants in Tyre too; in a way of trade they were allowed to converse with the heathen. But they traded mostly in wheat, a substantial commodity, and necessary; wheats of Minnith and Pamnag, two countries in Cenam famous for the best wheat, as some think; the whole land indeed was a land of wheat, (Deut. viii. 8.) It had the field of Kidon, (v. 17,) for it, as other parts of the land, was maintained by corn fetched from the land of Israel: they traded likewise in honey, and oil, and balm, or rosin; all useful things, and not serving to pride or luxury. And the land which these were the staple commodities of, was that which was the glory of all lands, which God reserved for his peculiar people, not those that traded in spices and precious stones; and the Israelites could not have enough of that which was provided for them if they have food convenient; for they that are acquainted with the delights of the children of God, will not set their hearts on the delights of the sons and daughters of men, or the treasures of kings and provinces. We find indeed that the New Testament Babylonia in such things as Tyre traded in, Rev. xvi. 12, 13. For, notwithstanding its pretensions to sanctity, it is a mere worldly interest.
[7.1 Though Tyre was a city of great merchandise, and they got abundance by buying and selling, importing commodities from one place, and exporting them to another, yet manufacture-trades were not neglected. The wares of their own making, and a multitude of such wares, are here spoken of, v. 16, 18. It is the wisdom of a nation to encourage art and industry, and not to bear hard upon the handicraft-tradesmen; for it contributes much to the wealth and honour of a nation to send abroad samples of such wares, as might bring them in the multitude of all riches.

[8.] All this made Tyre very great and very proud; The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market, (v. 25.) thou wast admired and cried up by all the nations that had dealings with thee; for thou wast replenished in wealth and number of people, was beautified, and made very glorious, in the midst of the seas. These that grow rich are cried up as very glorious; for riches are glorious things in the eyes of carnal people, Gen. xxxxi. 1.]

26. Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. 27. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company, which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. 28. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. 29. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; 30. And shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads; they shall wallow themselves in the ashes: 31. And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth; and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. 32. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyre, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? 33. When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people: thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise. 34. In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise, and all thy company in the midst of thee, shall fall. 35. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. 36. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shall be any more.

We have seen Tyre flourishing, here we have Tyre falling; and great is the fall of it, so much the greater for its having made such a figure in the world. Note, The most mighty and magnificent kingdoms and states, sooner or later, have their day, and some chance of promotion or success; but when they are in their zenith, they will begin to decline; but the destruction of Tyre was sudden. Her sun went down at noon. And all her wealth and grandeur, pomp and power, did but aggravate her ruin, and make it the more grievous to herself, and astonishing to all about her. Now observe here,

1. How the ruin of Tyre will be brought about, v. 26. Sudden, great, sudden, like a great ship split or sunk by the misdirection of her steersmen; Thy rowers have themselves brought thee into great and dangerous waters; the governors of the city, and those that had the management of their public affairs, by some mismanagement or other involved them in that war with the Chaldeans, which was the ruin of their state; by their insolvency, by some avarice given to the Chaldeans, or some attempt made upon them, in confidence of their own ability to contend with them, they provoked Nebuchadnezzar to make a descent upon them, and, by their obstinacy in standing it out to the last, enraged him to that degree, that he determined the ruin of their state; and, like an east wind, broke them in the midst of the seas. Note, It is ill with a people when those who sit at their own table, instead of putting them into the harbour, run them aground.

2. How great and general the ruin will be. All her wealth shall be buried with her, her riches, her fairs, and her merchandise; (v. 27.) all that had any dependence upon her, and dealings with her, in trade, in war, in conversation, they shall all fall with her into the midst of the seas, in the day of her ruin. Note, Those who make creatures their confidence, place their happiness in their interest in them, and rest their hopes upon them, will of course fall with them; happy therefore are they that have the God of Jacob for their Help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, who lives for ever.

3. What sordid lamentation would be made for the destruction of Tyre. The pilots, their princes and governors, when they see how ill they have conducted themselves, and how much they have contributed to their own ruin, shall cry out so loud as to make even the suburbs shake, (v. 28.) such a vexation shall it be to them to reflect upon their own bad conduct. The inferior officers, that were as the mariners of the state, shall be forced to come down from their respective posts, (v. 29.) and they shall cry out against them, and shall disown all they had received from them, most properly; and well able to hold out as thought thou hadst been; they shall cry bitterly for the common ruin, and their own share in it. They shall use all the most solemn expressions of grief; they shall cast dust on their heads, in indignation against themselves, shall wallow themselves in ashes, as having bid a final farewell to all ease and pleasure; they shall make themselves bald, (v. 31.) with tearing their hair; and, according to the custom of great mourners, they shall gird themselves with sackcloth, who used to wear fine linen; and, instead of merry songs, they shall weep with bitterness of heart. Note, Losses and crosses are very grievous, and hard to be borne, to those that have long been wallowing in pleasure, and sleeping in carnal security.

4. How Tyre should be upbraided with her former honour and prosperity; (v. 32, 33.) she that was Tyre the renowned, shall now be called Tyre the destroyed to the midst of the sea. "What city is like Tyre? Did ever any city come down from such a height of prosperity to such a depth of adversity? Time was, when thy wares, those of thine own making, and those that passed through thy hands, went forth out of the seas, and were exported to all parts of the world; then thou filledst many
people, and didst enrich the kings of the earth and their kingdoms. The Tyrians, though they bore such a name in trade, were yet, it seems, fair merchants, and let their neighbours not only live, but thrive, by them. All that dealt with them, were gainers; they did not cheat or oppress the people, but did enrich them with the multitude of their merchandise. "But now they that used to be enriched by thee, shall be ruined with thee," (as is usual in trade); "when thou shalt be broken, and all that are lifted up in thee, all thy company shall fall too," v. 34. There is an end of Tyre, that made such a noise and bustle in the world. This great blaze goes out in a snuff.

3. How the fall of Tyre should be matter of terror to some, and laughter to others, according to they were differently interested and affected. Some shall be sore afraid, and shall be troubled, (v. 55.) concluding it will be their own turn to fall next. Others shall hiss at her, (v. 36.) shall ridicule her pride and vanity, and bad conduct, and think her ruin just. She triumphed in Jerusalem's fall, and there are those that will triumph in hers. When God casts his judgments on the sinner, men also shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place, Job xxvii. 22, 23. Is this the city which men called the perfection of beauty?

CHAP. XXVIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. A prediction of the fall and ruin of the king of Tyre, who, in the destruction of that city, is particularly set up as a mark for God's avowals, v. 1-10. II. A lamentation for the king of Tyre, when he is thus fallen, though he falls by his own iniquity, v. 11-19. III. A prophecy of the destruction of Zion, which was in the neighbourhood of Tyre, and had a dependence upon it, v. 20-25. IV. A promise of the restoration of the Israel of God, though in the day of their calamity they were insulted over by their neighbours, v. 24-26.

1. THE word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God, Because thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thy heart as the heart of God: 3. Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 4. With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: 5. By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic, hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God; 7. Behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die of the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. 9. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no god, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10. Thou shalt die of the deaths of the uncutومmaced by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

We had done with Tyrus in the foregoing chapter, but now the prince of Tyrus is to be singled out from the rest; here is something to be said to him by himself; a message to him from God, which the prophet must send him, whether he will hear or whether he will forbear.

1. He must tell him of his pride. His people were proud, (ch. xxvii. 3.) and so is he; and they shall both be made to know that God resists the proud. Let him know that he is not safe.

1. What were the expressions of his pride? His heart was lifted up, v. 2. He had a great conceit of himself, was blown up with an opinion of his own sufficiency, and looked with disdain upon all about him; out of the abundance of the pride of his heart, he said, I am a god: he did not only say it in his heart, but had the impudence to speak it out. God has said of princes, They are gods, (Ps. lix. 6.) but it does not become them to say so of themselves; it is a high affront to him who is God alone, and will not give his glory to another. He thought that the city of Tyre had as necessary a dependence upon him as the world has upon the God that made it; and that he was himself independent as God, and unaccountable to any. He thought himself to have the wealth and greatness and God strength and as incontestable an authority, and that his prerogatives were as absolute, and his word as much a law, as the word of God. He challenged divine honours, and expected to be praised and admired as a god, and doubted not to be defied among other heroes, after his death, as a great benefactor to the world. Thus the king of Babylon said, I will be like the Most High, (Isa. xiv. 14,) he even like the Most High in the strange God, and therefore will not be easily traduced, because I cannot be controlled. I sit in the seat of God; I sit as high as God, my throne equal with his. Divinum imperium cun Jove Caesar habet.—Cesar divides dominion with Jove. I sit as safe as God, as safe in the heart of the seas, and as far out of the reach of danger, as he in the height of heaven. He thinks his guards of men of a set apart from God and independent on him, as her armies were of hosts of angels that are about the throne of God. He is put in mind of his meaness and mortality, and, since he needs to be told, he shall be told, that self-evident truth, Thou art a man, and not God, a depending creature, a dying creature; thou art flesh, and not spirit, Isa. xxxi. 5. Note, Men must be made to know that they are but men, Ps. ix. 20. The greatest wits, the greatest dototies, the greatest solons are men, and not gods; Jesus Christ was both God and man. The king of Tyre, though he has such a mighty influence upon all about him, and with the help of his riches bears a mighty sway, though he has tribute and presents brought to his court with as much devotion as if they were sacrifices to his altar, though he is flattered by his courtiers, and made a god by his poets, yet after all, he is only a man, he knows it, he says it; but he sets his heart as the heart of God; Thus hast conceived thyself to be a god, hast compared thy self with God, thinking thyself as wise and strong and as fit to govern the world, as he. It was the ruin of our first parents, and ours in them, that they would be as gods, Gen. iii. 5. And still that corrupt nature which inclines men to set up themselves in their own eyes, to exalt themselves above what they are, to prize what their own hands have made, to have what they will, their own end, to live to themselves, and their own felicity, to enjoy themselves, sets their hearts as the heart of God, invades his prerogatives, and catches at the flowers of his crown—a presumption that cannot go unpunished.
1. We are here told what it was that he was proud of.

1. His wisdom. It is probable that this prince was a man of very good natural parts, a philosopher, and well read in all the parts of learning that were then in vogue, at least, a politician, and one that had great dexterity in managing the affairs of state. And then he thought himself wiser than Daniel, v. 3. We found, before, that Daniel, though now but a young man, was celebrated for his prevalence in prayer, ch. xiv. 14. Here, we find him famous for his understanding in the management of the affairs of this world, a great scholar and statesman, and withal a great saint; and yet not a prince, but a poor captive. It was strange that under such external disadvantages his lustre should shine forth, so that he was become wise to the proverb. When the king of Tyre dreams himself to be a god, he says, I am wiser than Daniel. There is no secret that they can hide from thee. Probably, he challenged all about him to prove him with questions, as Solomon was proved, and he had unravelled all their enigmas, had solved all their problems, and none of them all could puzzle him; he had perhaps been successful in discovering plots, and diving into the counsels of the neighbouring princes; and therefore thought himself omnipotent, and that no thought could be withholden from him. Therefore he said, I am a god. Note, Knowledge puffeth up; it is hard to know much and not to know it too well, and to be elevated with it. He that was wiser than Daniel, was prouder than Lucifer. Those therefore that are knowing must study to humble, and to evidence that they are so.

2. His wealth. That way his wisdom led him; it is not said that by his wisdom he searched into the avenues of religion or government, meddled the state better than it was, or made better laws, or had advanced the interests of the commonwealth of learning; but his wisdom and understanding were of use to him in traffic. As some of the kings of Judah loved husbandry, (2 Chron. xxxvi. 10.) so the king of Tyre loved merchandise, and by it he got riches, increased his riches, and filled his treasures with gold and silver, and with silver-wares, and with vessels of gold. Thus, the wisest of the world is, those are cried up as the wisest men, that know how to get money, and by right or wrong to raise estates; and yet really this their way is their folly, Ps. lxxix. 13. It was the folly of the king of Tyre, [1.] That he attributed the increase of his wealth to himself, and not to the providence of God, forgetting him whom he had forsaken, to get wealth, Dan. viii. 17, 18. [2.] That he therefore thought himself a wise man, because he was a rich man; whereas a fool may have an estate, (Ecc. vi. 19.) yes, and a fool may get an estate, for the world has been often observed to favour such, when bread is not to the wise, Ecc. iv. 11. [3.] That his heart was lifted up because of his riches; for the increase of his wealth, which made him so haughty and proud; and yet he had no heart to set his heart as the heart of God. The man of sin, when he had a great deal of worldly pomp and power, showed himself as a god, 2 Thess. ii. 4. Those who are rich in this world, have therefore need to charge that upon themselves, which the word of God charges upon them, that they be not high-minded, 1 Tim. vi. 17.

2. The extremity of the destruction; They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, v. 7. against all those things which they gloried in as thy beauty, and the production of thy wisdom. Note, It is just with God that our enemies should make that their prey which we have made our pride. The king of Tyre’s palace, his treasury, his city, his navy, his army, these he glories in as his brightness, these, he thinks, make him illustrious and glorious as a god on earth. But all these the victorious enemy shall defile, shall deface, shall detest, he thought them sacred, things that none durst touch; but the conquerers shall seize them as common spoil, and spoil the brightness of them. But, whatever comes of what he has, surely his person is saved, (v. 8.) whereas Solomon’s body was burnt to ashes. They shall cast him, (x. 26.) into the fire, to the grave; then shall die the death. And, (1.) It shall not be an honourable death, but an ignominious one. He shall be so vituperated in his death, that he may despair of being defiled after his death. He shall die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas, that have no honour done them at their death, but their dead bodies are immediately thrown overboard, without any ceremony or mark of distinction, to be a feast for the fish. Tyre is like to be destroyed in the midst of the sea, (ch. xxxvii. 32.) and the prince of Tyre shall fare no better than the people. (2.) It shall not be a happy death, but a miserable one; he shall die the deaths of the uncircumcised, (v. 10.) of those that are strangers to God, and not in covenant with him, and therefore that die under his wrath and curse. It is death, a double death, a temporal and eternal, the death both of body and soul. He shall die the second death; that is dying miserably indeed. The sentence of death, here passed upon the king of Tyre, is ratified by a divine authority; I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. And what he has said will he do. None can gainsay it, nor will he answer it.

3. The effectual destruction. He shall be made of all his pretensions to deity, (v. 9.) “When the conqueror sets his sword to thy breast, and then seest no way of escape, wilt thou then say, I am God? Wilt thou then have such a conceit of thyself, and such a confidence in thyself, as thou hast now? No, thy being overpowered by death, and by the fear of it, will force thee to own that thou art not a god, but a weak, trembling, trembling, dying man. In such a hand as that which is here described, (in the hand of and of the instruments that he employed,) thou shalt be a man, and not God; utterly unable to resist, and help thyself.” I have said, Ye are gods; but ye shall die like men, Ps. lixxxii. 6, 7. Note, Those who pretend to be rivals with God, shall be forced one way or other to let fall their claims. Death, a last, worst, when we come into his hand, will make us know that we are men.

11. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 12. Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Ty- rus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God, Thou sealest up the sun, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13. Thou hast
been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx; and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy taborets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14. Thou art the anointed cherub that coverest; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned; therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17. Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. 18. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee; and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.

As after the prediction of the ruin of Tyre, (ch. xxvi.) followed a pathetic lamentation for its, (ch. xxvi, ii.) so after the ruin of the king of Tyre is foretold, it is bewailed.

1. This is commonly understood of the present prince of Tyre, spoken to, v. 2. His name was Eschato, or Ethiobus, as Diodorus Siculus calls him, that was king of Tyre when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it. He was, it seems, upon all external accounts, an accomplished man, very great and famous; but his iniquity was his ruin. Many expositors have suggested, that beside the literal sense of this lamentation there is an allegory in it, and that it is an allusion to the fall of the angels that sinned, who undid themselves by their pride. And (as is usual in texts that have a mystical meaning) some passages here refer primarily to the king of Tyre, as that of his high degree, his prerogatives over the angels, as that of being in the holy mountain of God. But if there be any thing mystical in it, (as perhaps there may,) I shall rather refer it to the fall of Adam, which seems to be glanced at, (v. 13.) Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God, and that in the day thou wast created.

In some it is thought that the king of Tyre is meant the whole royal family, this including also the foregoing kings, and looking as far back as Hiram king of Tyre. The present governor is called prince; (v. 2.) but he that is here lamented is called king. The court of Tyre and its kings had for many ages been famous. But sins ruins it.

Now we may observe two things here:

1. What was the renown of the king of Tyre. He is here spoken of as having lived in great splendour, v. 12.—15. He was a man but it is here owned he was a very considerable man, and one that made a mark for himself in his day. He exceeded other men; Hiram and other kings of Tyre had done so in their time; and the present king perhaps had not come short of any of them: Thou seest up the sum full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty: both the powers of human nature and the prosperity of human life, seemed in him to have been at the highest pitch. He was looked upon to be as wise as one of his merchandise, ethiobus, he could make him, and as happy as the wealth of this world and his enjoyment of it could make him; in him you might see the utmost that both could do; and therefore seal up the sum, for nothing can be added; he is a complete man, perfect in suo generi—in his kind. (2.) He seemed to be as wise and happy as Adam in innocence; (v. 13.) Thou hast been in Eden, even in the garden of God, thou hast lived as it were in paradise all thy days, hast had a full enjoyment of everything that is good for food or pleasant to the eyes; and an uncontroverted dominion over all about thee, as Adam had. One instance of the magnificence of the king of Tyre, is, that he outdid all other princes in jewels, those which have the most plenty of that trade most abroad, as he did; Every precious stone of his temple. There is a great variety of precious stones; but he had jewels of so great a quantity, and so splendid, that, beside what were treasured up in his cabinet, and were the ornaments of his crown, he had his clothes trimmed with them; they were his covering; nay, (v. 14.) he walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire, these precious stones, which glittered and sparkled like fire. His rooms were in a manner set round with jewels, so that he walked in the midst of them. He was so proud and vain that he fancied himself so glorious as if, like God, he had been surrounded by so many angels, who are compared to a flame of fire. And if he be such an admirer of precious stones as to think them as bright as angels, no wonder that he is such an admirer of himself, as to think himself as great as God. Nine several sorts of precious stones are here named, which were all in the High Priest's ephod: these gems they are particularly named, because he, in his building, and in his dress, and in speaking, was to speak particularly of them, and tell those about him, with a great deal of foolish pleasure. THIS is such a precious stone; of such a value, and so and so are its virtues. Thus is he upbraided with his vanity. Gold is mentioned last, as far inferior in value to these precious stones; and he used to speak of it accordingly. Another thing that made him think his palace a paradise, was, the curious music he had, the taborets and pipes, hand instruments and wind instruments; the workmanship of these was extraordinary, and they were prepared for him on purpose; prepared in thee, the pronoun is feminine, in thee, O Tyre; or it denotes that the king was effeminate in doing on such things. They were prepared in the day he was created. This is, that the architect of the temple had made them on purpose to celebrate the joys either of his birth-day or of his coronation-day. These he prided himself much in, and would have all that came to see his palace take notice of them. (3.) He looked like an incarnate angel; (v. 14.) Thou art the anointed cherub that covers or protects; that is, he looked upon himself as a guardian angel, that he was bright, he was the glory set pointed to their office, and qualified for it; anointed kings should be to their subjects as anointed cherubim, that cover them with the wings of their power; when they are such, God will own them; their advancement was from him; I have set thee so. Some think, because mention was made of Eden, that it refers to the cherub set on the east of Eden to cover
it, Gen. iii. 24. He thought himself as able to guard his city from all invaders as that angel was for his charge. Or, it may refer to the cherubim in the most holy place, whose wings covered the ark; he thought himself as bright as one of them. (4.) He appeared in as much splendour as the High Priest when he was clothed with his garments for glory and honour, which was most pleasing to God, as president of the temple built on that holy mountain; thou didst look as great, and with as much majesty and authority, as ever the High Priest did when he walked in the temple, which was garnished with precious stones, (2 Chron. iii. 6.) and had his habit on, which had precious stones both in the breast and on the shoulders; in that he seeth set up in the midst of the stones of fire. Thus glorious is the king of Tyre; at least, he thinks himself so.

2. Let us now see what was the ruin of the king of Tyre, what it was that stained his glory, and laid all this honour in the dust: (v. 15.) "Thus was perfect in thy ways thou didst prosper in all thy affairs; and every thing went well with thee; thou hast not only not a clear, but a bright reputation, from the day thou wast created, the day of thine accession to the throne, till iniquity was found in thee; and that spoiled all." This may perhaps allude to the deplorable case of the angels that fell, and of our first parents, who were perfect in their ways till iniquity was found in them. And when iniquity was once found in him it increased, he grew worse and worse; and increased, and increased; and "his pride, led thy sanctuaries; thou hast lost the benefit of all that which thou thoughtst sacred, and in which, as in a sanctuary, thou thoughtest to take refuge; these thou hast defiled, and so exposed thyself by the multitude of thine iniquities." Now observe,

1. What the iniquity was that was the ruin of the king of Tyre. (1.) The iniquity of his traffic, (v. 16.) by the multitude of thy merchandise; they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thus thou hast sinned. The king had so much to do with his merchandise, and was so wholly intent upon the gains of that, that he took no care to do justice, to right things; and to himself, and to others; and to make all agreeable, he hath committed violence; nay, in the multiplicity of business, wrong was done to many by oversight; and in his dealings he made use of his power to invade the rights of those he dealt with. Note, Those that have much to do in the world, are in great danger of doing much amiss; and it is hard to deal with many without violence to some. Trades are called mysteries; but too many make mysteries of iniquity. (2.) His pride and vainglory; (v. 17.) "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou wast in love with thyself, and thy own shadow. And thus thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of the brightness, the pomp and splendour, wherein thou livest." He gazed so much upon this, that it dazzled his eyes, and prevented him from seeing his way. He appeared so puffed up with his greatness, that it bereaved him both of his wisdom, and of the reputation of it. He really became a fool in glorifying. Those make a bad bargain for themselves, that part with their wisdom for the gratifying of their gaiety, and, to please a vain humour, lose a real excellency.

2. What the ruin was, that this iniquity brought him to. (1.) He was thrown out of his dignity, and dislodged from his palace, which he took to be his paradise and temple; (v. 16.) "I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God." His kingly power was high as a mountain, setting him above others; it was a mountain of God, for the powers that be are ordained of God, and have something in them that is sacred; but, having abused his power, he is reckoned profane, and is therefore deposed and expelled; he disgraces the crown he wears, and so has forfeited it, and shall be destroyed from the midst of the stones of fire, the precious stones with which his palace was garnished, as the temple was; and they shall be no protection to him. (2.) He was exposed to contempt and disgrace, and trampled upon by his neighbours; "I will cast thee among the pavement-stones, from the midst of the precious stones, and will lay thee a fruitful spectacle before kings, that they may behold thee, and take warning by thee not to be proud and oppressive." (3.) He was quite consumed by his city, and by it; "I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee. The conquerors, when they have plundered the city, will kindle a fire in the heart of it, which shall lay it, and the palace particularly, in ashes. Or, it may be taken more generally, for the fire of God's judgments, which shall devour both prince and people, and bring all the glory of both to ashes upon the earth; and shall be brought forth from the midst of thee. All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are devoured by a fire of their own kindling. (4.) He was hereby made a terrible example of divine vengeance. Thus he is reduced in the sight of all them that behold him; (v. 18.) They that know him shall be astonished at him, and shall wonder how one that stood so high could be brought so low. The king of Tyre's palace, like the temple at Jerusalem when it was destroyed, shall be an astonishment and a hissing, 2 Chron. vii. 20, 21. So fell the king of Tyre.

20. Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it, 22. And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. 23. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the Lord. 24. And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor any grieving thorn of all that are round about them, that despised them; and they shall know that I am the Lord God. 25. Thus saith the Lord God, When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the people among whom they are scattered, and shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, then shall they dwell in their land that I have given to my servant Jacob. 26. And they shall dwell safely therein, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; yea, they shall dwell with confidence, when I have executed judgments upon all those that despise them round about them; and they shall know that I am the Lord their God.
God's glory is his great end, both in all the good and in all the evil which proceed out of the mouth of the Most High; so we find in these verses,

1. God will be glorified in the destruction of Zion, a city that lay near to Tyre, was more ancient, but not so considerable, had a dependence upon it, and stood and fell with it. God says here, I am against thee, O Zion, and I will be glorified in the ruin of thee, v. 22. And again, "They that would not know by gentler methods, shall be made to know that I am the Lord, and I alone, and that I am a just and jealous God, when I shall have executed judgments in her, destroying judgments, when I shall have done execution according to justice, and according to the sentence passed; and so shall be sanctified in her." The Zidonians, it seems, were more addicted to idolatry than the Tyrians were, who, being men of business and large conversation, were less under the power of bigotry and superstition; the Zidonians were noted for the worship of Ashtaroth. Solomon introduced it, 1 Kings xi. 9. Jezebel was daughter to the king of Zion, who brought the worship of Baal into Israel; (1 Kings xxi. 31.) so that God had been much dishonoured by the Zidonians. Now, says he, I will be glorified in the destruction of Zion, which were borderers upon the land of Israel, where God was known, and where they might have got the knowledge of him, and have learned to glorify him: but, instead of that, they seduced Israel to the worship of their idols. Note, When God is sanctified, he is glorified; for his holiness is his glory; and those whom he is not sanctified and glorified by, he will be sanctified and glorified upon, by executing judgments upon them, which speak him a just Avenger of his own and his people's injured honour.

The judgments that shall be executed upon Zion are, war and pestilence, two wasting, depopulating judgments, v. 23. They are God's messengers which he sends on his errands, and they shall accomplish that for which he sends them. Pestilence and blood shall be sent into her streets, there the dead bodies of these shall lie, who perished, some by the plague, occasional or through ill diet when the city was besieged, and some by the sword of the enemy, most likely the Chaldean armies, when the city was taken, and all were put to the sword. Thus the wounded shall be judged; when they are dying of their wounds, they shall judge themselves, and others shall say, They justly fall; or, as some read it, They shall be punished by the sword, that sword which God shall commission to destroy every side. It is God that judges, and he will overcome.

Nor is it Tyre and Zion only on which God would execute judgments, but on all these that despised his people Israel, and triumphed in their calamities; for this was now God's controversy with the nations that were round about them, v. 26. Note, When God's people are under his contending, he will not be pleased to see those who despise them and their enemies, to see those who despise them, and their enemies, to take delight in them, and to affect the membranes that were scorched, that they shall not seem vile to those who are about them, and therefore takes it ill of these who despise them, and so help forward the affliction when he is but a little displeased; Zech. i. 13. God regards them even in their low estate; and therefore let not men despise them.

God will be glorified in the restoration of his people to their former safety and prosperity. God had been dishonoured by the sins of his people, and their sufferings too had given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme; (Isa. lii. 5.) but God will now both care them of their sins, and ease them of their troubles, and so will be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen, will recover the honour of his holiness, to the satisfaction of all the world, v. 25. For,

1. (1.) They shall return to the possession of their own land again; I will gather the house of Israel out of their dispersions, in answer to that prayer, (Ps. civ. 47.) Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen; and in pursuance of that promise, (Deut. xxx. 4.) Then the Lord thy God gather thee. Being gathered, they shall be brought in a body, to dwell in the land that I have given to your fathers, to the ancient grant, in bringing them back, for that remained in force, and the discontinuance of the possession was not a defection of the right. He gave it, will again give it.

2. (2.) They shall enjoy great tranquillity there. When those that had been vexations to them are taken off, they shall live in quietness; there shall be no more a burning briar, or a gnawing thorn, v. 24. They shall have a happy habit, and shall build houses, and plant vineyards; and they shall enjoy a happy security and serenity there; they shall dwell safely, shall dwell with confidence, and there shall be none to disquiet them, or make them afraid, v. 26. This never had a full accomplishment in the body of that people, for after their return out of captivity, they were ever and anon molested by one band or another: But now, the church in this world has been ever since quite free from prickling briars and gnawing thorns; yet sometimes the church has rest; believers always dwell safely under the divine protection, and may be quiet from the fear of evil. But the full accomplishment of this promise is reserved for the heavenly Canaan, when all the saints shall be gathered together, and every thing that offends shall be removed, and all griefs and fears for ever banished.

CHAP. XXIX.

Three chapters we had concerning Tyre and its king, next follow four chapters concerning Egypt and its king. This is the first of them. Egypt is described and foretold, no doubt, and in a general manner, for late they had had but too friendly a correspondence with it, and had depended too much upon it; and therefore, whether the proclamation reached Egypt or no, it would be of use to Israel, to take them off from their confidence in their alliance with it. The prophecies against Egypt, which are all laid together in these four chapters, were of five several dates; the first in the tenth year of captivity; (v. 1.) the second in the twenty-second; (v. 12.) the third in the eleventh year, and the first month; (ch. xxx. 20.) the fourth in the eleventh year, and the third month; (ch. xxxi. 1.) the fifth in the twelfth year; (ch. xxxii. 1.) and another in the sixteenth year. We shall observe these in this chapter, we have,

1. The destruction of Pharaoh foretold, for his dealing deceitfully with Israel. v. 1. 7. II. The desolation of the land of Egypt foretold, v. 8. 12. III. A promise of the restoration thereof, in part, after forty years, v. 13. 18. IV. The possession that should be given to Nubchadrezar of the land of Egypt, v. 17. 20. V. A promise of mercy to Israel, v. 21.

1. In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying,

2. Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt: 3. Speak, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. 4. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of the
rivers shall stick unto thy scales. 5. And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven. 6. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. 7. When they took hold of thee by the hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Here is,

I. The date of this prophecy against Egypt. It was in the tenth year of the captivity, and yet it is placed after the prophecy against Tyre, which was delivered in the eleventh year, because in the accomplishment of the prophecies, the destruction of Tyre happened before the destruction of Egypt, and Nebuchadnezzar's gaining Egypt was the recompense of the eyes of his adversaries: therefore the prophecy against Tyre is put first, that we may the better observe that. But particular notice must be taken of this, that the first prophecy against Egypt was just at the time when the king of Egypt was coming to relieve Jerusalem, and raise the siege, (Jer. xxxviij. 5.) but did not answer the expectations of the Jews from them. Note, It is good to foresee the failure of our creature-confidence, then when we are most in temptation to depend upon them; that we may cease from man.

II. The scope of this prophecy. It is directed against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and against all Egypt, v. 2. The prophecy against Tyre began with the people, and then proceeded against the prince. But this begins with the prince, because it begins to have its accomplishment in the insurrections and rebellions of the people against the prince, not long after this.

III. The prophecy itself. Pharaoh Hophra (for so was the present Pharaoh surnamed) is here represented by a great dragon, or crocodile, that lies in the midst of his rivers, as Leviathan in the waters, to play therein, v. 3. Niblus, the river of Egypt, was famed for crocodiles. And what is the king of Egypt, in God's account, but a great dragon, venomous and mischievous? Therefore says God, I am against thee, I am above thee; so it may be read. How high soever the princes and potentates of the earth are, there is a higher than they, (Ecc. v. 8.) a God above them, that can control them, and, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, a God against them; and they will be free to reckon with them. Observe here,

1. The pride and security of Pharaoh. He lies in the midst of his rivers, rolls himself with a great deal of satisfaction in his wealth and pleasures; and he says, My river is my own: he boasts that he is an absolute prince, his subjects are his vassals, Joseph bought them long ago, Gen. xlvii. 25. That he is a sole prince, and has neither partner in government, nor competition for it; that he is out of debt, what he has is his own, and none of his neighbours have any demands upon him; that he is independent, neither tributary nor accountable to any. Note, Worldly, carnal minds please themselves with, and pride themselves in, their property; forgetting that whatever we have, we have only the use of it, the property is in God; we ourselves are not our own, but his; our tongues are not our own, Ps. xii. 4. Our river is not our own, for its springs are in God. Moses could never find what he had, is his own, for though it be so against all the world, it is not so against God. But Pharaoh's reason for his pretensions is yet more absurd; My river is my own, for I have made it for myself. Here he usurps two of the divine prerogatives, to be the author, and the end, of his own being and felicity. He only that is the great Creator, can say of this world, and of every thing in it, this is my own, for myself. He calls his river his own, because he looks not unto the Maker thereof, nor has regard unto him that fashioned it long ago, Isa. xxii. 11. What we have, we have received from God, and must use for God, so that we cannot say, We made it, much less, We made it for ourselves; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships, in contempt of God and his sovereignty. 2. The course God will take with this proud man, to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, v. 4. 5. (1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has a hook and a cord for this levithan, with which he can manage him, though none on earth can; (Job xli. 1.) I will bring thee up out of the midst of the waters; we cast them out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency, and placest such a confidence. Herodotus relates of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt, that he had reigned in great prosperity for twenty-five years, and was so elevated with his successes, that he said, God himself cannot cast me out of his kingdom; but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence. God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy. (2.) All his fish shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a dependence on him, as he thought, but really such as he had dependence upon; these shall stick to his scales, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But, (3.) The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales, shall perish together, as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be meat to the beasts and fowls, v. 5. Now this is supposed to have its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh, in defence of Aricus king of Libya, who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians, to recover his kingdom. The Pharaoh was defeated in battle, and all his forces put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom, that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left thrown into the wilderness, he and all the fish of the river with him. Thus issue men's pride and presumption and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they call their own under God, when they call it their own against God. The libation of the cannibals God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people, they encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them; (v. 6.) because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. They pretended to be a staff for them to lean upon, but when any serious emergency supervened, they were found black and could not, or treacherous and would not, do that for them that was expected. They broke under them, to their great disappointment and amazement, so that they rent their shoulder, and made all their limbs to be at a stand. The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which when he failed to do to any purpose, it could not but put
them to a great consternation. God had told them, long since, that the Egyptians were broken reeds; (Isa. xxx. 6, 7.) Rabshakeh had told them so; (Isa. xxxvi. 6.) and now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falsehood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is, and will be, the Avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

3. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the Lord: because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. 10. Behold, therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. 11. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. 12. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 13. Yet thus saith the Lord God, At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered: 14. And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and I will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom. 15. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms; neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. 16. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord God.

This explains the foregoing prediction, which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is a prophecy,

1. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them, is, their pride, v. 9. They said, The river is mine, and I have made it; therefore their land shall spue them out. (1.) God is against them, both against the king and against the people, against thee and against thy rivers; waters signify people and multitudes, Rev. xvii. 15. (2.) Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them, to destroy both man and beast, the sword of a civil war. (3.) The country shall be depopulated. The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and the enemies of the Lord, the cities not inhabited; the wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It shall be utterly waste; wastes of waste, (so the margin reads it,) and desolate; (v. 10.) neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited, (v. 11.) it shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are so, v. 12. This was the effect not so much of what is spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them. It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation. (4.) The people shall be dispersed and scattered among the nations, (v. 12.) so that they who thought the balance of power was in their hand, should now become a contemptible people. Such a fall does a haughty spirit go before.

2. Of the restoration of Egypt after awhile, v. 13. Egypt shall be desolate forty years, (v. 12.) and then I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, v. 14. Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before; however, they end not but that it shall be a period of a hundred and seventy years' captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished, (1.) That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to return to the land of their habitation, and give them a settlement there again, v. 14. Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not crown for ever, nor use them in this world. (2.) That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a kingdom again, but it shall be the basest of the kingdoms, (v. 13.) it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but, to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall not be a great kingdom, but shall be but a base kingdom. It shall be so low and despised as never it was, and made to bear a contemptible and servile yoke before. It shall bear a yoke and a staff, a reproach and a shame. It shall lose its ancient name, Egypt, and be called a people of sorts.

[1.] That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not exact itself above the nations, nor rule over the nations, as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own, but of other nations.

[2.] That it may not deceive the people of God; (v. 16.) It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel; they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it as they have done, which is a sin that brings its iniquity to remembrance, that is, provokes God to punish them still further for all their other sins. Or, it puts them in mind of their idolatries, to return to them, when they look to the idolaters, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in are often therefore ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensured again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste, He that use provokes Egypt for their ransum, (Isa. xlix. 3.) will now give Egypt for their cure; and it shall be destroyed rather than Israel shall not in this particular be reformed. God, not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, breaks those creature-stays which we lean too much upon; and makes them to be no more, that they may be no more our confidence.
17. And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first
say of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against
Tyre: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyre, for the service that he had served against it: 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebu-
chadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and
take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. 20. I have given him the land of
Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God. 21. In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to
bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they
shall know that I am the Lord.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar put into execution the covenants in the compacts of the Ammonites and Moabites, and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre; during all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cy-
renians and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished: and just at the end of the siege of Tyre, God delivers this prophecy to Jeremiah, which in the most solemn manner he was to use. 22. That utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completely by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is hid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophra, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold, Jer. xlv. 30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold, Jer. xlviii. 10, 11, 12.

1. What success God would give to Nebu-
chadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him that land, that he might take the spoil and prey of it, v. 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it were inconsiderable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was well known to Nabuchodonosor. They having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. 

Et quid discordia cives perduxit miseror—What 
swertchenedness does civil discord bring? Jeremiah for told that Nebuchadnezzar should array him-
self with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on
his coat, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

2. Upon what considerations God would give Ne-
buchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a reward to him for the hard service which he had caused his army to serve against
Tyre, v. 18, 20. (1.) The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure; it held out thirteen years, all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it, to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was to be crossed with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege, every head was made bald, and every shoulder feeleth, with carrying burthens, and labouring in the water, when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is with difficulty subdued. These that have much to do in the world, find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But, (2.) In this service God showed that they wrought for him, v. 20. He set them at work, for the benefit of another city and its king; though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for him, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God over-
rule all to his own glory. Yet, (3.) For this service he had no wages or reward. Therefore he was a great expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappoi-
nted; the Tyrians sent away by ships their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations, though they be carried through a vast utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completely by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr. Lightfoot observes, that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is hid here, that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophra, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold, Jer. xlv. 30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold, Jer. xlviii. 10, 11, 12.

1. What success God would give to Nebu-
chadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him that land, that he might take the spoil and prey of it, v. 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it were inconsiderable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was well known to Nabuchodonosor. They having been divided among themselves, no doubt, gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who, when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. 

Et quid discordia cives perduxit miseror—What 
swertchenedness does civil discord bring? Jeremiah for told that Nebuchadnezzar should array him-
self with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on
his coat, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

2. Upon what considerations God would give Ne-
buchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a reward to him for the hard service which he had caused his army to serve against
Tyre, v. 18, 20. (1.) The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood and treasure; it held out thirteen years, all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it, to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was to be crossed with earth, and many other difficulties which were thought insuperable they had to struggle with; but so great a prince, having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege, every head was made bald, and every shoulder feeleth, with carrying burthens, and labouring in the water, when they had a strong tide and a strong town to contend with. Egypt, a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre, a single city, being unanimous, is with difficulty subdued. These that have much to do in the world, find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But, (2.) In this service God showed that they wrought for him, v. 20. He set them at work, for the benefit of another city and its king; though they meant not so, neither did their heart think so, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men and bad men are tools that God makes use of, and are working for him, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully does God over-
rule all to his own glory. Yet, (3.) For this service he had no wages or reward. Therefore he was a great expense to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappoi-
nted; the Tyrians sent away by ships their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations, though they be carried through
anci shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage; in the honour that shall be done, (1.) To their princes; they are the horns of the house of Israel, the seat of their glory and power, these began to bud forth when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon; Daniel sat in the gate of the city; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were set over the affairs of the province, (Dan. ii. 49.) these were all of the king's seed, and of the princes, Dan. i. 3. And it was within a year after the conquests of Egypt that they were thus preferred; and, soon after, three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the bawling forth of the horns of the house of Israel. And, some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin king of Judah, Jer. lxi. 31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy omens. (2.) To their prophets; and I will give thee the opening of the mouth. Though none of Ezekiel's prophesies, after this, are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophe-sying, and with more liberty and boldness, when Daniel and his fellows were in power, and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonians, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people when God enlarges the liberties of his ministers, and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.

CHAP. XXX.

a this chapter, we have, 1. A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt, which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadrezzar. In which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all those to which she had been a terror, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in pushing on this destruction, v. 1-19. 2. A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt, just before the desolation of it begun by the Babylonians, which gradually weakened them, and prepared the way for the king of Babylon, v. 20-26. It is all much to the same purport with what we had before.

1. THe word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Howl ye, Woe worth the day! 3. For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen. 4. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. 5. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. 6. Thus saith the Lord, They also that uphold Egypt shall fall; and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord God. 7. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. 8. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be de-stroyed. 9. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships, to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt for, lo, it cometh. 10. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon. 11. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nations shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw their swords against Egypt and fill the land with the slain. 12. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked; and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the Lord have spoken it. 13. Thus saith the Lord God, I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease out of Noph and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt: and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. 14. And I will make Pthros desolate, and will set fire in Zoon, and will execute judgments in No. 15. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt; and I will cut off the multitude of No. 16. And I will set fire in Egypt: Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily. 17. The young men of Aven and Pibeseth shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity. 18. At Taphanethes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. 19. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt, and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as, in the general, very frightful. What can protect a pravocking people, when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them? 1. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow; (v. 2, 3.) "Howl ye, ye may justly shriek now that it is coming, for ye shall be made to shriek and make hideous howls, when it comes. Cry out, Woe worth the day! or, Ah the day, alas because of the day, the terrible day! Woe and alas! For the day is near; the day we have so long dreaded, so long desired. It is the day of the Lord, the day in the which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance; you have your day now, when you can all bear you, and all your days shall hear you, and God will take his day now shortly; the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment," Ps. xxxvii. 13. It will be a cloudy day, that is, dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm; fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, of reckoning with the heathen, for all their heathenish practices; that time which David spake of when God would Now-
out his fury upon the heathen, (Ps. lxix. 6.) when they shall sink; Ps. lx. 15.

2. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her, and in her neighbourhood. (1.) Egypt herself shall fall; (v. 4.) The sword shall come upon Egypt, the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? They shall take away her multitude. Is it strong, and well fixed? Her foundations shall be broken down, and they shall break them down, but also she shall be broken, she shall be utterly laid waste, high shall fall of course. (2.) Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her; when the slain fall so thick in Egypt, great shall be in Ethiopia, both that in Africa, which is in the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side; when their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but apprehend their own in danger; nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all fall with them by the sword; (v. 5.) Ethiopia, and Libya, (Cush and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham, who are mentioned,) and Misraim, that is, Egypt, between them, Gen. x. 6. The Lydians, who were famous archers, are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, Jer. xlvii. 7. These shall fall with Egypt and Chaldb; that shall fall with them, and among the inhabitants of the inner Fayoum, these and those were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries, who upon some account or other resided in Egypt; as did also the men of the land that is in league, some of the remains of the people of Israel and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called, (Acts iii. 28.) the children of the covenant, God, iv. 28. These sojourned in Egypt, contrary to God's command, and these shall fall with them. Note, They that will take their lot with God's enemies, shall have their lot with them; yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

3. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt, shall come down under her, shall come down with her; (v. 6.) They that uphold Egypt shall fall, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; and now they that pretended to uphold Egypt, shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin, they are themselves deceived. (1.) Does Egypt think here disciples and converts to her cause; and do they not remember her judgment, and do they not remember her king? The pride of her flower shall come down, v. 6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken, and humbled. (2.) Is the multitude of her people her support? These shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene, which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall come, and the conquerors shall come in; and the desert bandmen said the merchants, shall be desolate, (v. 7.) as before, ch. xxix. 12. Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, v. 10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, v. 11. (3.) Is the river Nile her support, and the several channels of it a defence to her? I will make the rivers dry, (v. 13.) her own streams shall be dried up, and her fruits shall be desolate. (4.) Are her idol's a support to her? Those shall be destroyed, those imaginary upholders shall appear more than ever to be imaginary, for so images are when they pretend to be deliverers and strong holds; (v. 13.) I will cause their images to cease out of Niph. (5.) Is her royal family her support? There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt; the royal family shall be extinguished, and all that continued so long. (6.) Is her courage her support, and does she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men in war, and to be now prepared to spare, She shall fall; I will put a fear in the heart of Egypt. (7.) Is the rising generation her support, is she upheld by her children, and does she think herself happy because she has her quiver full of them? Alas, the young men shall fall by the sword, (v. 17.) and the daughters shall go into captivity, (v. 18.) and so she shall be robbed of all her hopes. 4. God will destroy all the opening judgments on Egypt; (v. 8.) They shall know that I am the Lord, and greater than all gods, than all their gods, when I have set a fire in Egypt. The fire that consumes nations is of God's kindling; and when he sets fire to a people, all their helpers shall be destroyed; those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before the Lord when he is angry? When he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, (v. 15. 16.) neither its strength nor its multitude can stand it in any stead.

5. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction; The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, and be quite cut off by the hand of the king of Babylon, v. 1. The king of Babylon, and the king of Egypt, and the king of Ethiopia, and the king of Babylon, shall not be able to join themselves together. It is said of the Chaldeans, who should destroy Egypt, (1.) That they are strangers, (v. 12.) who therefore shall show no compassion for old acquaintance sake, but shall carry it strangely toward them. (2.) That they are the terrible of the nations, (v. 11.) both in respect of force, and in respect of ferocity; and, in respect of horror, they shall be made terrible work. (3.) That they are the wicked; who will not be restrained by reason and conscience, the laws of nature, or the laws of nations, for they are without law; I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked. They do violence unjustly, as they are wicked; yet, so far as they are instruments in God's hand of executing his judgments, it is on his part justly done. Note, God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another; and even wicked men acquire a title to prey, jure belii.—by the laws of war, for God sells it into their hands.

6. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest; The sword shall go through the land. Divers places are here named: Amurath, v. 12. Sinjor, (v. 11.) Sinjor, and Elaven, (v. 13, 15, 16.) Aven and Phubeseth, (v. 17.) Tehaan, v. 18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God's judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily; their day shall be spent, their pleasures, comforts, and hopes shall be extinguished; and, in their turn, they shall no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done; the pomp of their strength shall cease, and a cloud shall cover them; a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen, or shine further. And, lastly, the Ethiopians, who are at a distance from them, and are the more determined enemies of them, shall share in their pain and terror; God will so kindle his vengeance spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopians shall be made afraid, v. 9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure; fearfulness shall, when he pleases, surprise the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves, (1.) The land of Egypt mortified. Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt, v. 19. The destruction of Egypt is the
executing of judgments, which intimates not only that it is done justly, for its sins, but that it is done regular, and inasmuch as it is done by God, and by the executions God does, are according to his judgments. (2.) The God of Israel herein glorified; They shall know that I am the Lord. The Egyptians shall be made to know it, and the people of God shall be made to know it better. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.

20. And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 24. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly-wound man. 25. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. 26. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

This short prophecy of the weakening of the power of Egypt was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians, which attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem, was frustrated in its enterprises, and returned re infecta—without accomplishing their purpose; whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege, and carried his point. The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been many ages considerable. That of Babylon was but lately arrived at its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria. Now it is with them as it is with fair weather and fine crops, growing up, others are declining and going back; one must increase, and the other must of course decrease.

1. It is here told that the kingdom of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of its territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to submit to either himself or his friend. (4.) This was in part done already; (v. 21.) I have broken the arm of Pharaoh some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned broken, when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish, (Jer. xlv. 2.) And made himself master of all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates, 2 Kings xxiv. 7. Egypt had been long in gathering strength, and extending its dominions, and therefore that there may be a proportion observed in providence, it loses its strength slowly and by degrees. It was soon after the king of Assyria was taken; in the year of his death, he was conquered by the king of Babylon, and his empire was divided among his conquerors, (2 Kings xxiv. 7.) and the same was more and more wearied out, until the arm of his power was broken, and the king of Egypt fell with the rest. The king of Babylon was by this time the most formidable enemy that Egypt had to contend with. They were much at variance with each other, and the former had often to suffer in Egypt's wars with the Assyrians. 2. It is here told that the kingdom of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, v. 24, 25. It is said and repeated, that God will, (1.) Put strength into the king of Babylon's arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. (2.) That he will put a sword, his sword, into the king of Babylon's hand, which signified his giving him a commission, and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war, particularly against Egypt. (3.) To judge. As judges on the bench, like Plate, (John xix. 11.) so generals in the field, like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

CHAP. XXXI.

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying it. In the former, as in the latter, the crimes, and to see what has been done to others in the like case, which serves both to direct and to justify the proceedings: Pharaoh stands in the bar of divine justice for his pride and haughtiness, and the injuries he had done to God's people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority; so strong, and so well guarded, as not to be overthrown, but he is declared by the prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh. 1. He must show him how great a monarch the king of Assyria was, and how he had been treated with what a mighty sway he bore; the king of Egypt, great as he was, could not go beyond him, v. 3. 9. II. He must then show him how he was to the king of Assyria, and to Nebuchadnezzar, as a man to a child, as the prophet next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the kingdom of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations, and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride, v. 11. 17. IV. He must leave the king of
Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own face in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's sin, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective-glass of his ruin, v. 18.

1. AND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude: Whom art thou like in thy greatness? 3. Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. 4. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. 5. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long, because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. 6. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.

7. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. 8. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the cedrus-trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. 9. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before: when God's people were in the depth of their distress, it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours, that insisted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling, that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people, and put into the hands of those that hated them, Isa. li. 22, 23. In this prophecy, 1. The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own; (v. 2.) See Note, a. The multitude of his attendants, that contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength; these he was proud of, these he put a confidence in, and they were as proud of him, and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, Whom art thou like in thy greatness? We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison. Those that think highly of themselves, fancy themselves as great and as good as such and such, that have been mightily celebrated. The flatterers of princes tell them whom they equal in pomp and grandeur; "Well," says God, "let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is like him in greatness, and no way inferior to him; but let him pitch upon whom he will, he will find that his day came to fall; he will see there was an end of all his perfection, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner." Note, The falls of others, both into sin and ruin, are minded to the Mediation of Christ, and are intended to be secrets, or high-minded, or to think we stand out of danger.

11. He is directed to show him an instance of one whom he resembled in greatness; and that was the Assyrian, (v. 3.) whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod. Senacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy; but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ashes to the top of its stock. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, v. 3. The glory of the house of David is illustrated by the same similitude, ch. xvii. 3. The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, had refused to be promoted over the trees, because they would not leave their fruitfulness; (Jug. ix. 8, &c.) and therefore the choice falls upon the cedar, that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1. The Assyrian monarch was a tall cedar, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a high stature, and his top among the thick boughs; he was attended by other princes that were tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave men. He spread all around his neighborhood, they were all shrubs to him; (v. 3.) His height was exalted above all the trees of the field, they were many of them very high, but he overtopped them all, v. 8. The cedars, even these in the garden of Eden, where, we may suppose, they were the best of the kind, would not hide him, but his top branches outshone theirs.

He was a spreading cedar: his branches did not only run up in height, but ran out in breadth; denoting that this mighty prince was not only exalted to great dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth, but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far, and his influences much further. This cedar, like a vine, sent forth his branches to the sea, to the rivers, Ps. lxxx. 11. His boughs were made his branches became long; (v. 5.) so that he had a shadowing shroud, v. 3. This contributed very much to his beauty, that he grew proportionably large as well as high. He was fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches, (v. 7.) very comely as well as very stately, fair by the multitude of his branches, v. 9. His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order by the skill of the gardener, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as amiable in the eyes of wise men, as it was admirable in the eyes of all men. The fir-trees were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular; nor were the branches of the cedrus-trees like his branches, so thick, so spreading. In short, no tree was to be compared to the god of the Assyrians, which stood where paradise was planted; there where there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight, (Gen. ii. 9.) there was none like to this cedar in beauty; in all the nations about there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and which every body was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them did virtuously, but he excelled all; they were all admired, all exalted, all the trees of them that envied him, v. 9. When they found they could not compare with him, they were angry and grieved that he so far outdid them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those who in any thing excel others, that thereby they make themselves the objects of envy; and who can stand before envy?
3. He was serviceable, as far as a standing, growing cedar could be, and that was only by his shadow; (v. 6.) All the fowls of heaven, some of all sorts, made their nests in his boughs; where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The branches of the field put themselves under the protection of his branches, there they were levant—rising up, and cooent—lying down, there they brought forth their young; for they had there a natural covert from the heat and from the storm. The meaning of all is, Under his shadow dwelt all great nations; they all fled to him for safety, and were willing to swear allegiance to him. He would undoubtedly protect them; as travelers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter. Note, Those who have power, ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over; for to that end they are intrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come, and trust in his shadow, Judg. ix. 15. But the utmost security that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself, can give, is but the shadow of a tree, which is but a scanty and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed. Let us therefore flee to God for protection, and he will take us under the shadow of his wings, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and statelyest cedars, Ps. xvii. 8.—xcli. 4.

4. He seemed to be settled and established in great power; (v. 1.) Jer. xxii. 10. For God that made him fair, v. 9. For by him kings reign: he was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him. Note, God's hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth; and therefore we must not envy them; yet that will not secure the continuance of their prosperity; for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn them into deformity. He seemed to have a good bottom; this cedar was not like the hale in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places. (Jer. xvi. 6.) It was not a root in a dry ground, Isa. lii. 2. No, he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur; (v. 4.) The waters made him great; he had vast treasures, large stores and magazines, which were as the deep that set him up on high, constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs, and tolls, which were as rivers running and going about his plants; these enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests every where, for he went out his little rivers, or conduits, to all the trees of the field, to water them, and when they had maintenance from the king's palace, (Ezra iv. 14.) and their country was nourished by the king's country, (Acts xxi. 20.) they would be serviceable and faithful to him. Those that have wealth flowing upon them in great rivers, find themselves obliged to send it out again in little rivers; for, as goods are increased, they are increased that eat therein, and the more men have, the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long because of the multitude of waters, which fed them. (v. 5. and v. 7.) His root was by great waters, which seems to secure that it should not wither, (Ps. i. 3.) that it should not see when heat comes. Jer. xvii. 8. Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, Job v. 3. Ps. xxxvii. 35.

10. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have, therefore, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. 12. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him upon the mountains and in the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. 13. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: 14. To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. 15. Thus saith the Lord God, In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning; I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. 16. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit; and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. 17. They also went down into hell with him, unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. 18. To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Syria in pomp and power and prosperity, how like he was to him in greatness; now here we see,

1. How he does likewise resemble him in his pride; (v. 10.) for as face answers to face in a glass, so does one corrupt, carnal heart to another; and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcomen, are fatal to many others too. Thou, O king of Egypt, hast lifted up thyself in height, hast been proud of thy wealth and power, ch. xxix. 3. And just so, he, the king of Assyria, when he had shot up his top among the thick boughs, his heart was immediately lifted up in his height, and he grew insolent and imperious; set God himself at defiance, and trampled upon his people; witness the messages and letter which the great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, Isa. xxxvii. 4. How haughtily does he speak of himself and his own achievements, how scurrility of that great and good man! There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particu-
lady that of oppressing God's people; it is charged upon them both together, (Isa. li. 4.) but here that sin is run up to its cause, and that was, pride; for it is the thought and fear of the crown that produced it. Note, When men's outward condition rises, their minds commonly rise with it. And it is very rare to find an humble spirit in the midst of great advancements. II. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall; and for the opening of this part of the comparison.

Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, says God, (v. 11.) I have therefore, because he was thus lifted up, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen. Cyrus, king of the Medes, in the 26th year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the 1st year of his reign, destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became, very emphatically, the mighty one of the heathen; most mighty among them; and most mighty over them, to prevail against them. (1.) It is God himself that orders his ruin; I have delivered him into the hand of the executioner; I have driven him out. Note, God is the Judge, who puts down one, and sets up another. Ps. lxxxv. 7. And when he pleases, he can raise and abase princes, who, being both armed and come themselves, and seem to others, to have taken deep-root. And the mightiest ones of the heathens could not gain their point against those they contended with, if the Almighty did not himself deliver them into their hands. (2.) It is his own sin that procures his ruin; I have driven him out for his wickedness. None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is for their wickedness. None of our comforts are ever lost, but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness. (3.) It is a mighty one of the heathen that shall be the instrument of his ruin. For God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. He shall surely deal with him, shall know how to manage him, great as he is, Note, Proud, imperious men will, sooner or later, meet with their match. Now, in this history of the fall of the Assyrian, observe,

[1.] A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far; but his day comes to fall. First, This stately cedar was cropped; the terrible of the nations cut high. When God cut his high seat, his congregation disappeared. Second, It was deserted; All the people of the earth, that had fled to him for shelter, are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. When he was disabled to afford protection, they thought they no longer owed him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them, and have a dependence upon them, it is only for what they can get; when Providence frowns upon them, their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them. Thirdly, It was insulted over, and its full triumphed in; (v. 13.) Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar. Its fall is triumphed in by the other trees, who were angry to see themselves over-stript so much; All the trees of Eden, that were cut down and fallen before him, all that drank water of the same deep well, were now forced to drink of the tree of life, the top of which, when the Assyrian, in the south, is said to bow with the dew of heaven, (Dan. iv. 23.) and to bud through the scent of water; (Job xiv. 9.) all these shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth, when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves. Solamen miseris socios haniisse doloris-To have companions in wo is a solace to those who suffer. But, on the contrary, the honorable cedar, being cut down, the height and strength, mourned for him, and the trees of the field fainted for him, because they could not but read their own destiny in his fall. How, fir-trees, if the cedar be shaken, for they cannot expect to stand long, Zech. xi. 2.

[2.] An explanation of the similitude of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch and all his adherents and supporters; they are all delivered to death, to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the axes: he and his princes, who, he said, were altogether kings, go down to the grave, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, as common persons of no quality or distinction; they die like men, (Ps. lxxxii. 7.) they were carried away with a tempest, and were driven to perdition, (Isa. xxiv. 20.) and neither protect them nor descend after them. Again, (v. 16.) He was cast down to hell with them that descended into the pit; he went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are, in obscurity and oblivion. Again, (v. 17.) They all that were his arm, on whom he stayed, by whom he acted, and exerted his power, all that dwelt under his shadow, his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grave with him, unto them that were slain with the sword, to those that were cut off by untimely deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame. When great men fall, a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

[3.] What God designed, and aimed at, in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, First, To give an alarm to the nations about; to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a gaze; (v. 16.) I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall; they were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus; it gave a shock to all their confidences, and made them understand how frail and insecure all human glory is. He was not only brought down, but he went down to the grave, (v. 15.) I caused a mourning, a general lamentation, as the whole kingdom goes into mourning at the death of the king; in token of this general grief, I covered the deep for him, put that into black, gave a stop to business, in compliance to this universal mourning; I restrained the floods, and the great waters were stayed, (Isa. xlv. 16.) they were still, and dry shall be the channel, that of lamentation. Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him; as the allies of Babylon, Rev. xviii. 9. Secondly, To give an admonition to the nations about, and to their kings; (v. 14.) To the end that none of all the trees by the waters, though ever so advantageously situated, may exalt themselves above others; they shall be stripped from their borrowed; and their own dress upon them, by their own righteousness, and shall be naked, and shall show their top among the thick boughs, looking disdainfully upon others, nor stand upon themselves for their height, confiding in their own policies and powers, as they could never be brought down. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm, as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his evidence failed him. And, The fall of

Vol. iv.—4 Z
proud, presumptuous men is intended for warning to others to keep humble. It had been well for Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself active in bringing down the Assyrian, if he had taken the admonition. 2. Here is a prophecy of the fall of the king of Egypt; for though Pharaoh thought himself like the Assyrian in glory and greatness, overtopping all the trees of Eden, as the cypress does the shrubs; but thou also shalt be brought down, with the other trees that are pleasant to the sight, as those in Eden. Thou shalt be brought to the grave, to the nether or lower parts of the earth, thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, that die in their uncleanness, and that was a curse, and among the uncircumcised, at a distance from God; then shall those whom he has trampled upon, triumph over him, saying, "This is Pharaoh and all his multitude. See how mean he looks, how low he lies; see what all his pomp and pride are come to; here is all that is left of him." Note, Great men, and great multitudes, with the great figure and great noise they make in the world, will the and coming generation there is, will soon become little, less than nothing; such as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

CHAP. XXXII.

Still we are upon the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt; which is wonderfully enlarged upon, and with a great deal of emphasis. When we read so very much of Egypt's ruin it is written in the several prophecies of divers times delivered concerning it, we are ready to think, Surely there is some special reason for it. And, I. Perhaps it may look as far back as the book of Genesis, where we find (ch. xxv. 14.) that God determined to judge Egypt, for oppressing his people; and though that was in part fulfilled in the plagues of Egypt, and the drowning of Pharaoh, yet, in this destruction here foretold, those old scenes are looked upon, and they shall have it in full accomplishment. II. Perhaps it may look so far forward as the book of the Revelation, where we find that the great enemy of the gospel-church, that makes war with the Lamb, is spiritually called Egypt. Rev. xi. 8. And if so, the destruction of Egypt and its Pharaoh was a type of the destruction of that proud enemy; and betwixt this prophecy of the ruin of Egypt and the prophecy of the destruction of Anti-christ there is some analogy. We have two distinct prophecies in this chapter, relating to Egypt, both in the same month, one on the first day of the month, the other that day fortnight, probably both on the sabbath-day. They are both lamentations, not only to signify how lamentable the fall of Egypt should be, but to intimate how much the prophet himself should lament it, from a generous principle of love to mankind. The destruction of Egypt is here represented under two multitudes: 1. The killing of a lion or a whale, or some such devouring creature, v. 1. 2. The funeral of a great commander or captain-general, v. 17. 32. The two prophecies of this chapter are much of the same length.

1. AND it came to pass in the twelfth 2. year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Art thou not like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas; and thou canst go forth with thy rivers, and troublest the waters with thy feet, and foulest the rivers. 3. Thus saith the Lord God, I will, therefore, spread out my net over thee with a company of many people; and they shall bring thee upon my net. 4. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. 6. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. 7. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dim; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. 8. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. 9. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. 10. Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them; and they shall tremble at every moment, every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11. For thus saith the Lord God, The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. 12. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations, all of them; and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. 13. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters; neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. 14. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oil, saith the Lord God. 15. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that thereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord. 16. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her; the daughters of the nations shall lament her; they shall lament for her, even for Egypt, and for all her multitude, saith the Lord God.
threatening, as a lion when he roars. Great potencies, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, rise, in God's account, no better than beasts of prey. He is like a man grown up in passion like a lion, a terror in the seas, very turbulent and vacillating, as the levitation that makes the deep to boil like a pot, Job xli. 31. WhenPharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyprians, he came forth with his rivers, with his armies, troubled the waters, disturbed his own kingdom, and the neighbouring nations, faulted the rivers, and made them madly. Now, in such a day of disaster is often the world by the restless ambition and implacable resentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that troubleth Israel, and not Eliphaz.

2. He that has troubled others, must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, Josh. vii. 25.

(1.) This is set forth here by a comparison. IsPharaoh like a great whale, which, when it comes up the river, gives great disturbance, a levitation which Job cannot draw out with a hook? (Job xli. 1.) Yet God has a net for him, which is large enough to enmesh him, and strong enough to secure him; (v. 3.) I will spread my net over thee, even the army of the Chaldeans, a company of many people; they shall force him out of his fastnesses, dispossess him of his possessions, throw him from a great fish upon dry ground, upon the open field, (v. 4.) where, being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, ch. xxix. 5. What can the strongest fish do to help itself, when it is out of the water, and lies gasping? The flesh of this great whale shall be laid upon the mountains, (v. 5.) and the valleys shall be filled with his height. Such numbers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain, that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills, and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the valleys. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the valleys. Or, Such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this levitation, that, when he is laid upon the ground, he shall fill a valley. Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this levitation, as shall water the land of Egypt, the land wherein now he swains, now he sports himself, v. 6. It shall reach to the mountains, and the waters of Egypt shall again be turned into blood, by this means; The rivers shall be full of thee. The judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the breaking of the head of leviathan against the mountains, (Ps. lviii.) and in the following verses, for the like purpose, by breaking the head of Pharaoh; and they shall go no more, now they go farther; this old serpent not only has now his head bruised, but is all crushed to pieces.

(2.) It is set forth by a prophecy of the deep impressions which the destruction of Egypt should make upon the neighbouring nations; it would put them all into a consternation, as the fall of the Assyrian monarchy did, ch. xxxix. 13, 16. When Pharaoh of old, and his harshest enemies, the harshest torments, is put out and extinguished, it shall make all about him look black, v. 7. The heavens shall be hung with black, the stars darkened, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower world receives its light; and therefore, (v. 8.) when the bright lights of heaven are made dark above, darkness by consequence shall cover the land of Egypt, and bring it into such desolation and darkness, that it shall be on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness, which was upon Egypt of old for three days, seems to be alluded to, as, before, the turning of the waters into blood. For when former judgments are forgotten, it is just that they should be repeated. When their privy-councillors, and scribes, and those that have the direction of the public affairs, are deprived of wisdom, and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace are hid from them, their lights are darkened, and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, Isr.xix. 13. The princes of Zion are become fools.

But when the news became known upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, countries which they had not known, (v. 9.) people shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it. [1.] It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent kingdom thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory, which they have taken so much by the means of Pharaoh, this pride will be vexed to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the gods of Egypt were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others. [2.] It shall fill them with admiration; (v. 10.) They shall be amazed at thee, shall wonder to see so great riches and power come to nothing, Rev. xvi. 17. Note, They that admire with complacency the pomp of this world, will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp; which to those that know the vanity of all things here below is no surprise at all. [3.] It shall fill them with fear; Even their kings (that think it their prerogative to be secure) shall be horribly afraid for thee, concluding their own house to be in greater danger, when their neighbour's is on fire. If I shall brandish my sword before them, they shall tremble every man for his own life. Note, When the sword of God's justice is drawn against some, to cut them off, it is thereby brandished before others, to give them warning. And those that will not be admonished by it, and made to reform, shall yet be frightened by it, and made to tremble. They shall tremble at every moment, because of thy fulness. When others are ruined by sin, we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing ourselves guilty and obnoxious. Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?

(3.) It is set forth by a plain and express prediction of the desolation itself that should come upon Egypt.

[1.] The instruments of the desolation appear very formidable. It is the sword of the king of Babylon, that warlike, that victorious prince, that shall come upon thee; (v. 11.) the swords of the mighty, even the terrible of the nations, all of them, (v. 12.) an army that there is no standing before. Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may expect, some day or other, to be engaged with such instruments of destruction that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been before to quarrel with his neighbour, and to come forth with his rivers, with his armies, v. 2. But God will now give him enough of it.

[2.] The instances of the desolation appear here very frightful, much the same with what we had before, ch. xxix. 10.—12. ch. xxx. 7. First, The multitude of the army, vast, and large, a multitude; and some estimated, some picked out to be made examples, but all cut off. Note, The numbers of sinners, though they be a multitude, will neither secure them against God's power, nor entitle them to his pity. Secondly, The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled; the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, In renouncing the pomp of this world we may expect as much, that shall be cut off. There are things that are soon spoiled, and that cheat their admirers. Thirdly, The cattle of Egypt, that used to feed by the rivers, shall be destroyed, (v. 13.) either cut off by the sword, or carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast, that come thither to drink.

Fourthly, The waters of Egypt, that used to flow
briskly, shall now grow deep and slow and heavy, and shall run like oil, (v. 14.) a figurative expression signifying that there should be such external address and heaviness upon the whole nation, that even the rivers should go softly and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion.

Fifthly, The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, (v. 13.) corn and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth; when these are smitten, the rest of their reliance, their face is turned, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader. Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fullness of those things, and are full of them; that enjoy most, and have their hearts set upon those employments. The Egyptians were full of their pleasant and plentiful country, and its rich productions. Every one that talked with them should percei- ve how much it filled them. But God can soon make their country destitute of that whereof it is full; it is therefore our wisdom to be full of treasures in heaven. When the country is made destitute, 1. It shall be an instruction to them; Then shall they know that I am the Lord. A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and the fading, perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute no mean part to our right knowledge of God as our Portion and Happiness. 2. It shall be a lamentation to all about them: The daughters of the nations shall lament her, (v. 16.) either because, being in alliance with her, they share in her grievances, and suffer with her; or, being admirers of her, they at least share in her grief, and sympathize with her. They shall lament for Egypt and all her multitude; it shall excite their pity to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

17. It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. 19. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncer- uncrescoed. 20. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword; she is delivered to the sword: draw her and all her multitudes. 21. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. 22. Asshur is there, and all her company; his graves are about him; all of them slain, fallen by the sword: 23. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. 24. There is Edam, and all her multitude round about her grave; all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living; yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit. 25. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitudes: her graves are round about him; all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they borne their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain. 26. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him; all of them uncircum- circised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. 27. And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war; and they have laid their swords under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

28. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword. 29. There is Edom, her kings, and all her princes, which with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. 30. There be the princes of the north, all of them, and all the Zidonians, which are gone down with the slain; with their terror they are ashamed of their might; and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. 31. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord God. 32. For I have caused my terror in the land of the living; and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh, and all his multitude, saith the Lord God.

This prophecy concludes and completes the burden of Egypt, and leaves it and all its multitude in the pit of destruction. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of those who attend it to the grave, and accompany it in the grave. This dead corpse of a kingdom is here,

I. Brought to the grave. The prophet is ordered to cast them down to the pit, (v. 18.) to foretell it as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, Jer. 1. 10. He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down. Yet he shall foretell it as one that had an affectionate concern for them; he must weep for the multitude of Egypt, even when he casts them down. When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral, befitting her quality; let her be buried with the daughters of the famous nations, in their burying-places, and with the same ceremony; it is but a poor alloy to the reproach and terror of death, to be buried with those that were famous; yet this
s all that is allowed to Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt herself from the common fate of proud and impious nations? No, she must take her lot with them; (v. 19.) **Whom dost thou pass in beauty?** Art thou so much fairer than any other nation, that thou shouldest expect therefore to be excused? No, others, as fair as thou, are sunk into the pit; go down therefore, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. Thou art like them, and must lie among them; the multitude of Egypt shall all fall in the midst of them that are slain with the sword; now that there is a general slaughter made among her people, does she drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is delivered to the sword, to the sword of war, (but, in God’s hand, the sword of justice,) is delivered to be publicly executed. **Draw her and all her multitude;** either draw them as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave, in a hearse; or, as malesfactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution, on a sledge; **draw them to the pit,** and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

11. This corpse of a kingdom is bid welcome to the grave, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony, as the surprising fall of the king of Babylon is illustrated, He is made prominent among the nations, and in the midst of them conspicuous, and introduced into these mansions of darkness, Isa. xiv. 9, 8c. so here, (v. 21.) They shall speak to him out of the midst of hell, as it were congratulating his arrival, and calling him to join with them, in acknowledging that which neither he nor they would be brought to own when they were in their pomp and pride, that it is in vain to think of concerting with them, the world has hardened their hearts against him, and prospered. They shall say to him, and to him that pretended to help him, Where are you now? What have you brought your attempts to at last?

Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, that are ready to give her a scornful reception, and upbraid her with coming to them at last; these nations here spoken of, probably, were such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off: let Egypt know that she has neighbour’s fare. When she goes to the grave, she does but migrate ad filares—migrate to the majority; there are innumerable before her. But it is observable, this is mentioned especially about this time, or a little before, utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that welcome Egypt to the pit; for though they suffered the same things that these nations suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, were the provoking circumstance of their going down to the pit, as it was to the heathen; they were not smitten as others were, nor slain according to the slaughter of other nations, Isa. xxvii.

7. But let us see who they are, that are gone to the grave before Egypt, that lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword, with whom she must now take up her residence;

1. There lie the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy; (v. 22.) **Ashur is there, and all her company;** all the countries that were tributaries to, and had dependence upon, that crown. That mighty potentate, who used to lie in state, with his guards and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his graves about him, and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are all of them slain; fallen by the sword; the number of their months was cut off in the midst, and being bloody and deceitful men, they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their graves were set in the sides of the pit, all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, v. 23. All their company is such, as were slain, fallen by the sword; a vast congregation of such who had caused terror in the land of the living; but as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears, (in the grave the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor, Job. i. 18.) so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors; who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors, to all the creature created, (Gen. vi. 14.) and those were no exceptions to others, they were not prevented from making themselves terrors, in their generation.

2. There lies the kingdom of Persia, which, perhaps, within the memory of man at that time, had been wasted and brought down; There is Elam and all her multitude, the king of Elam and his numerous armies, v. 24, 25. They also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations their day. But Elam has now a grave by herself, and the graves of the common people round about her, fallen by the sword; she has her bed in the midst of the slain, that went down with uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy, and not in covenant with God. They have borne their shame with them that go down to the pit, and as they came down, the disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay, they die under particular marks of ignominy, which God and man put upon them. Note, They who cause their terror shall, sooner or later, bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is put in the midst of them that are slain. All the honour he can now pretend to is, that he lies in the midst of those mighty men, v. 26. There lie Meshech and Tubal, those barbarous northern nations, had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon five quarter for some years, making every thing their own that they could lay their hands on; but, at length, Cyaxares, king of the Medes, drew them by a wise into his power, cut off abundance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, v. 26. There lie Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying-place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword. These Scythians, Meshech, and Tubal, they are mingled in their graves, and all other nations spoken of, in the bed of honour; (v. 27.) They shall not lie with the mighty, shall not be buried in state, as these are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that go down to their graves with their weapons of war carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly their swords laid by them, and their heads placed upon such a pillow; these Scythians are not buried with those marks of honour, but their iniquities shall be upon their sons; they shall, for their iniquity, be left unburied; though they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

3. There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but, about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was fortold, ch. xxv. 13. Among the sepulchres of the nations, there is Edom, v. 29. There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, her kings and all her princes, her wise statesmen, (which Edom was famed for,) and her brave soldiers; these were the mighty might are laid by them that were slain by the sword; their might could not prevent it, nay, their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them
to engage in war, and incensed their neighbours against them, who thought it necessary to curb their growing greatness. A deal of pains they took to ruin themselves as may be seen in chap. xxi. 1-31. But, with their might and all their power, they were stopt with the sword. The Edomites retained circumcision, being of the seed of Abraham. But that shall stand them in no stead, they shall lie with the uncircumcised.

3. There be the princes of the north, and all the Edomites. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs as the Egyptians were, who relied much on that part of their strength; but they are gone down with the slain, (v. 30.) down to the pit. Now they are ashamed of their might, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it, and trusted to it; and, as the Edomites with their might, so these with their terror, are laid with them that are slain by the sword, and are forced to take their lot with them. They bear their shame with them that go down to the pit, die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of public justice.

Lastly, All this is applied to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hopes of tranquillity, when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest of their neighbours have been laid waste; (v. 28.) "Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the unconverted;" when God has opened the way before them and has been their sword, they must expect to come down with them. (1.) It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt, to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before; (v. 31.) Pharaoh shall see them, and be comforted; it will be some ease to his mind, that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle; his not the first arm that has been rent in two, his not the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenhill observes here, "The comfort which wicked ones have after death, is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary." They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow-sufferers; the rich man in hell dreaded it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can see, and be comforted. (2.) But nothing will be an exemption from the miseries of this world. If I have caused any terror in the land of the living, Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every body fear them, Odetum dum mutuant—Let them hate, so that they do but fear. But now the great God has caused his terror in the land of the living; and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 15. In this day of terror, Pharaoh and all his multitude shall be laid with them that are slain by the sword.

The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states, may show us something. [1.] Of this present world, and the empire of death in it. Come, and see the calamities state of human life; see what a dying world this is; the strong die, the mighty die, Pharaoh and all his multitude. See what a killing stroke the sword of the Lord deals man with. [2.] Of the other world; though it is the destruction of nations as such, that perhaps is principally intended here, yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impious nations as such, those that are unremittent in heart, those that are slain by the sword of divine justice; their iniqutv is upon them, and with it they bear their shame. Those, Christ's enemies that would not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him; though they be as parricides, though they be as numerous, as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

1. A GALN the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3. If, when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people: 4. Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him: but he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. 6. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. 7. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand. 9. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

The prophet had been, by express order from God, taken off from prophesying to the Jews, just then when the news came that Jerusalem was invested, and that great thing to which I, ch. xxiv. 37. foretold, that Jerusalem should be taken, that is, in two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and here his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite, he would not have sent prophets to them; nor if he had not had mercy in store for them, would he have showed them such things as these. In these verses we have,
1 The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions associated with him and those that employ him.

2-6. It is supposed to be a public danger, that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman—when God brings the sword upon a land, v. 2. The sword of war, whenever it comes upon a land, is of God's bringing; it is the sword of the Lord; his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it. At such a time the mouth of danger, though he be not in the borders of their country, where the threatened danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their watchman. Thus wise are the children of this world in their generation. Note, One man may be of public service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the watchmen of a kingdom, that are continually to employ themselves, and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to expose themselves, for the public service.

2. It is supposed to be a public trust that is lodged in the watchman, and that he is accountable to the public for the discharge of it. His business is, (1.) To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy; and therefore he must not be blind or asleep, for then he cannot see the sword coming. (2.) To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet, or, as sentinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A special trust and confidence is reposed in him by those that set him to be their watchman, that he will faithfully do these two things; and they venture their lives upon his fidelity.

Now, [1.] If he do his part, if he be beseized aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only delivered his soul, but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great, or so near, as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surprised by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head. If any person goes presumptuously to lay the watchman to the ground, he must be ready to take the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the sword comes, and takes him away in his folly, he is felo de se—a suicide; foolish man, he has destroyed himself. But, [2.] If the watchman do not do his duty; if he might have seen the danger and did not, but was asleep or heedless, or looking another way or, if he did see it and did not give warning, he is guilty only for his own safety, and blow not the trumpet to warn the people; so that some are surprised and cut off in their iniquity, v. 6.) cut off suddenly, without having time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, time to repent and make their peace with God; (which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is taken away in his infidelity, for God has trusted his watchman's hand; he shall be found guilty of his death, because he did not give him warning of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that gives warning and he that takes warning, have delivered their soul.

1. He is a watchman to the house of Israel. He had occasionally given warning to the nations about, but to the house of Israel he was a watchman by office, for they were the children of the prophets and the covenant nation, the chief of the nations, as the people of the land did, v. 2. (For they were not so wise for their souls, to secure the welfare of them, as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interests.) But God did it for them; he appointed them a watchman.

2. His business as a watchman is, to give warning to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of sin, v. 3. The watchman is to speak in the mouth, and speak to them. (1.) God has said, The wicked man shall surely die; he shall be miserable; unless he repent, he shall be cut off from God, and all comfort and hope in him; shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall, and lie for ever under the wrath of God, which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God has said it, that he will never suffer them all the world to gainsay it, that the wages of sin is death. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacity, their personal interests which pass into the other world, and last for eternity. National interests do not. (2.) It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this; warn them from me; which intimates that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of its may, and that God is destined it should be prevented. Sinners are therefore warned of the wrath to come, that they may flee from it, Matt. iii. 7. (3.) It is the work of ministers to give him warning to say to the wicked, It shall be ill with thee, Isa. iii. 11. God says in general, The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The minister's business is, to apply this to particular persons, and to say, "O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, whoever thou art; if thou go on in sin, they will inevitably be the ruin. O adulterer, O robber, O drunkard, O swearer, O sabbath-breaker, thou shalt surely die." And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to warn the wicked from his way, warn him to turn from it, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in public, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself; if the prophet did not give him warning, he is guilty of his death, as the wicked way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; for though the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction. Note, It will not serve impotent men to say, We cannot tell; the watchman did not give them warning, that they were careless and unfaithful; for though they were so, it will be made to appear that God left not himself without witness. But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity, the watchman also shall be called to an account; His blood will I require at the hand. The blind leader shall be blind with his followers into destruction. If that a desire God has of the destruction of sinners, in that he resents it so ill, if these concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day, who palliate sin, and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe that they shall have grace to come to an end. 4. If he do his duty, he may take the comfort of
it, though he do not see the success of it; (v. 9.) "If thou warn the wicked of his way, if thou tell him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn, but persist in it, he shall die in his iniquity, and the fair warning given him will be an aggravation of his sin and run; but thou hast delivered thy soul." Note, It is a comfort to ministers, that they may through grace save themselves, though they cannot be instrumental to save so many as they wish of those that hear them.

10. Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel. Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? 12. Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. 13. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. 14. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he hath robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. 17. Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but, as for them, their way is not equal. 18. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. 19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

These verses are the substance of what we had before, (ch. xviii. 20, &c.) and they are so full and express a declaration of the terms on which people stand with God, (as the former were of the terms on which ministers stand,) that it is no wonder that they are here repeated, as those were, though we had the substance of them before. Observe here,

I. The cavils of the people against God's proceedings with them. God was now in his providence contending with them, but their uncontrouled hearts were not as yet humbled, for we are inducres to justify themselves, though thereby they reflected on God. Two things they insisted upon, in their reproaches of God, and in both they added indignity to their sin, and misery to their punishment.

1. They quarrelled with his promises and favours, as having no kindness or sincerity in them, v. 10. God had warned them, before they were moved by the preachers, to set it out of their reach, and therefore did but mock them with the mention of it. The prophet had said, some time ago, (ch. xxiv. 23.) Ye shall pine away for your iniquities; with that word he had concluded his threatenings against Judah and Jerusalem; and this they now upbraided him with, as if it had been spoken absolutely, to drive them to despair; whereas it was spoken conditionally, to bring them to repentance. Thus are the sayings of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds, who are minded to pick quarrels. He puts them in hopes of life and happiness; and herein they would make him contradict himself; "For" (say they) "if our transgressions and our sins be upon us, as thou hast often told us they are; and if we must, as such, pine away in them, and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, how shall we then live?" If this be our doom, there is no remedy. "We die, we perish, we all perish." Note, It is very common for those that have been hardened with presumption when they were warned against sin, to sink into despair when they are called to repent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for them.

2. They quarrelled with his threatenings and judgments, as having no justice or equity in them. They said, The way of the Lord is not equal, (v. 17, 20.) suggesting that God was partial in his proceedings, and that with him there was respect of persons, and that he was more severe against sin and sinners than there was cause. 11. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both these ends.

1. Those that despairs of finding mercy with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to show mercy, v. 11. When they spake of pining away in their iniquity, God sends the prophet to them, with all speed, to tell them that though their case was sad, it was not desperate, but there was yet hope in Israel. (1.) It is certain that God has no delight in the misery of sinners, nor does he desire it; if they will destroy themselves, he will glorify himself in it, but he has no pleasure in it, but would rather they should turn and live, for his goodness is that attribute of his which is most his glory, which is most his delight. He would rather sinners should turn and live, than go on and die. He has said it, he has sworn it; and because it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation; we have his word and his oath; and since he could swear by no greater, he swears by himself; As I live. They questioned whether they should live, though they did repent and reform; Yea, says God, as sure as I live, true penitents shall live also; for their sakes will I do it; and with Christ in God it is. It is certain that God is sincere and earnest, in the calls he gives sinners to repent; Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil way. To repent is to turn from our evil way; this God requires sinners to do; this he urges them to do, by repeated pressing instances; Turn ye, turn ye. O that they would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly, without delay! This he will enable them to do, if they will but frame their doings to turn to the Lord,
Hos. v. 4. For he has said, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, Prov. i. 23. And in this he will accept of them for it is not only a book of commands, but what he himself delivers. (3.) It is certain that if sinners persist in their inimiciry, it is owing to themselves; they die, because they will die; and herein they act most absurdly and unreasonably; Why will ye die, O house of Israel? God would have them heard, and they would not be heard.

2. Those that despaired of finding justice with God, are here answered with singular confidence of the case, which God would go by in dealing with the children of men, which carries along with it the evidence of its own equity; he that runs, may read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, as a nation, was now dead; it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judging concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, Jer. xvii. 7-10. If God speak concerning it, to build and to plant; if it do wickedly, he will recall his favours, and leave it to ruin. But if he speak concerning it, to pluck up and destroy, and it repent, he will revoke the sentence, and deliver it. So it is here. In short, the most plausible professors, if they apostatize, shall certainly perish for ever: so from God's own mouth are pronounced foremost sinners, if they repent, shall certainly be happy for ever in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this stupid, senseless people, that said, The way of the Lord is not equal; for these rules of judging are so plainly just, that they need no other confirmation of them than the repetition of them.

(1.) If those that have made a great profession of religion, throw off their profession, quit the good ways of God, and grow loose and carnal, and sensual, and worldly, the profession they made, and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession, shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly perish in their iniquity; v. 12, 13, 18.

[1.] God says to the righteous man, that he shall surely live, v. 13. He says it by his word, by his ministers; he that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, He shall live. Surely such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his righteousness, and continue in it, if he be right and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in the love of God, and be for ever happy in that love.

[2.] Righteous men, who have very good hopes of themselves, and whom others have a very good opinion of, are yet in danger of turning to iniquity, by trusting to their righteousness. So the case is put here; If he trust to his own righteousness and commit iniquity, and come to make a trade of sin; if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way, and persist in it—this may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness. Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themself; and have been brought to this by his own righteousness and iniquity, and thinks he has already made God so much his debtor, that now he may venture to commit iniquity, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that whatever evil deeds he may do hereafter, he can be in no danger from them, having so many good deeds beforehand to balance them. Or, He trusts to the strength of his own righteousness; thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue, that he may thrust himself into any temptation, and it cannot overcome him, and so by presuming on his own sufficiency he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on the confine of sin, he is drawn at length into the deserts of shame. This ruined the Pharisees, that intrusted to themselves that they were righteous, and that their long prayers, and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widow's houses.

[3.] If righteous men turn to iniquity, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers, and all their oaths, as the prophet says, for all deeds of righteousness made, no remembrance had, of their good deeds, they shall be overlooked, as if they had never been. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, in the day of his transgression. When he becomes a traitor and a rebel, and takes up arms against God, it will not serve for him to plead, in his own defence, that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government: no, he shall not be able to live; the remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God's justice or his own conscience, in the day that he sins, but rather shall, in the estimate of both, highly aggravate the sin and sins of God's apostate. And therefore for the people that he concealed himself, that he could have him; 13. And again, (v. 18.) He shall even die thereby; and it is owing to himself.

(2.) If those that have lived a wicked life, repent and reform, forsake their wicked ways and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation.

[1.] God says to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die. The way that thou art in leads to destruction. The wages of thy sin is death, and thine iniquity will shortly be thy ruin. It was said to the righteous man, Thou shalt surely live, for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness; but he made an ill use of it; and was imboldened by it to commit iniquity. It was said to the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, for warning him not to persist in his wicked ways; and he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty. Thus, even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a savour of life unto life, while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a savour of death unto death. When God says to the wicked man, Thou shalt surely die, eternally, it is to frighten him, not out of his vices, but out of his sins.

[2.] There is many a wicked man who was hastening apace to his own destruction, who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He turns from his sin, (v. 10,) and is resolved that he will have no more to do with it; and, as an evidence of his repentance for wrong done, he restores the pledge (v. 15,) which he had taken uncharitably from the poor; he gives again that which he had robbed and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor does he only cease to do evil, but he learns to do well; he does that which is lawful and right, and makes conscience of his duty both to God and to his neighbour. And this, many years ago, he neither feared God nor regarded man. But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of divine grace; he that was going on in the paths of death and destruction, now walks in the statutes of life, in the way of God's commandments, which has life in it, (Prov. xi. 28,) and life at the end of it, Matth. xix. 17. And in this good way he perseveres, without committing iniquity; though yet free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity.
He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins which he before allowed himself in.

[3.] He that does thus repent and return, shall escape the ruin he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God. Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for if he confess and forsake it, he shall find mercy. He shall surely live, he shall not die, v. 15. Again, (v. 16.) He shall surely live. Again, (v. 19.) He has done that which is lawful and right; and shall live thereby. But will not his wickedness be remembered against him? No, he shall not be punished for them, v. 12. As for the wickedness of the wicked, though it was very heinous, yet he shall not fall thereby, in the day that he turns from his wickedness. Now that it is become his grief, it shall not be his ruin. Now that there is a settled separation between him and sin, there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as upbraided with them, v. 16. None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him, either as a clog to his pardon, or an alloy to the comfort of it, or any blemish and diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge whether the way of the Lord be not equal; whether this will not justify God in the destruction of sinners, and glorify him in the execution of judgements. The conclusion, then, of the whole matter is, (v. 20.) 'O ye house of Israel, though ye are all involved now in the common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made in the spiritual and eternal state, and I will judge you every one after his ways. Though they were sent into captivity by the hand, good fish and had enclosed in the common net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile, and will render to every man according to his works. Therefore God's way is equal and unexceptionable; but as for the children of thy people, God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses; (Exod. xxxii. 7.) 'They are thy people, I can scarcely own them for mine.' As for them, their way is unequal; this way which they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophets, is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures, it will certainly be found that he is in the right, and they are in the wrong.

21. And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22. Now the hand of the Lord was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came, and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning, and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. 23. Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we are many; the land is given us for inheritance. 25. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land? 26. Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land? 27. Say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Is it I live, surely they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword; and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured; and they that be in the forts, and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence. 28. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. 29. Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations, which they have committed.

Here we have,

I. The tides brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burnt in the eleventh year of the captivity, and the fifth month, Jer. liii. 13. Tides hereof were brought the prophet by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year, and the tenth month, (v. 21.) which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done; we may well suppose that, there being a constant correspondence, at this time more than ever, kept up between Jeremiah and Babylon, he had heard the news long before. But this was the first time he had an account of it from a refugee, from one who escaped, who could be particular, and would be faithick, in the narrative of it. And the sign given him was, the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames; (ch. xxiv. 26.) He that escapes in that day, shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears, to hear it more distinctly than ever, from one that could say, Quaeque ipsae miserrima vidit—These miserable scenes I saw.

II. The divine impressions and influences he was under, to prepare him for those heavy tides; (v. 22.) The hand of the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth to speak to the house of Israel what we had in the former part of this chapter; and now he wrote no more during this time, as he prophesied more with more freedom and boldness, and by latter events. So that the event proved a true prophetic, to the confirmation of these that contradicted him. All the prophecies from ch. 24. to this chapter, having relation partly to the nations about, it is probable that the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing; for he could not say to the Ammonites, Say unto Tyre, etc. etc. etc. but by letters directed to the persons concerned; as Zacharias, when he could not speak, wrote; and herein he was as truly executing his prophetic office as ever. Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good by writing letters and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may speak to the children of his people. It is probable that he had, during these years been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but that he never spoke to them as a prophet, by inspiration, till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instructions, and opened his mouth, furnished him with power to speak to the people as he ought to speak.

III. A particular message he was intrusted with, relating to those Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land, v. 24. See what work sin had made; the
ries of Israel were now become the wastes of Is-
rael, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had
escaped the sword and captivity, still continued
there, and began to think of re-settling. This
was so long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that
it was some time before this, that Gedaliah (a modest,
humble man) and his friends were slain; but, pro-
ably at this time, Jeconiah, and the proud men
that joined with him, were at the height, (Jer. xliii.
2) and before they came to a resolution to go into
Egypt, wherein Jeremiah opposed them, it is prob-
able that the project was to establish themselves
in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel
here opposed them, and probably despatched the
message away by the person that brought him the
news of Jerusalem's destruction. Or, perhaps, those
here prophesied against might be some other party
of Jews, that remained in the land, hoped to take
root there, and to be sole masters of it, after Joha-
nan and his forces were gone into Egypt.
Now here we have,
1. An account of the pride of these remaining
Jews, who dwell in the wastes of the land of Israel.
The pride of not only those who had been very
humbling, and still was very threat-
ening, yet they were intolerably haughty and se-
cure, and promised themselves peace. He
brought the news to the prophet, that Jerusalem
was smitten, could not tell him (it is likely) what
these people said, but God tells him, They say,
'The land is given us for our inheritance, v. 24.
Our pride in it is an inheritance to us; they
consider us as occupiers; we shall now be placed alone in the
midst of the earth, and have it all to ourselves.'
This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand
of God, and a reigning selfishness, and narrow-spi-
ightedness; they pleased themselves in the ruin of
their country as long as they hoped to find their own
account of it, cared not though it were all waste;
such as that they might have the sole property; a poor in-
hertance to be proud of! They have the impudence
to compare their case with Abraham's, glorifying in
this, 'We have Abraham to our father. 'Abraham,'
say they, 'was one, one family, and he inherited
the land, and lived many years in the peaceable
enjoyment of it; but we are many, many families, and
have more than we can use'; which is an utter
lie, or rather
'Inheritance.' (1) They think they can make out as
good a title from God to this land as Abraham
could; 'If God gave this land to him, who was but
one worshiper of him, as a reward of his service, much
more will he give it to us, who are many
worshippers of him, as the reward of our service.'
This speaks the great conceit they had of their own
merits, as if they were greater than those of Abra-
ham their father, who yet was not justified by
works. (2) They think they can make good the
possession of this land against the Chaldeans and
all other invaders, as well as Abraham could against
those that were competitors with him for it; 'If he,
who was but one, could hold it, much more shall
we, who are many, and have more at com-
mand than his three hundred trained servants.'
This speaks the confidence they had in their own
might; they had got possession, and were resolved
to keep it.
2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences
did neither humble them nor terrify them, he sends
them a message sufficient to do both.
(1) To humble them, he tells them of the quick-
elled foxes tip, Jeconiah, which rendered them
utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they
could not expect God should give it them.
They had been followed with one judgment after another,
but they had not profited by those of grace
so as might be expected; they were still unformed,
and how could they expect that they should possess the
land? 'Shall ye possess the land? What! such
wicked people as ye are? How shall I put thee
among the children, and give thee a pleasant land?'
Jer. iii. 19. Surely you never reflect upon
yourselfs, else you would rather wonder that you are
in the land of the living than expect to possess this
land. For they were not, as Jeremiah says, [1.]
'You make no conscience of forbidden fruit,
forbidden food; you eat with the blood,' directly
contrary to one of the precepts given to Noah and
his sons, then when God gave them possession of
the earth, Gen. ix. 4. [2.] 'Idolatry, that cov-
enant-breaking sin, that sin which the jealous God
has in a particular manner proscribed by to lay
your country waste, is still the sin that most God
besees you, and which you have a strong inclination to.
'You lift up your eyes toward your idols, which
is a sign that though perhaps you do not how your
knee to them so much as you have done, yet you set
your hearts upon them, and hanker after them.'
[3.] 'You are as fierce and cruel and barbarous as
ever; you shed blood, innocent blood.' [4.] 'You
are as proud as David's fierce men, who, with
your own bow, and have no dependence on, or regard to,
God and his providence; you stand upon your
sword, (v. 26.) you think to carry all before you,
and make all your own, by force of arms.' How
can they expect the inheritance of Isaac, (as these
did,) who are of Ishmael's disposition, that had his
hand against every man, (Gen. xvi. 12.) and Esau's
prophesied to be the strongest pillars; though it was sin that first drew
the sword. But, blessed be God, there are those
who know better, that stand upon the support of
the divine power and promise, and lay their
heads in the bosom of divine love, not trusting in
their own swords, Ps. xlv. 3. [5.] 'You are
guilty of all manner of abominations, and, particu-
larly, you defile every one his neighbour's wife,
and shall ye possess the land? What! such vile mis-
creants as you?' Note, They cannot expect to
possess the land, nor to enjoy any true comfort or
happiness here or hereafter, who live in rebellion
against the Lord.
(2.) To terrify them, he tells them of the further
judgments God had in store for them, which should
make them utterly unable to possess this land, so
that they could not stand it out against the enemy.
Do they say that they shall possess the land? No,
God has said it, he has sworn it, As I live, saith
the Lord. Though he has sworn that he delights not
in the death of sinners, yet he has sworn also that
those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, shall
not enter into rest. [1.] They that are in the
enemies' hands shall fall by them, as the first, either by the sword of the Chaldeans, who come to
avenge the murder of Gedaliah, or by one another's
swords, in their intestine broils. [2.] They that are
in the open field, shall be devoured by wild
beasts, which swarmed of course in the country,
when it was despoiled, and there were none to
protect them, and keep them under, Exod. xxiii. 29.
When the army of Israel were in the country, still there was no safety in it. Norwere beasts was one of the four sore judgments, ch. xiv.
15. [3.] They that are in the forts and in the
caves, that think themselves safe in artificial or
natural fastnesses, because men's eyes cannot discover
them, or men's darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they shall die of the pestilence. [4.] The whole land, even the land of Israel, that had been the glory of all lands, shall be most desolate, v. 28. It shall be desolation, destruction, all over as desolate as desolation itself can make it. [5.] Zion itself, the holy mountain not excepted, shall be desolate, the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that none shall pass through; as it was threatened, (Deut. xxxviii. 62.) Ye shall be left few in number. [5.] The pomp of her strength, whatever she glories in as her joy, and trusts to as her strength, shall be made to cease. [6.] All this is done, this is told; it is not made to know their dependence upon God, when all their creature-comforts fail them, and are made desolate.

30. Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord. 31. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. 32. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33. And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The foregoing verses spake conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy; and yet returned not to the Lord; in these verses, these are reproved who were now in captivity in Babylon, under divine rebukes, and yet were not returned by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the others are charged with: they made some show of religion and devotion; but their hearts were not right with God. The thing they were here accused of is, mocking the messengers of the Lord; one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it.

I. By invasions, ill-natured reflections upon him, privately among themselves, endeavouring by all means possible to render him despicable. The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that they who spake so well of him to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, would surely not speak ill of him behind his back. But God comes, and unt buena. In their hearts they were still talking against thee, (v. 50.) or talking of thee, no good, I doubt. Note, Public persons are a common theme or subject of discourse; every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure; and faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them every day; it is well that they do not; for if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work, not to be easily got over. But God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers; not only what is decreed against them, or sworn against them, not only what is written against them, or ordered against them in tenor or deliberation, but of what is said against them in conversation, and among neighbours when they meet in the evening, by the walls and in the doors of their houses; where whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always. They have often charged the prophet's charge, but they loved to talk of him in a careless, and bantering way; they said jokingly, "Come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord; perhaps it will be something new, and will entertain us, and furnish us with matter of discourse." Note, Those have arrived at a great pitch of profoundness, who can make so great a priviilege, and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing of the words of the Lord; who can make ridicule; yea, though it be not done publicly, but in private conversation among themselves. Serious things should be spoken of seriously.

II. By assembling with him in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God, and mock his prophets. But their hypocrisy is often before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it will be laid open. Observe here,

1. The plausible profession which these people made, and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those (Matth. xx. 8.) who draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him. (" They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace. They came unto thee as the people came. In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house, (ch. viii. 1.) and there, it is probable, they spent their new moons and their sabbaths in religious exercises, and their prayers as well as their worship, thus mocked and blasphemed against the Lord and his prophets."

2. They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the public assembly; there were none of them whispering or laughing, or going about them or sleeping. But they sit before thee as my people, with all the shows of gravity, and seriousness, and composure of mind. They sit out the time, without weariness, or wishing the sermon done. (3.) They were very attentive to the word preached; "They are not thinking of something else, but they hear thy words, and take notice of what thou sayest." (4.) They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Though, behind his back, they could not give him a good word, yet, to his face, they showed much love to him and his doctrine; they pretended to have a great concern lest he should spend himself too much in preaching, or expose himself to the Chal
EZEKIEL, XXXIV.

The iniquities and calamities of God's Israel had been largely and pathetically lamented before, in this book. Now, in this chapter, the shepherds of Israel, the men both in church and state, are called to an account, as having been very much necessary to the sin and ruin of Israel, by their neglecting to do the duty of their place. Here is, 1. A high charge exhibited against them for their negligence, their unskilfulness and unfaithfulness in the management of public affairs, (v. 1-6.) and again, v. 8. II. Their discharge from their trust, for their insufficiency and treachery, (v. 10-16.) III. A gracious promise that God would take care of his flock, though they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had done, by their mal-administrations, v. 11-16. IV. Another charge exhibited against the shepherds that were fat and strong, for the injuries they did to those that were weak and feeble, v. 17-22. V. Another promise, that God would in the fulness of time send the Messiah, a great and good shepherd of the sheep, who should redress all grievances, and set every thing to rights with the flock, v. 23-31.

1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3. Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 4. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away neither have ye sought that which was lost, but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. 6. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till chap. xxix. It is most probable that it was delivered after the completing of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to inquire into the causes of it.

1. The prophet is ordered to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel—the princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim or council of state, or whoever they were that had the direction of public affairs, in a higher or lower sphere; the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions showed them,
that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity. God has something to say to the shepherds, for they are but under shepherds, accountable to him who is the great Shepherd of Israel. And that which he says is, Ito the shepherds of Israel! Though they are shepherds, and shepherds of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter them. Note, If men's dignity and power do not, as they ought, keep them from sin, they will not serve to exempt them from reproof, to excuse their repentance, or to secure them from the judgments of God if they do not repent. We had a wo to the false shepherds, Jer. xxviii. 1. God had a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.

11. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with, in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them, for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with.

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves, and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge; Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? No doubt they should, but they betray their trust if they do not. Not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them, and bring them to it. But these shepherds made this the least of their care, they fed themselves, coveted every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite, and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure of the profits of their places, they did eat the fat, the cream; (so some:) for he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it; (1 Cor. ix. 7.) and they made sure of the best of the milk. They made sure of the fleece, and clothed themselves with the wool, getting into their hands all manner of things in the estates of their subjects, yes, and killed them, and made them liable to the full costs of their sheep, which were taken for death for his vineyard. Note, There is a wo to those who are in public trusts, but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefit than about the office, and what money is to be got than what good is to be done. It is an old complaint, All seek their own, and not the public or their own.

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge; Ye feed not the flock. They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so lazy and slothful were they; nor, they never desired or designed it, so treacherous and unfaithful were they.

(1.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were discomposed, did not strengthen them, or heal them, or bind them up, v. 4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, sorrowed or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died; they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocency. They took no care to remove the poisons to see them provided for; they might starve. Nay, they took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error, to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss, and out of course, everywhere; and they were busy to fortify, and not to rectify them.

(2.) They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were dispersed, that were driven away by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek for shelter where they could find a place; or that wandered of choice upon the mountains and hills, (v. 6.) where they were exposed to the beasts of prey, and became meat to them, v. 5. Every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begged, some went abroad and traded, and thus the country became thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and ruined hands both in the fields of corn and in the fields of battle, both in harvest and in war; My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, v. 6. And they were never inquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country; None did seek or search after them. Nay, with force and cruelty they ruled them, which drove them more away, and discouraged those that were driven from them. They were a people of bad, who have reason to expect better treatment among strangers than in their own country. It may be meant of those of the flock that went astray from God and their duty; and the priests, that should have taught the good knowledge of the Lord, used no means to convince and reclaim them, so that they became an easy prey to seducers. Thus were they scattered, because there was no shepherd, v. 5. There were those that called themselves shepherds, but really they were not. Note, Those that do not do the work of shepherds, are unworthy of the name. And if those that undertake to be shepherds, are foolish shepherds, (Zech. xi. 13. ) if they are proud and above their business, idle and do not love their business, or faithless and unconcerned about it, the case of the flock is as bad as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd than such shepherds.

Christ complains that his flock were as sheep having no shepherd, when yet the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's seat, Matt. ix. 36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease; ill with the flock when the shepherds drive them away, and disperse them, by ruling them with force.

7. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; 8. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely, because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock: 9. Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; 10. Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more: for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. 11. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall
their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord Gop. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up, in God's name, against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a just indignation, and upon the flock with a tender compassion. God, by the prophet, here expresses both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon (v. 7, 9.) to hear the word of the Lord, to hear this word. Let them hear how little he regards them who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not hear the word of the Lord giving them their direction, shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

I. How much displeased God is at the shepherds. The shepherds, v. 8. God's flock became a prey to the deceivers first that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity; and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been no shepherds; and therefore God says it, (v. 10.) and confirms it with an oath; (v. 8.) I am against the shepherds. They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and they made use of his name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them; No, says God, so far from that, I am against them. Note, It is not our having the name and authority of shepherds, that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is against them, and they shall know it, for he has a commission from God to feed the flock, and a word in his name which he has charged them with: I will require my flock at their hands, and charge it upon them, that so many of them are missing. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment-day, who take upon them the care of souls, and yet take no care of them. Ministers must watch and work, as those that must give account, (Heb. xii. 17.) 2. They shall be deprived of their wages. They shall cease from feeding the flock, from pretending to feed it. Note, It is just with God to take out of men's hands that power which they have abused, and that trust which they have betrayed. But if this were all their punishment, they could hear it well enough, therefore it is added, (v. 9.) Neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, which, instead of protecting, they had made a prey of. Note, Those that are enlicing themselves with the spoils of the public, cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them, but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds their false friends, as well as from the lions their open enemies.

II. How much concerned God is for the flock; he speaks as if he were the more concerned for them, because he saw them thus neglected, for with him the fatherless finds mercy. Precious promises are made here upon the occasion, which were to have their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity, and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds hear this word of the Lord, and know that they have no part or lot in the matter. But let the poor sheep hear it, and take the comfort of it. Note, The aged patriarchs and ministers fall in doing their part, for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand, rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under shepherds may prove careless, but the Chief Shepherd neither slumbers nor sleeps. They may be false, but God abides faithful.

1. God will gather his sheep together that were scattered, and bring them back to the fold that had wandered from it: I, even I, who alone can do it, will do it, and will have all the glory of it. I will both search my sheep, and find them out, (v. 11.) as a shepherd does, (v. 12.) and bring them back as he does the stray sheep, upon his shoulders, from all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. There are cloudy and dark days, windy and stormy ones, which scatter God's sheep; which send them hither and thither, to divers and distant places, in quest of secrecy and safety. But, (1.) Wherever they are, the eye of God will find them out; for his eyes run to and fro through the earth, in favour of them, I will seek for my sheep, and will not let any of them be lost, though driven ever so far off, shall be lost. The Lord knows them that are his; he knows their work, and where they dwell, (Rev. ii. 13.) and where they are hidden. (2.) When his time is come, his arms will fetch them home; (v. 13.) I will bring them out from the people. God will both incline their hearts to come by his grace, and will by his providence open the way for them. God will search for and recover the sheep that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body; I will gather them from the countries into which they are dispersed; not only the most considerable families of them, but every particular person, v. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away.

2. God's people shall be brought out triumphantly out of Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and others. When those that have gone astray from God into the paths of sin, are brought back by repentance, when those that erred come to the acknowledgment of the truth, when God's outcasts are gathered and restored, and religious assemblies, that were dispersed, rally together, upon them, and remove every difficulty that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body; I will gather them from the countries into which they are dispersed; not only the most considerable families of them, but every particular person, v. 16. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away. This will be the scene of the great national reformation, when the churches have rest and liberty, then this promise has a further accomplishment.

2. God will feed his people as the sheep of his pasture, that had been famished. God will bring the returning captives safe to their own land, (v. 13.) will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, and that is a good pasture, and a fat pasture; (v. 14.) there shall sheaf for sheaf, and there shall be no more to make them afraid. Ps. xxiii. 2. He makes, me to lie down in green pastures. Compare this with the like promise, (Jer. xxxi. 5, 4.) when God restored them not only to the milk and honey of their own land, to the enjoyment of its fruits, but to the privileges of his sanctuary on mount Zion, the chief of the mount.
tains of Israel; when they had an altar and a temple again, and the benefit of a settled priesthood, then they were fed in a good pasture.

3. He will succour those that are hurt, will bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick, will comfort those that mourn in Zion and with Zion. If ministers, who should speak peace to those who are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost the Comforter will be faithful to his office. But, as it follows, the fat and the strong shall be destroyed. He that has rest for disquieted saints, has terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. As every valley shall be filled, so every mountain and hill shall be brought low, Luke iii. 3.

17. And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. 18. Soweth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? 19. And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. 20. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God unto them, Behold, I, even I, will judge between the fat cattle and between the lean cattle. 21. Because ye have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; 22. Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23. And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it. 25. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. 26. And I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing. 27. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. 28. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them: but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. 29. And I will raise up for them a Plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. 30. Thus shall they know that I the Lord their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord God. 31. And ye, my flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God. The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the flock. God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between them and others of the same name, as between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming, for, for judgment he came into this world, (John xi. 39,) to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away, Luke i. 53. But this distinction shall be completely made at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, judge between cattle and cattle, when he shall divide between the precious and the vile, and shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left, (Matt. xxv. 32, 33,) which seems to have reference to this. We have here, 1. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were fat and strong, the rams and the he-goats, v. 17. Those that, though they had not power, as shepherds and rulers, to oppress widows, yet, being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them, to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have much, would have more, and, if they set to it, will have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them the one ewe-lamb, 2 Sam. xii. 4. Do not the rich oppress the poor merely with the help of their riches, and draw them before the judgment-seats? Jam. ii. 6. Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The rams and the he-goats not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, ate the fat and drank the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they trod down the residue of the pastures, and fouled the good streams with their feet, so that the flock was fain to eat that which they had trodden into the dirt, and drink that which they had muddied, v. 18, 19. This intimates that the great men, not only by extortion and oppression made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarcely left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them, that what little course fare they had, was illibtered to them. And this seemed a small thing to them: they thought there was no harm in it, as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Note, Many that live in pomp and at ease themselves, care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that are at ease, and the proud, grudge that any body should live by them with any contentment. But this was not all; they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock; (v. 21,) they thrust with side and shoulder those that were feeble, (for the weakest goes to the wall,) and pushed the diseased with their horns, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that if one of the flock be sick and faint, the rest will secure it as they can,
and shelter it from the scorching heat of the sun; but these, on the contrary, were most injurious to the diseased. That those they could not serve themselves of, did they what they could to rid the country of, and so scattered them abroad, as if the poor, whom Christ says we must have always with us, were public nuisances, not to be relieved, but sent far away from us. Note, It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and he-goats were springing to the means of the Scribes and Pharisees, for they are such troublers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from; (v. 23.) they devoured widows’ houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of divine truths, and oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders; besides, they were continually vexations and injurious to the flock by the flock that waited on the Lord, Zech. xi. 11. Note, It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent stations in it, Acts xx. 30. 11. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and beggarly, and that wait for the consolation of Israel; (v. 22.) “I will save my flock, and they shall hear my voice; and I will set up shepherds over them, and of their own beasts of prey, by their own shepherds, or by the rams and he-goats among themselves.” Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom, and the exceeding great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom. Observe, What God does for the benefit of the Messiah himself. (1.) He shall have his commission from God himself: I will set him up, v. 23. I will raise him up, v. 29. He sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him. (2.) He shall be the great Shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one Shepherd, under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold. (3.) He is God’s Servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to his glory; his Servant, to reestablish his kingdom among men, and advance the interests of that kingdom. (4.) He is David; one after God’s own heart, set as his King upon the holy hill of Zion, made the head of the corner; with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God promises that he shall be the Lord’s anointed, and is both the Root and Offspring of David. (5.) He is the Plant of renown, because a righteous Branch, (Jer. xxxiii. 5.) a Branch of the Lord, that is beautiful and glorious, Isa. iv. 2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a Branch of renown. Some understand it of the church, the planting of the Lord, Isa. lix. 3. Its name shall be remembered, (Ps. cvi. 17.) and Christ’s in it. 2. Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded; (v. 25.) I will make with them a covenant of peace. The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of it, through the whole world, and the good we need to make us happy. The tenor of this covenant is; “I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them, (v. 24.) will own them, and will be owned by them; in order to this, my Servant David shall be a Prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in their own names.” Note, First, That God, by his grace and promises, that he will have the Lord Jehovah for their God, and that they will have the Lord Jesus for their Prince, have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people.

From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion; “I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with them; and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it.” 3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah, and interested in the covenant of peace. These are set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock. But we have a key to it, v. 31. They that be from the house of David, the house of the shepherds, are really men; men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them is promised, (1.) That they shall enjoy a holy security, under the divine protection. Christ, our good Shepherd, has caused the evil beasts to cease out of the land, (v. 33.) having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broken their power, and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring devouring lion to them; they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, nor the heathen a terror to them; neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; sin and Satan, death and hell, are conquered. And then they shall dwell safely, not only in the folds, but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are; they shall dwell without fear, but they shall dwell safely there; which denotes not only that the beasts being made to cease, there shall be no danger, but, their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil. Note, Those may lay them down and sleep securely, sleep at ease, that have Christ for their Prince; for he will bestow their Prince upon them, and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, none shall make them afraid. If God be for us, who can be against us? Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed. Through Christ, God delivers his people not only from the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all that fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised; (v. 27.) They shall be safe in their land, in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbors to desire their land; and that which shall make them think themselves safe is, their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God; They shall know that I am the Lord. All our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God, and mistakes concerning his ways; the effect of this care concerning them encourages their confidence in him: “I have broken the bands of their yoke, with which they have been brought, and held down, under oppression, and have delivered them out of the hands of those that served themselves of them. Whence they shall argue, He that has delivered, does and will, therefore will we dwell safely.” This is explained, and applied to our gospel-state, (Luke iv. 74.) That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, as those may do, that serve him in faith. (2.) That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things, for their comfort and happiness; They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, v. 29. Famine and scarcity, which have been the experience of his people, and look as much to their reproach among the heathen as to any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked of. But now they shall not bear that shame of the heathen any more. For the showers shall come down in their season, even showers of blessings, v. 26. Christ is a Shepherd that will feed his people with the fat of the field. They shall go in and out, and find himself; [1.] That he shall be the Prince, for he shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which occasions those that are put off with it to
be consumed with hunger. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called beggarly elements, for there was little in them, compared with the Christian institutes whereunto the mower fills his hand, and he that binds sheaves, his bosom. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled with that hunger, for they shall be filled. And he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall never thirst. [2.] Showers of blessings shall come upon them, v. 26, 27. The heavens shall yield their dew, the trees of the field also shall yield their fruit. The seat of this plenty is God's hill, his holy hill of Zion, for on that mountain, the Lord, he said, that God was made man, nations a feast; to that those must join themselves, who partake of gospel-benches. The cause of this plenty is, the showers that come down in their season, that descend upon the mountains of Zion; the graces of Christ, his doctrine that drops as the dew; the graces of Christ, and the gifts and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The instances of this plenty and the blessings of heaven poured down upon us, and the productions of grace brought forth by us; our comfort in God's favour, and God's glory in our fruit-bearing. The extent of this plenty is very large, to all the places round about my hill for out of Zion shall go forth the law, shall go forth light to a dark world, and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Zion, shall draw waters out of the fountains of salvation; and the nearer the church, the nearer its God. And lastly, The effect of this plenty, is, I will make them a blessing, eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, Isa. xix. 24. Or, They shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful. Note, Those that are the blessed of the Lord must study to make themselves blessings to the world. He that is good, let him also judge: and he that has received the gift, the grace, let him minister the same.

Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spoke much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure that God would not utterly destroy their nation, how low soever it might be brought, as long as that blessing was in the womb of it, Isa. lxxv. 8. But it speaks much more comfort to us, to whom it is fulfilled, who are the heirs of this promise. Surely, God has fed in his pavilions, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

CHAP. XXXV.

It was promised, in the foregoing chapter, that when the time to favour Zion, yea, the set time, should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah, and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of the church to cease, and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlarges upon the former promise, concerning these blessings and comforts. But this next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. Mount Seir, that is, Edom, is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fully put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for as they all walked in the way of Cain that hated Abel, so they all walked in the way of Esau, who hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob, by virtue of a particular blessing, was ultimately the conqueror. Now it is hereby charged upon the Edomites, and that was, their spite and malice to Israel, v. 5, 10, 13. II. The ruin threatened, that should come upon them for this sin. God will bring upon them (v. 9.) and to their children, they shall be laid waste, (v. 4.) depopulated, and made quite desolate, (v. 6-9.) and left so when other nations that had been wasted, should recover themselves, v. 14, 15.

1. MOREOVER, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesies, against it, 3. And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out my hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. 4. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. 5. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end: 6. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. 7. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth. 8. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword. 9. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatenings we had before; (ch. xxv. 8.) but here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has wees of its own. The prophet must boldly set his face against Edom, and prophesy particularly against it; for the God of Israel has said, O mount Seir, I am against thee. Note, Those that have God against them, have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers, nor dare they prophesy any good to them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

1. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, v. 5. God espouses his people's cause, and will plead it; takes what is done against them as done against himself, and will reckon for it; and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites. (1.) Because of the enmity they had against the seed of God, though not the whole of God, but only the part of God that was weakest in the heart; "Then hast had a perpetual hatred to them, to the very name of an Israelite." The Edomites kept up an hereditary malice against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birthright and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him; (Gen. xxviii.) and we do not find that ever he was quarrelled with him again. Now it is hereby charged upon the Edomites, and that was, their spite and malice to Israel, which is, their hatred against them, v. 5. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred to them, to the very name of an Israelite. Therefore the Lord God contends with the Edomites, that they may not be able to obviate the bad influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last; but it is not to be wondered at, that profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Gen. iii. 15.) will continue to the end. Marvel not if the world hate you. (2.) Because of the injuries they had done to the people
of God; they shed their blood by the force of the sword, in the threescore of their calomny; they did not attack them as fair and open enemies, but laid wait for them, to cut off those of them that had escaped; (Obad. 14.) or, they drove them back upon the sword of the pursuers, by which they fell. It was cowardly, as well as barbarous, to take advantage of their distress; and for neighbours, with whom they had lived peaceably, to smite them over the head, when strangers openly beset them. It was in the time that their unrighteousness had an end, when the measure of it was full, and destruction came. Note, Even those that suffer justly, and for their sins, are yet to be pitied, and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

2. What should be the effect and issue of that condemnation? If God stricken out his hand against the country of Edom, he will make it more desolate, v. 3. Desolation and desolation. (1.) The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword; (v. 6.) I will prepare thee unto blood. Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength, the more effectually to subdue it. Thus preparation is in the making a great while before the judgment. 

3. The sword shall not pass through Edom; it implies, "Thou hast delighted in it, and thirsted after it. Those that do not keep up a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong, will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, "Unless thou hast hatred, that is, "unless thou hast repent, and put off this bloody disposition, blood shall pursue thee." And then it is an intimation that they may be prevented by a thorough reformation. If the turn not, he will wither his sword, Ps. vii. 12. But if he turn, he will lay it by. Blood shall pursue thee, the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed, or the judgment of blood; thy bloodthirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seestek to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Edomites, as had been foretold; (Isa. xxxiv. 6.) the mountains and hills, the valleys and rivers, shall be filled with slain, v. 8. The pursuers shall overtake those that flee, and shall give noquarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood, those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. Satis te sanguine eum sitis—Gissi thyself with blood, which thou hast thirsted. (2.) The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed, (v. 4.) the country made desolate; (v. 7.) for God will cut off from both him that passes out, and him that returns; and when the inhabitants are cut off, that should keep the cities in repair, they will decay, and go into ruins; and those are cut off that should till the land, that will soon overrun with brutes and wild beasts. Note, Those that help forward the desolations of Israel, may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which completes the judgment is, that Edom shall be made perpetual desolations, (v. 9.) and the cities shall never return to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion. Note, Those that are enemies to God and his people, as the carnal mind hath, can expect no other than to be made a perpetual desolation. Implacable malice will justly be punished with irreparable ruin.

10 Because thou hast said, These two nations, and these two countries, shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the Lord was there: 11. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord God, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy, which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee. 12. And thou shalt know that I am the Lord, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. 13. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them. 14. Thus saith the Lord God, When the whole earth rejoiced, I will make thee desolate. 15. As thou diest rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

Here is, 1. A further account of the sin of the Edomites, and their bad conduct toward the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for setting on the Babylonians, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, Raze it, raze it, down with it, down with it; (Ps. cxlvii. 7.) inflicting a rage that needed no spur; here it is further charged upon them, that they triumphed in Jerusalem's ruin, and in the desolations of the country. Many blasphemies they spake against the mountains of Israel, saying, with pride and pleasure, They are laid desolate, v. 12. Note, The troubles of God's church, as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corruptions of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of.

Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed, (1.) From a sinful passion against the people of Israel; from anger and envy, and hatred against them, (v. 11.) that perpetual hatred spoken of, v. 5. Though they were not a match for them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldaeans came, and were a blame. (2.) From the natural appetite to the land of Israel. They pleased themselves with hopes that when the people of Israel were destroyed, they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make out something of a title to it, ob destructum sancti—so many of the heathens. If Jacob's issue fail, they think, they will next in the entail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue; "These two nations of Judah and Israel shall be mine. Now is the time for me to put in for them," however, they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours; We will possess it, when it is deserted; Ceditur occupantibus—Let us get possession, and that will be title enough. Note, These have a spirit like the Edomites towards their next of kin, and others, because they hope to get by them, or are pleased with their failing, because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the dispossessions, losses, and crosses that others meet with in it, instead of showing ourselves, upon such an occasion, greedy of it, we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it, and our expectations from it. But in this case of the Edomites' coveting the land of Israel, and gaping
EZEKIEL, XXXVI.

We have done with mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves, with the prophet, to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope, before we have done with the chapter, to leave it in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter: 1. Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their unjust defeatable exiles is described, and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed, and that in due time they shall be settled again in their own land, in the midst of peace and plenty, v. 1-5. 2. Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate; wherein they are reminded of their former sins, and God's judgments upon them, to humble them for their sins and under God's might hard, v. 6-19. But it is promised, 1. That God would glorify himself in showing mercy to them, v. 21-24. 2. That he would sanctify them by giving them his grace, and fitting them for his service; and this for his own name's sake, and in answer to his prayers, v. 25-28.

1. Also, thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord: 2. Thus saith the Lord God; Because the enemy had said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession; 3. Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: 4. Therefore, ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God; Thus saith the Lord God to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about; 5. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen,
and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession with the joy of all their heart, with desipteful minds, to cast it out for a prey. 6. Prophesy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy and in my fury, because ye have borne the shame of the heathen: 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I have lifted up my hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. 8. But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to any people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. 9. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown: 10. And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it: and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be built: 11. And I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bring fruit: and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. 12. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel; and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. 13. Thus saith the Lord God: Because they say unto you, Thou land devourst up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; 14. Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord God. 15. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou hear the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord God.

The prophet had been ordered to set his face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against them, ch. vi. 2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now that God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, v. 1. And again, (v. 4.) Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord; and what he saith to them, he saith to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken. 4. 4.) The people were gone, some one way, and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains, and valleys; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them; The earth abides for ever. Now, to show the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place; which if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would have called upon it to hear the word of the Lord, nor would, at this time, have showed it such things as these. Here is, 1. The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It is become both a prey and a derision to the heathen that are round about, v. 4. 1.) It is become a prey to them; even they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them, all their neighbours flew to the spoil as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on; (v. 5.) They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession to the heathen; to the rest of them, even such as had escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite; Turbo Romae sequitur fortunam ut semper—The mob of Rome still raise the elevated, and despise the fallen. It is the common cry, when a man is down, Down with him. 2. It is become a derision to them. They took all they had, and laughed at them when they had done. The enemies said, "Ah, even the ancient high places are ours in possession, v. 2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, nor the sanctity, nor the fortifications, of the land of Israel are its security, but we are become masters of it all." The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a sport of it; where the grandeur of a high and holy profession; for the more glorious the prosperity was, the more heinous is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel; Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people, v. 3. All the talk of the country about was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spake of it had some prevish, ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the scornings of them that were at ease, and the contempt of the proud, Ps. cxiii. 4. There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people, among such people, were sure to be a reproach when the crown was fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity, in its suffering days, to be everywhere spoken against. 2. The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly. Let us see, 1. How they dealt with the Israel of God; they carved out large possessions to themselves out of their land; out of God's land; for so indeed it was; "They have appointed my land into their possession," (v. 3.) and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but intrenched upon God's prerogative. It was the holy land which they had their sacrilegious hands upon. God spake of nothing but God's interest; if they had any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but cast it out for a prey, as if they had won it in a lawful war. And this they did without any dread of God and his judgments, and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the joy of all their hearts, because they got by it, and with despicable minds to Israel, that had lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is all the joy of a worldly heart; and the calamities of God's people all the joy of a despiteful mind. And those that had not an opportunity of making a prey of God's people, made a reproach of them; so that they were the shame of the heathen, v. 6. Every body ridiculed them, and made a jest of them; and the truth is, they had been more evident to themselves than that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous and very barbarous.

2. How God would deal with them who were
thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He has spoken against the heathen; he has passed sentence upon them, he has determined to reckon with them for it, and this in the fire of his zeal, both for his own honour, and for the honour of his people, v. 5. Having a love for both, strong as death, he has a jealousy for both, cruel as the grave. They speak in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them; and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak in his jealousy and in his fury, v. 6. Fury is in God; but he will first visit and handle them, and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will so speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure. What he says, he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath. He has lifted up his hand, and sworn by himself, has sworn, and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this, (v. 7.) Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people, will, sooner or later, have it turned upon themselves; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach; at furthest, in that day, when God's displeasure shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt.

III. The promise of God's favour to his Israel, and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies, to show himself so much the more concerned for them, and ready to do them good; as David hoped that God would recompense the good for Shimei's cursing him. Let them curse, but bless them. In this we as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will, and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain, if, the more unkind men are, the more kind God is; if, the more kindly he speaks to us by his word and Spirit, the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The promise of mercy is for them, and will turn to them, v. 9. As the curse of God reaches the ground for man's sake, so does the blessing. Now that which is promised is,

1. That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them; My people Israel are at hand to come, v. 9. Though they are at a great distance from their own country, though they are dispersed in many countries, and though they are detained by the power of their enemies, yet they shall come again to their own border, Jer. xxxiii. 17. The time is at hand for their return. Though there were above forty years of the seventy, (perhaps fifty;) yet remaining, it is spoken of as near, because it is sure, and there were some among them that should live to see it. The Jews, says Dr. Ch];ow, were not one day. The mountains of Israel are now desolate; but God will cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel, not as travellers passing over them, but as inhabitants, not tenants, but freeholders; They shall possess them, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs; thou shalt be their inheritance. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, where children are heirs, even Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2. That they should afford a plentiful, comfortable maintenance for their owners, at their return. When the land had enjoyed her sabbath for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful afterward, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath-rest; Ye shall be lifted and sown, (v. 9.) and shall yield your fruit to my people Israel, v. 8. Note, It is a blessing to the earth, to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.

3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement in their own land; The cities shall be inhabited, the wastes shall be built, v. 10. And I will settle the captivity after the former captivity, 11. Their own land had unsettled them, but now God's favour shall resettle them. When the prodigal son is become a penitent, he is settled again in his father's house, according to his former estate; Bring hither the first robe, and put it on him. Nay, I will do better unto you now than at your beginnings. There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.

4. That the people, after their return, should be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thickly inhabited, and as tillable, people, as ever. God will bring back the people to their own land, and to the property of it; observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, (v. 10.) all whose spirits God stirred up to return; and those only were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, though but few, in comparison, returned at first, yet afterward, at divers times, they all returned; and then (says God) I will multiply these men. (v. 16.) multiply men and beasts; or there should never be any more occasion for the seasons of calamity. The Canaan was got into a bad name. It had of old sinned out the inhabitants, (Lev. xviii. 28.) the natives, the Aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by these that should have put another construction upon it, Numb. xiii. 32. It had of late delivered the Israelites, and sinned them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, It is a land, which, instead of supporting its natives or tribes that inhabit it, bereaves them, overthrows them, and causes them to fall; it is a torment which breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promises that it shall be so no more; Thou shalt no more bereave them of men, (v. 12.) shalt no more wear them to death, v. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the land. God will make them like a fruitful country.

Note. God will take away the reproach of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they hear no more the shame of the heathen, (v. 13.) especially when it is reformed, when sin, which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, they shall hear no more reproach from the heathen.

5. That the depopulation and desolation of their land would be no more than a temporary destruction; I will turn to thee, I will turn to thee, saith the Lord, v. 11. I will turn to thee, saith the Lord, for that reason, that I will turn again, that is, return to their land. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will soon be redressed, and their honour recovered.

6. Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land,
they defiled it by their own way and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. 18. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols whereby they had polluted it: 19. And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them. 20. And when they entered unto the heathen, whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land. 21. But I had pity for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. 22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God: I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, when ye shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. 24. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return, in due time, to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes, that they were unworthy, utterly unworthy, of such a favour; therefore, to remove that discouragement, God here shows them that he would do it for them purely for his own name's sake, that he might be glorified in it, and by it, and that he might magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute which of all others is most his glory. And the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this is intended further to show that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God; to this end Christ directly did, in that short prayer, Father, glorify the name, and God declared it was his end in all he did, in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven; I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again, John xii. 28. Now observe here,

1. How God's name had suffered both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

1. God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, v. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. But they defiled it by their own way, their wicked way; that is our own way, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people defiles their land; renders it abominable to God, and uncomfortable to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him or with one another. What was unpleasant might not be made use of; by the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us, we forfeit the use of them; and, the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, nothing is pure to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary, and made every thing she touched ceremonially unclean, Lev. xx. 19. Sin is that abominable thing that was in the midst of the earth, he cannot endure to look upon. They shed blood, and worshipped idols, (v. 18.) and with these sins defiled the land. For this, God poured out his fury upon them, scattered them among the heathen; their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands. Herein God was righteous, and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, nor, did justice to his own name, for he judged them according to their way and according to their doings, v. 19. And yet, the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say, if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that for mischief he brought them forth. Their neighbours considered them rather as an unfruitful seed of the earth, and took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him, and put contempt upon him; and God's name was continually every day blasphemed by their oppressors, Isa. li. 5.

2. When they entered into the land of the heathen, God had no glory by them; but, on the contrary, his name was profaned, v. 20. (1.) It was profaned by the sins of Israel; they were no credit to their profession wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it. The name of God and his holy religion was blasphemed through them, Rom. ii. 24. When these that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words, and the trusts reposed in them, the enemies of the Lord had thereby great occasion given them to blaspheme, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous. (2.) It was profaned by the sufferings of them, for, by the sufferings of them, one occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers, and to make good his own grants. They said, in scorn, These are the people of the land, these wicked people; yea see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts; these miserable people, you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours. These are the people that came out of Jehovah's land, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these the that had statutes so righteous, whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this the nation that is so much celebrated for a wise and understanding people, and that is said to have God so nigh unto them? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, who appear here so vile, so abject? Thus God sold his people, and did increase his wealth by their captivity, Num. xxxvi. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

11. Let us see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them, and then working a great salvation for them. He would have scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy. For, though they were unworthy of his compassion, yet he had pity for his own holy name, and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which by bleeding among the heathen, on that
jewel which was trodden in the dirt, which the house of Israel, even in the land of their captivity, had profaned, v. 21. In pity to that, God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were so scandalous than they had been in their own land. "Therefore will I gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land, v. 24. Not for your sake, because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy; but for my holy name's sake, that the name of my great name," v. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name; his holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself; nor does any thing make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it; will sanctify my name which you have profaned." When God gives that which he has sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy: The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes and yours. When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe, 1. God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself, he will bring his people out of Babylon not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake, because he will be glorified. 2. God's goodness takes occasion from men's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; therefore he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it has been profaned by the commission of sin. 25. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. 27. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. 28. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. 31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall hate yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations. 32. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: he ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. 33. Thus saith the Lord God; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. 34. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. 35. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities, are become fenced, and are inhabited. 36. Then the heathen, that are left round about you, shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it 37. Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. 38. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solenn feasts, so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men; and they shall know that I am the Lord. The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration, by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour, (which was answered, in the foregoing verses, with this, that God, in doing it, would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness,) but of their unfitness for such a service; being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered, in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy, and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. But it is further intended as a drought for the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As, (ch. xxxiv.) after a promise of their return, the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd, so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations; which we have as much need of for our sanctification as we have of Christ's merit for justification.
versal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new Jerusalem, have a new heart and a new spirit, and these are necessary in order to their walking in newness of life. This is that divine nature which believers are by the promises made partakers of. (3.) That, instead of a heart of stone, insensible and inflexible, we are to receive any divine impressions, and to return any devout affections, God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into a living thing. (4.) It is promised (v. 1.) that his perpetual inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will cause them to walk in his statutes, will not only show them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom, and will, and active powers, for every good work. In order to this, he will put his Spirit within them; as a Teacher, Guide, and Sanctifier. Note, God does not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us: Ye shall keep my judgments. (5.) If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precepts that are promised: so order your walk and do your duty, as we have an interest in saving grace, you shall engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

And here promises that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, v. 28. Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God," (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people;) but he who has chosen us, and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the evidence of it. Thus it is promised, (v. 28.) that they shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it them at first, Deut. vii. 7. 8. Therefore he is gracious, because he has selected them, and hath chosen them. (33.) Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things; when they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them, then will I call for the corn, and will increase it, v. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word, the fruit both of the tree and of the field, shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the productions shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other a reproach to them, that they should be starved in a land of uncounted abundance. But now I will lay no famine upon you; and none are under that rod, without having it laid on by him. Then they shall receive no more reproach of famine, shall never be again upbraided with that: nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from reproach, but shall be gloried in, shall be a sight of Truth, a sight of the Ridder of the right path; and God shall be praised and magnified, in the midst of his people, for his people to be crowned with, sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with, and in them he will be honoured. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land and of its products is compared (v. 38.) to the large flocks of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now have not flocks shall be filled in parts, and not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over, (Ps. lxxv. 13.) but like the holy flock which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house.

Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed, when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for living sacrifices. Crowds are a lively sight. (6.) He shows what shall be the happy effects of this blessed change. (1.) It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins; (v. 31.) Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves. See here what sin is; it is an abomination, a loathsome thing that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the first step toward repentance; it is remembering our own evil ways, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed, and being particular in recapitulating them. We must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, our own evil ways, but our defects and infirmities, our doings that were not good, not so good as they were, but that they were not so good as they might have been; this is the first step in the true blessed reformation God would work among them; (v. 33.) "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance." This is God's method of mercy indeed, first to part men from their sins, and then to restore them to the enjoyment of their inheritance. (2.) They shall enjoy a plenty of all good things; when they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them, then shall I call for the corn, and I will increase it, v. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word, the fruit both of the tree and of the field, shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the productions shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other a reproach to them, that they should be starved in a land of uncounted abundance. But now I will lay no famine upon you; and none are under that rod, without having it laid on by him. Then they shall receive no more reproach of famine, shall never be again upbraided with that: nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from reproach, but shall be gloried in, shall be a sight of Truth, a sight of the Ridder of the right path; and God shall be praised and magnified, in the midst of his people, for his people to be crowned with, sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with.
God should overcome our badness, and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance, the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of ourselves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed, that will not be thus melted. (2.) It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for God will manifest his clear knowledge of God; (v. 36.) "Then the heathen that are left round about you, that spake ignorantly of God, (for so all those that speak ill of him,) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities, and to reestablish the most desolate countries; and that those who thought that his favours to his people may be obtained for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever. They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation, by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel, and his works which he has done for them; The Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. With us, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God. God impresses these things upon them, not as the recompense of their merits, but as the return of their prayers. (1.) Let them not think that they have deserved it; Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you; (v. 22, 32.) no, be you ashamed and confounded for your own ways. God is doing this, all this which he has promised; it is as sure to be done as if it were done for their sakes or the sakes of good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in showing mercy, he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but for his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed; Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes; which intimates that we are apt to entertain a high conceit of our own merits, and are with difficulty persuaded to disclaim a concern for the welfare of others. Then, as a condition of it, God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy, and not their merit, that made them so; and that therefore not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due. (2.) They must repent of the sin of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God, are not only not merited, but that they are a thousand times forfeited; and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy. (2.) Yet let them know that they must desire and expect it; (v. 37.) I will set for this be inquired of by the house of Israel. God has spoken, and he will do it; and he will give them a thousand times more than they expected, which requires that his people should seek unto him, and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming toward them in ways of mercy. [1.] They must pray for it, for by prayer God is sought unto, and inquired after. What is the matter of God's promises, must be the matter of our prayers. By asking, by the thing promised we must give glory to the Donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer, which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must ask, and then God will give him the heathen for his inheritance; must pray the Father, and then he will send the Comforter; much more must we ask, that we may receive. (2.) They must consult the oracles of God, and thus God is sought unto, and inquired after. The mercy must be, not an act of providence only, but a child of promise; and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which makes it both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God inquired of by Daniel, in the name of the house of Israel, then when he was about to do these great things for them; he consulted the oracles of God, for he understood by books, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both what was to be expected, and when; and then he set his face to seek God by prayer, Dan. ii. 3. 4. No true agreement with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operations of his providence concerning us, and in both he must be inquired of.

**CHAP. XXXVII.**

The threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of this book, and which God has, by his hand, begun to execute, is here begun to be counteracted by the restoration and deliverance for the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable, and as those were illustrated with many visions and similitudes, for the encouragement of God's people in these, for the encouraging of an humble faith. God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel, even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to their own land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely. 1. That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which should have been of use to them, that their recovery was likewise in their own minds; upon all these accounts they are here, in vision, compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men; which should be brought together and set in their own place in life. This is the subject of vision, (v. 1. 10.) and the explication of it, with its application to the present case, v. 11. 14. 2. That they were so divided among themselves, too much of the old enmity between Judah and Ephraim remaining even in their captivity. But as to this, by a sign of two sticks made one in the hand of the prophet, is foreshowed the happy coalition that should be, at their return, between the two nations of Israel and Judah, v. 15. 22. In this there was a type of the unifying of Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Samaritans, in Christ and his church. And so the prophet elides into a prediction of the kingdom of Christ, which should be ushered in by the captivity of his people, and their restoration to the land of promise, v. 23. 28.

1. **The hand of the Lord was upon me,** and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, 2. And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. 4. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5. Thus said the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: 6. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live: 7. And ye shall know that I am the Lord. 8. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied there was a
noise, and, behold, a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. 9. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. 12. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves. 14. And shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live; and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.

Here is,

1. The vision of a resurrection from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles, (A privation ad habemum non datur resurrection—From privalgion to possession there is no return,) that we could have no thought of it but by the word of the Lord; and that it is certain by that word, that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, some have urged from this vision: “For” (say they) “otherwise it would not properly be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the prophecies of the Lord Jesus, or for the confirming of the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith teaching a former deliverance,” Is. vii. 14. But whether it be a confirmation or no, it is, without doubt, a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, beside that which it is primarily intended to be the sign of. 2. The resurrection of souls from the death of sin by the life of grace, to a new, holy, spiritual, and divine life, by the power of divine grace going along with the word of Christ, John v. 24, 25. 3. The resurrection of the gospel-church, or any part of it, from an afflicted, persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace. 3. The resurrection of the body at the great day of God, that is, the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal. Let us observe the particulars of this vision.

(1.) The deplorable condition of these dead bones; the prophet was made, [1.] To take an exact view of them. By a prophetic impulse and a divine power he was, in vision, carried out and set in the midst of a valley, probably that plain spoken of, ch. iii. 22, where God then talked with him; and it was full of bones, of dead men’s bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought here, and the slain left unburied till all the flesh was devoured or putrefied, and nothing left but bones, mingled and piled one another and dispersed. He passed by them round about, and he observed not only that they were very many, (for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead,) but that, lo, they were very dry, having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been moistened with marrow, (Job xxi. 24,) when they have been any while dead, and left without their flesh, and not covered with dust; the body is now fenced with bones, (Job x. 11,) but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like these dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay unburied in the open valley, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 8, 9. The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried, (ch. xxxix. 12, 15,) for their destruction is final; but the bones of Israel are in the open valley, under the eye of Heaven, for there is hope in their end. [2.] He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself; (v. 5.) For the keeping of these bones so long dry, likely? Can they devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy policies to restore a captive nation? “No,” says the prophet, “I know not how it should be done, but thou knowetb.” He does not say, “They cannot live,” lest he should seem to limit the Holy One of Israel; but, “Lord, thou knowest whether they can, and whether they shall; if then thou dost put life into them, it is certain that they cannot live.” Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them, and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be effected by any counsel or power but his own.

(2.) The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones together, and these dead and dry bones to life. It must be done by prophecy. Ezekiel is ordered to prophesy upon these bones; (v. 4. and again, v. 9,) Prophesy to the wind. So he prophesied as he was commanded, v. 7, 10. [1.] He must preach, and he did so; and the dead bones lived by a power that went along with the word of God which he preached. [2.] He must pray, and he did so; he cried aloud to the Lord, that he might give an answer to prayer; for a spirit of life entered into them. See the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both, for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers prophesy upon the dry bones; Say unto them, Live; yea, say unto them, Live; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again, O dry bones, live. But we call in vain, still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word; Come, O breath, and breathe upon them. God’s grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God’s grace, and that grace must be manifested by the ministers of God, and by the faithful and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To prophesy upon dry bones seems as great a penance as to water a dry stick; and yet, whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must prophesy as we are commanded, in the name of him who raises the dead, and is the Fountain of life.

(3.) The wonderful effect of these means. Those that do as they are commanded, as they are commiss-
sioned, in the face of the greatest discouragements, need not doubt of success, for God will own and en-
roll as his own with delight, and all that were by.

First, That which he had to say to them was, that God would infallibly raise them to life: Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Ye shall live, v. 5. and again, Ye shall live, v. 6. And he that speaks the word, shall thereby do the work; he that says it, shall see it done. Thus the dry bones of Job, and all that were by, will clothe them with skin and flesh, (v. 6.) as he did at first, Job x. 11. He that made us so fearfully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, can in like manner new-make us, for his arm is not shortened.

Secondly, That which was immediately done for them was, that they were moulded anew into shape. We may well suppose it was with great liveliness and vigour that the prophet spake, especially when he found what he said began to take effect. Note, The opening, scaling, and applying of the promises, are the ordinary means of our participation of a new and divine nature. As Ezekiel prophesied in this vision, there was a noise, a word of command, from heaven, seconding what he said; or, it signified the motion of the angels that were to be employed in the work of resurrection; and the evidence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read of the noise of their singing, (Ezek. i. 24.) and the sound of their going, 2 Sam. v. 24. And behold, a shaking, or commotion, among the bones; even dead and dry bones begin to move, when they are called to hear the word of the Lord. This was fulfilled when, upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, those whose spirits God had stirred up, began to think of making up that liberty, and getting ready to be gone; when there was a noise, behold, a shaking; when David heard the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he stirred himself; then there was a shaking. When Paul heard the voice saying, Why persecutest thou me? Behold, a shaking of the dry bones; he trembled and was astonished. But this was not all, The bones came together bone to his bone, under a divine direction; and though there are in man a multitude of bones, yet of all the bones of all these numerous slain not one was missing, not one missed its way, not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, each knew and found its fellow; the dispersed bones came together, and the displaced bones were knit together; the divine power supplying that to these dead bones which might have been very necessary in the case.

Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the dead; the scattered atoms shall be arranged and marshalled in their proper place and order, and every bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom and power by which the bones were first formed in the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in several parts of the province of Babylonia, came to their own land, and were reunited and collected, in consent, to the general rendezvous, in order to their return. By degrees sinews and flesh came upon these bones, and the skin covered them, v. 8. This was fulfilled when the captives got their effects about them, and the men of their place helped them with silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their remove, Ezra iv. 4. But still there was no breath in them, and they were not yet alive, but only animated; 

may live. In answer to this request, the breath immediately came into them, v. 16. Note, The spirit of life is from God; 1 Thes. v. 23. and breathing into man the breath of life, and so he will at last in the resurrection. The dispirited, despairing captives were wonderfully animated with resolution to break through all the discouragements that lay in the way of their return, and applied themselves to it with all imaginable vigour. And they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army; not only a mighty, but effective, man, fit for service in the wars, and formidable to all that gave them any opposition. Note, With God nothing is impossible. He can out of stones raise up children unto Abraham, and out of dead and dry bones lev up an exceeding great army to fight his battles and plead his cause.

II. The application of this vision to the present calamitous condition of the Jews in captivity. These bones are the whole house of Israel, both the ten tribes and the two, as in what we see in this state, and what they shall be.

1. The depth of despair to which they are now reduced, v. 11. They all give up themselves for lost and gone; they say, Our bones are dried, our strength exhausted, our spirits gone, our hope is cut off. (v. 12.) Oh, let one strong man, but effectual man, rise, and free us from these miseries! For service in the wars, and formidable to all that gives them any opposition. Note, When troubles continue long, hopes have been frustrated, and all creature-confidences fail, it is not strange if the spirits sink; and nothing but an active faith in the power, promise, and providence of God, will keep them from dying away quite.

2. The height of prosperity, to which, notwithstanding this, they shall be advanced. Therefore, because things are come thus to the last extremity, prophesy to them, and tell them, now is God's time to appear for them, Jehovah-jireh, in the midst of the land of the Lord it shall be seen, v. 12.-14. Tell them, (1.) That they shall be brought out of the land of their enemies, where they are as it were buried alive; I will open your graves. These shall be restored, not only whose bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, (Ps. cxli. 7.) but who are buried in the grave; though the power of the enemy is like the bars of the pit, which one would think it impossible to break through, strong as death, and cruel as the grave, yet it shall be conquered; God can bring his people up from the depths of the earth, Ps. lxxvi. 20. (2.) That they shall be brought into their own land, where they shall live in prosperity. I will bring you into the land of Israel, (v. 12.) and place you there, (v. 13.) and will put my Spirit in you, and then ye shall live. Note, Then God puts spirit in us to good purpose, and so that we shall indeed live, when he puts his Spirit in us. And (lastly) in all this God will be glorified; Ye shall know that I am the Lord, (v. 13.) that I have spoken it, and made you to hear it, and all the earth shall know and be ashamed that none among the Chaldeans will quench the dead renews more than any thing to his honour, and to the honour of his word, which he has magnified above all his names; and will magnify more and more by the punctual accomplishment of every tittle of it.

15. The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, 16. Moreover, thou son of man, take one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: 17. And join them one to another into one stick, and they shall become one in
thy hand. 18. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? 19. Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in my hand. 20. And the sticks whereinon thou wittest shall be in thy hand before their eyes. 21. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, wherein they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: 22. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. 24. And David my servant shall be king over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. 26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Here are more exceeding great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews after their return to their own land; but they have a further reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of gospel-times.

1. It is here promised, that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love and mutual services; so that, whereas, even since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David under Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and it is to be feared, there had been some clashings between them even in the land of their captivity, (Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim,) now it should be no longer, but there should be a coalition between them, and, notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them, they should agree to love one another, and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign; the prophet was to take two sticks, and write upon one, For Judah, and upon the other, For Joseph, including Benjamin; these of the children of Israel that were his companions; upon the other, For Joseph, including the rest of the tribes, v. 16. These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into one in his hand, v. 17. The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion, as other men did. The meaning, should ask the meaning, of the word of God, which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and divine things are represented to us; the minister's lips should keep the knowledge hereof, and the people should ask it at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. It is a necessary question for grown people, as well as children, to ask, What mean ye by this service, by this sign? Ezek. xii. 18. The meaning was, that Judah and Israel should be come one in the hand of God, v. 19. (1.) They shall be one; one nation, v. 22. They shall have no separate interests, and, consequently, no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance, no remains, of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect harmony between them; a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwattering one another, nay, beating and bruising one another; but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another. (2.) It is a propheciedy more efficient. Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is to see Judah and Israel, that had long been at variance, now dwelling together in unity. Then they shall become acceptable to their God, amiable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, Isa. xl. 13, 14. (2.) They shall be one in God's hand: by his power they shall be united, and being by his hand, and the power of that hand, they shall be had together, so that they shall not fly off, to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the centre of their unity, and his grace the cement of it. In him, in a regard to him, and in his service and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one. Qui conveniunt in alippe tertii, inter se conveniunt—Those who agree in a third, agree with each other. Note, Those are best united, that are one in God's hand; whose union with each other results from their union with Christ, and their communion with God through him, Eph. i. x. One in us, John xvii. 21. (3.) They shall be one in their return out of captivity; v. 21. I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side, and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen with whom they had mingled themselves: they shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer to comply with their usages, and then they will soon agree to part together in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension, when they begin to come to themselves, and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted, they will run all together. Likewise their being joint sharers in the favour of
God, and the great and common deliverness wrought out for them all, should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering, should be healing, loving times. (4.) They shall all be the subjects of one God, shall come under one covenant. The Jews, after their return, were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks further, to the kingdom of Christ; he is that One King, in allegiance to whom all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And the unification of Christ's church (as they are called) by their becoming one fold under Christ the one great Shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ the partition-wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them \\

2. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry; this shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even away taking of their sin; (v. 23.) Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, those detestable, defiling things, no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with, all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin, as sin, will hate all sin. And those that have had a habit of continuing in idolatry, it is impossible for them to continue in the same, to make the same approaches to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money, or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of all their transgressions. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry; (1.) By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it; “I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, but where they met with idolatry, from their own allurements to it.” Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them, or return to them, but to save ourselves out of them, as we would out of infected places; See Zech. ii. 7. Rev. xviii. 4. And it is a great mercy when God, in his providence, saves us out of the dwelling-places where we have tempted him, keeps us from harm, by keeping us out of harm’s way in answer to his word, “Lead us not into temptation,” but deliver us from evil. (2.) By changing the disposition of their mind; “I will cleanse them;” (v. 28.) I will sanctify them, will work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin, and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness; and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols.” Whom God has cleansed he will keep clean.

3. It is here promised that they shall be the people of God, as their God, and the subjects and sheers of Christ their King and Shepherd. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated, (v. 25, 24.) for the encouragement of the faith of Israel; They shall be my people, to serve me, and I will be their God, to save them, and to make them happy. David, my servant, shall be king over them, to hight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and overrule all things that concern them for their good. He shall be their Shepherd, to guide, and provide for them; Christ is David, Israel’s King of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes to be his in all his covenants, and to keep his statutes. 4. It is here promised that they shall dwell comfortably, v. 25, 26. They shall dwell in the land of Israel; for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable. (1.) They shall have it by covenant; they shall come in again upon their old title of the grant made unto Jacob, God’s servant. As Christ was David, God’s servant, so the church is Jacob, his servant too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as born in God’s house. He will make a covenant of peace with them, (v. 26.) and, in pursuance of that covenant, he will make to them a covenant of Good-kingdom. Temporal mercies are then doubly sweet, when they are the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence. (2.) They shall come to it by prescription; “It is the land wherein your fathers have dwelt, and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously grant.” It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and therefore the portion of all posterity, and of those who are their fathers’ sons. (3.) They shall have it entailed upon them and the heirs of their body, and shall have their families built up, so that it shall not be lost for want of heirs. They shall dwell therein all their time, and never be turned out of possession, and they shall leave it for an inheritance to their children, and their children’s children for ever, who shall enjoy it when they are gone, the prospect of which will be a satisfaction to them. (4.) This shall be under a good government, which will contribute very much to the comfort of their lives; My servant David shall be their Prince for ever. This can be no other than Christ, of whom it was said, when he was brought into the world, He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, Luke i. 33. Note, It is the overreigning Prince, after all God’s faithful promises, that as his kingdom is everlasting, so he is an everlasting King; he lives to reign for ever and ever, and as sure and as long as he lives and reigns, they shall live and reign also. (5.) The charter by which they hold all their privileges, is indefeasible. God’s covenant with them shall be an everlasting covenant; so the covenant of grace is, for it secures to us an everlasting habitation. They have a heaven to live in, and a heaven of God to come from, when that heaven is their church.

5. It is here promised that God will dwell among them; and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed; I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; my tabernacle also shall be with them, v. 26, 27. (1.) They shall have the tokens of God’s special presence with them, and his gracious residence among them. God will in very deed dwell with them upon the earth, for where his sanctuary is, he is, and there is God. They shall be God’s sanctuary, and he took it from them, (Isa. lv. 11.) but now that they are purified, God will dwell with them again. (2.) They shall have opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives. (3.) They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacle they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught of the Lord. (4.) Thus their covenant-relation to God shall be improved, and the bond of it strengthened; “I will be their God, and they shall be my people, and they shall know it by having my sanctuary among them, and shall have the comfort of it.”

6. Both God and Israel shall have the honour of this among the heathen, v. 26. Now the heathen observe how Israel had profaned their own crown by their sins, and God has profaned it by his judgments; but when Israel is reformed, and God is returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know that the Lord sanctifies Israel, has a title to them, and an interest in them, more than other people, because his sanctuary is, and shall be, in the midst of them. Note, God designates the sanctification of these among whom he sets up his sanctuary. And blessed and holy are they who, enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification, that the heathen may know it is no less than the almighty
This chapter, and that which follows it, are concerning Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Israel, that should make a formidable descent upon them, and put them into a consternation; but their army should be routed, and their design defeated; and this prophecy, it is most probable, had its accomplishment some time after the return of the people of Israel out of their captivity, as the scriptures tell us, the vessels that had fled with the king of Syria, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in some other way not recorded, we cannot tell. If the sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far as the prophecy, we should have been better able to understand these chapters, but, for want of that key, we are locked out of the meaning of them. God had by the prophet assured his people of happy times after their return to their own land; but lest they should mistake the promises which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom, as if from them they might promise themselves an uninterrupted prosperity, he here tells them, as Christ told his disciples, to prevent the like mistake, that in the world they should have tribulation, but they may be of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last. This prophecy here of Gog and Magog without doubt, alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled, Rev. xx. 8. That Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the church, as the Old Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, Rev. xvi. But in both, the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in the Jewish church, as the New Testament prophecy, or rather the latter part of it, which comes to the Christian church. In this chapter, we have intermixed, I. The attempt that Gog and Magog shall make upon the lands of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations. Their project and design in it, v. 6-13. God's hand in it, v. 14. II. The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel, v. 15, 16, 18, 19. III. The divine restraint that these enemies should be under, v. 20. And again, v. 14. IV. The defeat that should be given to these enemies by the immediate hand of God, v. 21-23. which shall be more of in the next chapter.

1. AND the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him. 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 4. And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6. Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands; and many people with thee. 7. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. 8. After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. 9. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee. 10. Thus saith the Lord God, It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: 11. And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, 12. To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thy hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil.

The critical expositors have enough to do here to inquire out Gog and Magog: we cannot pretend either to add to their observations, or to determine their controversies; Gog seems to be the king, and Magog the kingdom: so that Gog and Magog are like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off, in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria, and Asia the less. Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that God is against him, even as Needom is against the others that are now the enemies of his church, and set himself against them, but he foresees these that will be so, and lets them know by his word that he is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of his own name; surely their wrath shall praise him, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Ps. cxlv. 9. Let us observe, 1. The confusion which God designed to put this enemy to; it is remarkable, that this is put first in the prophecy; before it is foretold that God will bring him forth against Israel, it is foretold that God will put hooks into his jaws, and turn him back, (v. 4.) that they might have assurance of their deliverance before they had the prospect given them of their danger. Thus he designs God is the comfort of his people, thus careful that they may not be frightened; even before the trouble begins, he tells them it will end well. 2. The undertaking which he designed to engage him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment. 1. The nations that shall be confederate in this enterprise against Israel, are many, and great, and mighty; Gog, and Persia, Ethiopia, &c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations here named, and many others. These people had been at variance with one another, and yet in combination
against Israel. How are they increased that trouble
God's people!
2. They are well furnished with arms and am-
munition, and bring a good train of artillery into the
field; horses and horsemen, (v. 4.) bravely equip-
ped with all sorts of armour, bucklers and shields
for defence, and all handling swords for offence.
Orders are given to their leaders, to go and attack
this expedition; (v. 7.) "Be thou prepared, and do thou
prepare. See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and, lest that should
not suffice, make further preparation, thou and all
thy company." Let Gog himself be a guard to the
rest of the confederates. As commander in chief,
let him engage to take care of them and their safety;
let him pass his word for their security, and take
their lives upon his heart; the leaders of an army,
instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and
presumptuously, and throwing away their lives
upon desperate undertakings, should study to be
a guard to them, and, whenever they send them
forth in danger, should contrive to support and
cover them. This call to prepare seems to be ironi-
cal; Do thy worst, but I will turn thee back; like
the Jews, (v. 9.) Gird yourselves, and ye shall be
broken in pieces.
3. Their design is against the mountains of Israel,
(v. 8.) against the land that is brought back from
the sword. It is not long since it was harassed with
the sword of war, and it has been always wasted,
more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but
newly gathered out of many people, and brought
forth out of the nations; it has enjoyed comfort
only for a short while-time, has not recovered any
strength since it was brought down by war and
captivity; and therefore its neighbours need not fear its being too great, nay, and therefore
it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon.
It is a people that dwell safely, all of them, in
unvalled villages, very secure, and having neither
bars nor gates, v. 11. It is a certain sign that they
intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear
no mischief from them. It cannot be thought that
they will offend others, who do not take care to
defend themselves; and it aggravates the sin of these
invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise evil
against thy neighbour, while he dwells securely by
thee, and has no distrust of thee, Prov. iii. 29. But
see here how the clouds return after the rain in this
world, and what little reason we have ever to be
secure of the integrity of the children of Israel. Israel
was brought back from the sword of one ene-
ymy, and beheld, the sword of another is drawn against it; former troubles will not excuse us from
further troubles; but when we think we have put
off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh
and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on
again; and therefore we must never boast, or be off
our guard.
4. That which the enemy has in view, in form-
ing his project, is, to enrich himself, and to make
himself master, not of the country, but of the
wealth of it, to spoil and plunder it, and make a
prey of it; At the same time that God intends to
bring this matter about, things shall come into the
mind of this enemy, and he shall think an evil
towards thee, v. 10. Note, All the mischief we do,
and particularly the mischief we do to the church of
God, arises from evil thoughts that come into their
mind; ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts,
slyful thoughts to those that are good, for the sake
of their goodness. It came into Antiochus's mind
what a singular people these religious Jews were,
and how their worship witnessed against and con-
demned the idolatries of their neighbours, and
therefore, in enmity to their religion, he would
plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy
people they were, that they had gotten cattle and
goods in the midst of the land, (v. 12.) and withal
how weak they were, and how unable to make any
resistance, and how easy it would be to carry off
what they had, and how much glory this rapin
would add to his victorious sword; these things
coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing
another, (v. 11, 12.) "I will go up to the land of uninvalled villages; yea, that I will, it will cost me nothing to make them
all my own; I will go, and disturb them that are at
rest, without giving them any notice; not to crush
their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence,
or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they
have done us; (they had none of these pretences to
make them, for they were; but purely to take a prey,
and to take a prey," (v. 12.) in open defiance to all
the laws of justice and equity, as much as the high-
wayman's killing the traveller, that he may take his
money. These were the thoughts that came into
the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew
them; nay, he knew them before they came into his
mind, for he understands our thoughts afar off,
Ps. cxvii. 2.
5. According to the project thus formed, he pours
in all his forces upon the land of Israel; and finds
those that are ready to come in to his assistance,
with the same prospects; (v. 9.) "Thou shalt as-
cend, and come like a storm, with all the force and
fury and fierceness imaginable, and thou shalt be
like a cloud to cover the land, to darken it, and to
threaten it. Thou, and not only all thy bands, all
thy horsemen, but the force thou must bring into the land, but many people with thee," (such as are spoken of, v. 15.) "Sheba and Dedan, the Arabians and Edomites,
and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon,
and other maritime cities, they and their young
lions that are greedy of spoil and live upon it, they
shall say, Art thou come to take the spoil of this
land?" Yes, he is. And therefore they wish him
success; or perhaps they envy him, or grudge it
him. "Art thou come for riches, who art thyself
such rich already?" Or, knowing that God was on
Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, fore-
seeing that they would be baffled, and that he
would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself.
Or, if he be come to take the prey, they will
come, and join with him, and add to his forces.
When Lycurgus, who was general of Antiochus's
army, came, they bid the neighboring nations
joined with him, (1 Mac. iii. 41.) to share in
the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. When thou
sewst a thief, then thou consentedst with him.

14. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and
say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God, In
that day when my people of Israel dwell-
eth safely, shalt thou not know it? 15. And
thou shalt come from thy place out of
the north parts, thou, and many people with
thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great
company, and a mighty army: 16. And
thou shalt come up against my people of
Israel as a cloud to cover the land; it shall
be in the latter days, and I will bring thee
against my land, that the heathen may
know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee,
O Gog, before their eyes. 17. Thus saith
the Lord God, Art thou he of whom I
have spoken in old time by my servants the
prophets of Israel, which prophesied in
those days many years, that I would bring
thee against them? 18. And it shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. 19. For in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath, have I spoken. Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; 20. So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 22. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. 23. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

The latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former; the dream is doubled, for the thing is certain, and to be very carefully regarded. 1. It is here again foretold that this seditious enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel; (ver. 15.) Thou shalt come out of the north parts (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) with a mighty army, shalt come like a cloud, and cover the land of my people Israel, v. 16. These words, (ver. 14.) When my people Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it? may be taken two ways; either, 1. As speaking of the people of Israel, and to this they answer, Thou shalt have intelligence between thee and thy heart, securely, and therefore how carelessly, the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a rich, but what an easy prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them. 2. Note, God's providence is to be acknowledged in the occasional, the small occasion, perhaps, that is given, and that not designately wither, to those first thoughts from which great enterprises take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make bad use of; as here. Or, 2. As speaking his disappointment in this attempt; which here, as before, the prophecy begins with; When my people Israel dwell safely, not in their own appreension only, but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the divine protection, shalt thou not be made to know it by the fruitfulness of thine endeavours to destroy them? Thou shalt soon find that there is no enchantment against Jacob, that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; thou shalt know thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no want of arms to smite thee, they have God himself, a Wall of fire, round about him, and that he who touches them, touches the apple of his eye; whatsoever meddles with them, meddles to his own hurt. And it is for the demonstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. They that gathered themselves against Israel, said, Let us take the spoil, and take the prey, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, Mic. iv. 11, 12. I will bring thee against my land; This is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself bring them upon them. Therefore, when we shall be well reconciled even to this, it is, that the heathen may know me to be the only living and true God, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, in thy defeat and destruction before their eyes; that all the nations may see, and say, There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens, for the help of his people. Note, God therefore brings his people into danger and calamity, that he may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance; and therefore suffers the enemies of his church to prevail awhile, though they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last, and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said, This shall be in the latter days, in the latter days of the Old Testament church; so the rashishness of the nation of Israel, was; but in the latter days of the New Testament church, another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated. Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into a great while hence, even in the latter days.

II. Reference is here had to the predictions of Jeremiah respecting this event, (Jer. xxxvii.) Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time, of whom messias spake in his prophecy of the latter days? (Deut. xxxiii. 43.) He will render vengeance to his adversaries; and David, (Ps. ix. 15.) The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made; and often elsewhere in the Psalms. This is the leviation of whom Isaiah spake, (Isa. xxvii. 1.) that congress of the nations of which Joel spake, Joel iii. 1. Many of the prophets had perhaps spoken particularly of this event, though it be not written; as they all had spoken, and written too, that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable, admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord's prophets, though they lived in several ages, for they were all guided by one and the same Spirit. As, it is said, that this furious, formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel, and that it should issue in his own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Macedeans to the forces of Antiochus, and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases. But these things are here foretold as usual, in figurative expressions, which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearer the letter than we know of.

1. God will be highly displeased with this bold invader; When he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel, and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then God's fury shall come up in his face; which is an allusion to the manner of men who look for the literal accomplishment of what some high affront is offered them, and they are resolved to show their resentments of it, v. 18. God will speak against them in his jealousy for his people, and in the fire of his wrath against his and their enemies, v. 19. See how God's permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his using them to serve his own purposes, consist with his hatred of sin, and his rendering it by punishment for it. God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an easy prey it might be, and determining thereby to glorify himself; and yet, when

**Vol. iv. — 5 D**
of the vastness of that destruction, in three consequences of it: the burning of their weapons, (v. 8. 10.) the burying of their slain, (v. 11. 16.) and the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unhumbled, (v. 17. 22.)

1. A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and his other providences concerning them, and a promise of further mercy that he had yet in store for them, (v. 23. 29.)

THEREFORE, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; 2. And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3. And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand.

4. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field, to be devoured. 5. Thou shalt fall upon the open field; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God. 6. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles; and they shall know that I am the Lord.

7. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.
be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He, and his bands, his regular troops, and the people that are with him, that follow the camp to share in the plunder, these shall all fall with him. Note, Those that cast in their lot among wicked people, (Prov. 1. 14.) that they may have one purse with them, must expect to lose it all with them, and fare as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made, that but a sixth part shall be left, (v. 2.) the other five shall all be cut off. Never was army so totally routed as this. And, for its greater infinity and reach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, v. 4. Compare v. 17. Thou shalt fall, for I have spoken it. Note, Neither shall be the most illustrious princes, (Antiochus was called Elyphanes, the illustrious,) and the most numerous armies, fall to the ground, than any word of God; for he that has spoken, will make it good.

3. His country also shall be made desolate; I will send a fire on Magog, (v. 6.) and among them that dwell carelessly, or confidently, in the isles, the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to destroy the land, but shall not, but shall be defeated in that design, but shall have his own destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other people's rights, justly lose their own.

4. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name. (1.) Among his people Israel; they shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness, his care of them, his faithfulness to them; his providence concerning them, and they shall have a better acquaintance with him; every providence should do so, as well as every ordinance; I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people. In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God, should know more of him; we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name as a holy name. Know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, and that hates all sin. And then it follows, I will not let them pollute my holy name any more. Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name, will not dare to profane it; for it is through ignorance of it that men make light of it; and make bold with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men; first, to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole manner of men to know his holy name, and so keeps us from polluting it, and engages us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he completes his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people, and reforms them. When the Almighty scattered kings for her, she was white as snow in Salomon, Ps. lxviii. 14. (2.) Among the heathen; those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. They shall be made to know by dear-bought experience, that he is a God of power, and his people's God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him, and prospered.

8. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord Gon; this is the day whereof I have spoken. 9. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years. 10. So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire; and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord Gon. 11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea, and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog, and all his multitude; and they shall call it, The valley of Hamon-gog. 12. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. 13. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown, the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord Gon. 14. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land, to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it; after the end of seven months shall they search. 15. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the burners have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land. 17. And thou, son of man, thus saith the Lord Gon, Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of a goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord Gon. 21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward. Though this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain; (v. 8.) * Behold, it is come, and it is done; it is as sure to be done, when the time is come, as if it were done already; this is the day whereof I have long and often spoken, and though it has been long in
coming, yet at length it is come." Thus it was said unto John, (Rev. xxxi. 6). It is done.

To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things specified as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave them the defeat; we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword, or struck a stroke: but,

I. They shall burn their weapons; their swords, and their arrows, (v. 3.) their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, leading-staves, truncheons and half-plies, every thing that is combustible. They shall not lay them up in their armories, or reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but they shall burn them; not all at once, for a bonfire, (to what purpose would that be?) but, as the fire had once, so to use them for fuel in their houses, instead of other fire-wood, so that they should have no occasion to take wood out of the field or forests, for seven years together; (v. 10.) such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field, where the enemy fell, and in the roads, which they passed in their flight. The weapons were dry, and fitter for fuel than green wood; and by saving the wood in their coppices and forests, they could grow. Though the mountains of Israel produce plenty of all good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty, and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them, as Providence shall give them opportunity to do so. We may suppose that when they who dwelt in the cities of Israel came forth to spoil those who spoiled them, and made reprisals upon them, they found not iron, silver, and gold, and ornaments; yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use, but the wood of the weapons for fuel, which is one of the necessaries of human life; to teach us to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, though we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it, and of those things which we may very well live without. And, even then, they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them, (their fire-side,) they might from it take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.

II. They shall bury their dead. Usually, after a battle, when many are slain, the enemy desire time to bury their own dead. But here the slaughter shall be so general, that there shall not be a sufficient number of the enemies left alive to bury the dead; and besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel, that it would take a work of time to find them out. It is left to the house of Israel to bury them as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

1. A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying them, the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea, either the salt sea, or the sea of Tiberias, a valley through which there was great passing and repassing of travellers between Egypt and Canaan, wherein there is such a dead bodies, putrefying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers who go that way, shall be forced to stop their noses. See what vile bodies ours are; when the soul has been a little while from them, the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous, or more noxious. There, therefore, where the greatest number lay slain, shall the burying-place be appointed.

And it shall be called, The valley of Hamon-gog, that is, of the multitude of Gog; for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance. How numerous the forces of the enemies were which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel!

2. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them, no less than seven months; (v. 12.) which is a further intimation that the slain of the Lord in this action should be many; and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they might cleanse the land from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corpses unburied in it; for the prevention of which it was appointed that those who were hanged on a tree, should be speedily taken down, and their carcasses burned; and that the intimation that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the saving of a land from ruin, the more the inhabitants should do for the cleansing of the land from sin.

3. Great numbers shall be employed in this work; All the people of the land shall be ready to lend a hand, and to be employed in both. In number of the army, and in the number of them that contribute the utmost he can in his place toward the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy which every man shall take up arms against. In publico discrimine uniusque homo miles est.—In the season of public danger every man becomes a soldier. And whoever shall assist in this work, it shall be to them a reward; though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of the country, seem but mean, yet, when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour. Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel; it is a credit to religion, when those that profess it are ready to every good work; and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, though they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. It shall be a recompense to them in the day when God will be glorified. Note, It is for the glory of God when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will see their good works, and glorify their Father, Matth. v. 16. And when God is honoured, he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them that should remain unburied. The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollutions of the country, and therefore they shall appoint men of continual employment, that shall apply themselves to it, and do nothing else till the land be thoroughly cleansed; for otherwise, that which is every one's work, should seem the burden of his own. Note, Those that are engaged in public work, especially for the cleansing and reforming of a land, ought to be men of continual employment, men that will stick to what they undertake, and go through with it, men that will apply themselves to it; and these that will do good according to their opportunities, will find themselves continually employed.

5. Even the passengers shall be ready to give information to those whose business it is to cleanse the land of what public nuisances they meet with, which call for their assistance; They that pass through the land, though they will not stay to bury the dead themselves, lest they should contract a ceremonial pollution, will yet give notice of these that they find unburied. If they but discover any thing that is

set up a sign, that the buriers may come, and bury it; and that, till it is buried, others may
take heed of touching it; for which reason their sepulchres among the Jews were whitened, that people might keep at a distance from them. Note, When good work is to be done, every one should lend a hand to further it, even the passengers themselves, who must not think themselves unconcerned in a common calamity, or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it.

Those whose work it is to cleanse the land must not content themselves with any thing in it that is defiling; though it were not the body, but only the bone, of a man, that was found unburied, they must encourage those who shall give information of it, private information, by a sign, concealing the informer, that they may take it away, and bury it out of sight. Nay, after the end of seven months, which was allowed for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this, they shall give a new name to their city. It shall be called Hamonah—The multitude.

O what a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! Thus shall they cleanse the land, with all this labor and care, and the while they are conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites that had been employed in the war with the Midianites, to purify themselves, Numb. xxxi. 24. Having received special favours from God, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.

III. The birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcasses of the slain while they remain unburied, and also upon those that are cut up. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, Rev. xiv. 17, &c. which is borrowed from this.

1. There is a general invitation given, v. 17. It is to the feast of every venge, and to every feast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that prey upon carcasses, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog; let them all gather themselves on every side, here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast; so the margin reads it. Note, The judgments of God, executed upon sin and sinners, are both a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people. When God brake the head of levitation, he gave him to be meat to Israel, Ps. lxxiv. The righteous shall rejoice as at a feast, and they see the vengeance, and shall wash his foot, as at a feast, in the blood of the wicked. This sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel; these are the high places, the altars, where God has been dishonourd by the idolatry of the people, but where he will now glorify himself in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made; They shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, v. 18, 19. (1.) It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God his Maker. (2.) It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams, and bullocks, and great goats, all of them failings of Bashan. It is the blood of the princes of the earth that they shall regale themselves with. What a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they call themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey! (3.) It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as sheep for the slaughter, and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the dead bodies of God's servants.

(Ps. lxxix. 2.) or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full; (v. 19, 20.) You shall eat fat, and drink blood, which are satiating, surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great, and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly; You shall be filled at my table. Note, He that keeps his table moral and religious will always keep his table rich, and it will always be filled. Thus shall you keep food for all flesh; the eyes of all wait upon him, and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table. And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he has prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and chariots that is, those who ride in the chariots, mighty men, and men of war, who trample upon nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley and the young eagles, Prov. xxx. 17. They thought to have made an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil pursues sinners even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey is but a type and sign of the terrible death that shall overtake them after death. God's enemies, even his unprofitable servants, shall be made to witness their iniquity, while they are made to witness the destruction of others. Thus God has made the wicked bear the judgment of others, and he will now make them bear the judgment of themselves. This is a measure for measure, and a just vengeance.

IV. This shall redound very much both to the glory of God and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people.

1. It shall be much for the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord; (v. 21.) All the heathen shall see and observe my judgments that I have executed, and thereby my glory shall be set among them. This principle shall be admitted and established among them more than ever, that the God of Israel is a great and glorious God. He is known to be so even among the heathen, that have not, or read not, his written word, by the judgments which he executes.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people; for they shall hereby be made to know that he is their God; (v. 22.) The house of Israel shall know, abundantly to their comfort, that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward. (1.) He will be so from that day and forward. God's judgments upon his enemies will make the whole body of his people to rejoice, and be glad in his holy name, and live in his victory. (2.) They shall know it with more satisfaction from that day and forward. They had sometimes been ready to question whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events of this day shall silence their doubts, and, the matter being thus settled and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

23. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword. 24. According to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions, have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. 25. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26. After
That they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses, whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. 27. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28. Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and has reference not only to the predictions concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the prophecies of this book concerning the captivity of the house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

When God gives up the meaning of his people's troubles, and rectify their mistake concerning them, who took occasion from the troubles of Israel to reproach the God of Israel, as unable to protect them, and untrue to his covenant with them. When God, upon their reformation and return to him, turned again their captivity, and brought them back to their own land, and, upon their perseverance in their reformation, wrought such great salvation upon them, that from the attempts of Gog upon them, then it will be made to appear, even to the heathen that will but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all for their reflection; that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had by sin forfeited his favour, and thrown themselves out of his protection; (v. 23, 24.) The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, that iniquity which they learned from the heathen their neighbours; because they trespassed against God. That was the true reason why God hid his face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies. It was according to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions. Now the evident of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to his honour; when the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God, when the world is made to know, 1. That God punishes sin, even in his own people, because he hates it most in those that are nearest and dearest to him, Amos iii. It is the praise of justice, it will be in due season, v. 7. When God gives up his people for a prey, it is to correct them and reform them, not to gratify their enemies, Isa. x. 7.—xiii. 24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves. 3. That no sooner do God's people humble themselves under the rod, than he returns in mercy upon them.

11. God will give his own people to know what great favour he has in store for them, notwithstanding the troubles he had brought them into; (v. 25, 26.) Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob. 1. Why now? Now God will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; (1.) Because it is time for him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings; Now will I be jealous for my holy name, that that may no longer be reproached. (2.) Because they now repent of their sins; They have borne their shame, and all their trespasses; when sinners repent, and take shame to themselves, God will have mercy upon them, and will not take vengeance of their sins; but will see that they do repent, and will be reconciled to them. It is particularly pleasing to God, that these penitents take a great way back in their penitential reflections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their own land, and the divine protection they were under, is a source of great satisfaction to them, and the sins they committed in that land; they dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none should have given them any disquiet or disturbance, if they had continued in the way of their duty. Nay, therefore they trespassed, because they dwelt safely; outward safety is often a cause of inward security, and that is an inlet to all sin, Ps. lxxii. Now they are willing to bear the shame of, and acknowledge that God has justly brought them into a land of trouble, where every one makes them afraid, because they had trespassed against him in a land of peace, where none made them afraid. And when they thus humble themselves under humbling providences, God will bring again their captivity and,

2. What then? When God has gathered them out of their enemies' hands, and brought them home again;

(1.) Then God will have the praise of it; I will be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, v. 27. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be sanctified in their reformation, and the making of them a holy people again, and will be glorified in their restoration, and the making of them a happy glorious people again.

(2.) Then they shall have the benefit of it; (v. 28.) They shall know that I am the Lord their God. Note, The providences of God concerning his people, that are designed for their good, have the grace of God going along with them, to teach them to eye God as the Lord, and their God, in all; and then they do them good. They shall see him as the Lord, and their God. [1.] In their calamities, that it was he who caused them to be led into captivity; and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it. [2.] In their comfort, that it is he who has gathered them to their own land, and left none of them among the heathen. Note, By the variety of events that befal us, if we look up to God in all, we may come to acquaint ourselves better with his attributes and designs.

(3.) Then God and they will never part, v. 29. [1.] God will pour out his Spirit upon them, to prevent their departures from him, and returns to folly again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then, [2.] He will never hide his face any more from them, will never suspend his favour as he had done: he will never turn from doing them good, and, in order to prevent their enemies, he will never turn from doing him service. Note, The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of the continuance of God's favour. He will hide his face no more from those on whom he has poured out his Spirit. When therefore we pray that God would never cast us away from his presence, we must as earnestly pray that, in order to that, he would never take his Holy Spirit away from us, Ps. li. 11.

CHAP. XL.

The waters of the sanctuary which this prophet saw in vision, (ch. iv. 4.) are a most sublime representation of this prophet. Hilheto, the waters have been sometimes but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the loins, but now the waters are risen and are become a river which cannot be passed over. Here is one con
1. IN the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self-same day the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. 2. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. 3. And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring-rod; and he stood in the gate. 4. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thy heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought thither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision. It was in the 25th year of Ezekiel's captivity, (v. 1.) which some compute to be the 33d year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the 14th year after the city was smitten. See how reasonably the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given, then when they were in the depth of their distress; and an assurance of the return of the morning, when they were in the midst of their captivity: "Then the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither to Jerusalem, now that it was in ruins, desolate and deserted"—a suitable sight to the prophet.

2. The scene where it was had. The prophet was brought, in the visions of God, to the land of Israel, v. 2. And it was not the first time that he had been brought thither in vision; we had him carried to Jerusalem, to see it in its iniquity and shame; (ch. viii. 3.) here he is carried thither, to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, though its present aspect, now that it was quite depopulated, was desolate. He was set upon a very high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah, to view this land, which was now a second time to be possessed. From the top of this mountain he saw as the frame of a city, the plan and model of it; but this city was temple as large as a city. The new Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 22.) had no temple therein; this here is all temple, which comes much to one. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heart in fashion as a man, he is squared and framed in the counsel of God, framed by infinite wisdom, and all very good.

3. The particular discoveries of this city (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, (v. 3.) not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might redeem and build the temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with, and access to, the benefits and privileges of God's house. He is that he shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. vi. 13. His appearing like brass intimates both his brightness and his strength. John, in vision, saw his feet like unto fine brass, Rev. i. 13.

4. The dimensions of this city, or temple, and the several parts of it, were taken with a line of flax,
and a measuring-reed, or rod; (v. 3.) as carpenters have both their line and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule; and those that would let others into the knowledge of it, must do it by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the scripture; the pattern in the mount. That is the line and the measuring-reed that is in the hand of Christ; with that doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that; for then peace is upon the Israel of God, when they walk according to that rule.

5. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord, and transmit it pure and entire to the church, v. 4. (1.) He must carefully observe every thing that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged. (v. 4.) "Behold with thine eyes all that is showed thee; do not only see it, but look intently upon it; and hear with thine ears all that is said to thee, diligently hearken to it, and be sure to set thine heart upon it; attend with a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind." What we see of the works of God, and what we hear of the word of God, will do us no good, unless we set our hearts upon them. Those who reckon themselves nearly concerned in it, and expect advantage from our souls by it. (2.) He must faithfully declare it to the house of Israel, that they may have the comfort of it; therefore he receives, that he may give. Thus the Revelation of Jesus Christ was lodged in the hands of John, that he might signify it to the churches, Rev. i. 1. And because he is to declare it as a messenger from God, he must therefore be fully apprised of it himself, and much affected with it. Note, Those who are to preach God's word to others, ought to study it well themselves, and set their hearts upon it. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself and declare it to the house of Israel, is, because to this intent he is brought thither, and has it showed him. Note, When the things of God are showed us, it concerns us to consider to what intent they are showed us; and when we are sitting under the ministry of the word, to consider to what intent we are brought thither, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God, in showing us such things, in vain.

5. And, behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring-reed of six cubits long, by the cubit; and a hand-breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building one reed, and the height one reed. 6. Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad, and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad. 7. And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers were five cubits; and the threshold of the gate, by the porch of the gate within, was one reed. 8. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate was inward. 10. And the little chambers of the gate eastward were three on this side, and three on that side; they three were of one measure; and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits. 12. The space also before the little chambers was one cubit on this side, and the space was one cubit on that side; and the little chambers were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. 13. He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another; the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door. 14. He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. 15. And from the face of the gate of the entrance, unto the face of the porch of the inner gate, were fifty cubits. 16. And there were narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches; and windows were round about inward: and upon each post were palm-trees. 17. Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, there were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement. 18. And the pavement by the side of the gates, over against the length of the gates, was the lower pavement. 19. Then he measured the breadth, from the fore-front of the lower gate unto the fore-front of the inner court without, a hundred cubits eastward and northward. 20. And the gate of the outward court, that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof. 21. And the little chambers there were three on this side, and three on that side; and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 22. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm-trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps: and the arches thereof were before them. 23. And the gate of the inner court was over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate a hundred cubits. 24. After that he brought me toward the south, and, behold, a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures. 25. And there were windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 26. And there were seven steps: to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm-trees, one on
this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

The measuring-reed which was in the hand of the surveyor-general, was mentioned before, v. 3. Here we are told, (v. 5.) what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was to be serviceable. It became to reckon, not by the common cubit, but the cubit of the sanctuary, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit that this holy house should be measured, and that was a hand-breath, four inches, longer than the common cubit. The common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty-two, see ch. xliii. 13. yet some of the critics contend, that this measuring-reed was but six common cubits, four and a half, and some hand-breath added to the whole. The former seems more probable. Here is an answer.

I. Of the outer wall of the house, which compassed it round, which was three yards thick, and three yards high, which denoted the separation between the church and the world on every side; and the divine protection which the church is under. If a wall of this thickness will not secure it, God himself will be a Wall of fire round about it; whoever attack it, it is at their peril.

II. Of the several gates with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the court of the Gentiles; some think, because in gospel-times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church, that their court should be left unmeasured, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be unnumbered, Rev. vii. 9, 11, 12.

1. He begins with the east gate, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple; the holy of holies being at the west end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen that worshipped toward the east. Now, in the account of this gate, observe,

(1.) That he went up to it by stairs, (v. 6.) for the gospel-church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to worship God, we must ascend; so is the call, Rev. iv. 1. Come up hither; Sursum corda—Up with your hearts.

(2.) That the chambers, adjoining to the gates were but little chambers, about ten feet square, v. 7. These were for those to lodge in, who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such as are made spiritual priests to God, to content themselves with little chambers, and not to seek great things to themselves; so that we may but have a place within the verge of God's court, we have reason to be thankful though it be in a little chamber, a mean apartment, though we be but door-keepers there.

(3.) The chambers, as they were each of them four-square, denoting their stability and due proportion, and their exact agreement with the rule, (for they were each of them one reed large, and one reed broad,) so they were all of one measure, so that there might be an equality among the attendants on the service of the house.

(4.) The chambers were very many; for in our Father's house there are many mansions, (John xiv. 2.) in his house above, and in that here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, Ps. xxxvii. 4, 5. Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers, which are parts of the great temple, the universal church, which are gathered and must be framed by the scriptural line and rule, and which Jesus Christ takes the measure of, that is, takes cognizance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

(3.) It is said, (v. 14.) He made also the posts. He that now measured them was the same that made them; for Christ is the Builder of his church, and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge of it. And his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his making of them, for no account is made of them further than they agree with that; To the law, and to the testimony.

(6.) Here are posts of sixty cubits, which, some think, was to full fill what Cymus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, that is, thirty yards, and more. Ezra vi. 3.

(7.) Here were windows to the little chambers, and windows to the posts and arches, to the cloisters below, and windows round about, (v. 16.) to signify the light from heaven with which the church is illuminated and attire, and to put us in mind of instruction, direction, and comfort to those that dwell in God's house; light to walk by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by. There were lights to the little chambers; even the least, and least considerable parts and members of the church, shall have light afforded them. All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. But they are no way to be thrown among the vulgar, as Kings vi. 4. The discoveries made to the church of Christ are but narrow and scanty, compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly.

(8.) Divers courts are here spoken of; an outermost of all, then an outer court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into which the priests only were admitted; we see, how gradually, as it were, the diversities of the degrees of glory, the several members of Christ's mystical body are here; as of the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of heaven; as there are stars in several spheres, and stars of several magnitudes, in the fixed firmament.—English Annotations.

Some draw nearer to God than others, and have a more intimate acquaintance with divine things; but to a child of God a day in any of his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. These courts had porches, or piazzas, round them, for the shelter of those that attended in them, from wind and weather; for when we are in the way of our duty to God, we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection, that he will graciously provide for us, nay, that he will himself be a Covert from the storm and tempest.

(9.) On the posts were palm-trees engraven, (v. 16.) to signify that the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree, in the courts of God's house, Ps. xcii. 12. The more they are depressed with the burden of affliction, the more strongly do they grow, as they say of the palm-trees. It likewise intimates the saints' victory and triumph over spiritual enemies; they have palms in their hands; (Rev. vii. 9.) but lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the posts of the temple as perpetual monuments of their honour; Thanks be to God who always causes us to triumph. Nay, believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall go no more out, and shall have his name engraven on their foreheads to be their brightest ornament and honour, Rev. iii. 12.

(10.) Notice is here taken of the pavement of the court, v. 17, 18. The word intimates that the pavement was made of porphyry-stone, which was of the colour of burning coals; for the brightest and most sparkling glories of this world should be put and kept under our feet when we draw near to God, and all the foreign ornaments, as it were, the burning coals, or stones of a fiery colour, with which the pavement of God's celestial temple is laid; and if the pavement of the court be
so bright and glittering, how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be!

2. The gates that looked toward the north, (v. 20.) and toward the south, (v. 24.) with their porticoes, are much the same with that toward the east, after the measure of the first gate, v. 21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in Exodus, and of the temple in the books of Kings and Chronicles, to signify the special notice God does take, and his ministers should take, of all that belong to his church; his delight is in them, his eye is upon them. He knows all that are his, all his living temples, and all that belongs to them. Observe,

(1.) This temple had not only a gate toward the east, to let in the children of the east, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom; but it had a gate to the north, and another to the south, for the admission of the poor and less civilized nations. The new Jerusalem has twelve gates, three towards each quarter of the world; (Rev. xxi. 13.) for many shall come from all parts, to sit down there, Matth. viii. 11.

(2.) To those gates they went up by steps, seven steps, (v. 22.-26.) which, as some observe, may remind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another; going from step to step, from strength to strength, still pressing forward toward perfection; upward, upward, toward heaven, the temple above.

27. And there was a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south a hundred cubits. 28. And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures; 29. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and there were windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 30. And the arches round about were five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad: 31. And the arches thereof were toward the outer court; and palm-trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps. 32. And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures. 33. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were according to these measures; and there were windows therein, and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 34. And the arches thereof were toward the outward court; and palm-trees were upon the posts thereof, and on this side and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. 35. And he brought me to the north gate, and measured it according to these measures: 36. The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 37. And the posts thereof were toward the outer court; and palm-trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps. 38. And the chambers, and the entries thereof, were by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt-offering.

In these verses, we have a delineation of the inner court; The survey of the outer court ended with the south side of it. This of the inner court begins with the south side, (v. 27.) proceeds to the east, (v. 32.) and so to the north; (v. 33.) for here is no gate either of the outer or inner court toward the west; it should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters toward the west, 1 Chron. ix. 54.—xxvi. 18. But Josephus says, that in the second temple there was no gate on the west side. Observe,

1. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court; the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, the galleries or rows round the court the same, the arches over the doors the same. The work of grace, and its workings, are the same, for substance, in grown Christians that they are in young beginners, only that the former are got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike precious, though it be not alike strong. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for all they are brethren, and bear the same image.

2. The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by seven steps, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by eight steps. This is expressly taken notice of, (v. 31, 34, 37.) to signify that the nearer we approach to God, the more we should rise above this world and the things of it. The people, who worshipped in the outer court, must rise seven steps above other people, but the priests, who attended in the inner court, must rise eight steps above them; must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

39. And in the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering. 40. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, were two tables; and on the other side, which was at the porch of the gate, were two tables. 41. Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew their sacrifices. 42. And the four tables were of hewn stone for the burnt-offering, of a cubit and a half long, and a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments, wherewith they slew the burnt-offering and the sacrifice. 43. And within were books, a hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables was the flesh of the offering. 44. And without the inner gate were the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate; and their prospect
was toward the south; one at the side of the east gate, having the prospect toward the north. 45. And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house. 46. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok, among the sons of Levi, which come near to the Lord to minister unto him. 47. So he measured the court, a hundred cubits long, and a hundred cubits broad, foursquare, and the altar that was before the house. 48. And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. 49. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits: and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it; and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

In these verses we have an account, 1. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the inner court. We find no description of the altars of burnt-offerings in the midst of that court, till ch. xliii. 13. But because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the gospel, here is early notice taken of the tables, at our entrance into the inner court, till we come to partake of the table of the Lord, we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the inner court. But in this gospel-temple we meet with no altar, till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our Altar, that sacrificeth every gift. Here were eight tables provided, whereon to set the criptic sacrifices, and the tables for this purpose, either in the tabernacle, or in Solomon's temple. But here they are provided, to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel-times, and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up these sacrifices. Here were the shambles for the altar; here were the dressers on which they did the flesh of the sacrifices, the knives with which they cut it up, and the hooks on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar, (v. 43.) and there also they washed the burnt-offerings, (v. 38.) to intimate that before we draw near to God's altar, we must have every thing in readiness; must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual garments, with gifts; 2. The use that some of the chambers mentioned before, were put to. (1.) Some were for the singers, v. 44. It should seem, they were first provided for before any other that attended this temple-service, to intimate, not only that singing of psalms should still continue a gospel-ordination, but that the gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and praise, and give them occasion to break forth into singing, which is often foretold concerning gospel-times, Ps. xcvii. 1.—cxxxviii. 1. (2.) Others were for the priests; both those that kept the charge of the house, to cleanse it, and to see that none came into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair, (v. 45.) and those that kept the charge of the charge of the altar. (v. 46.) The Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house, shall enjoy the comforts of it.

3. Of the inner court; the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, v. 47. The altar that was before the house, was placed in the midst of this court, over against the three gates, so that coming in on any side of the outer court, when the gates were set open, all the people in the outer court might through them be spectators of the service done at the altar. Christ is both our Altar and our Sacrifice, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is Salvation in the midst of the earth, (Is. lxiv. 12.) to be looked unto from all quarters.

The temple is called the house, emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely, and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch, and so we come to the place where the altar is. This porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, Joel ii. 17. In this porch, beside the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz; He will establish; in him is strength, v. 49. In the gospel-church, every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place, and to be done decently and in order.

Chap. xlii.

An account was given of the porch of the house, in the close of the foregoing chapter, this brings us to the temple itself; the description of which here given creates much difficulty to the critical expositors, and occasions diversities among them. Those must consult them, who are nice in their inquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; It shall suffice us to observe. I. The dimensions of the house, the posts of it, (v. 1.) the door, (v. 2.) the walls of it, (v. 4.) the pillars, (v. 5.) the foundations and wall of the chambers, their doors, (v. 8.) and the house itself, (v. 13.) ii. The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place, v. 3. 4. 11. III. An account of another of the doors between the porch and the rate place, v. 12. 15. 4. The manner of the building of the house, v. 7. 16. 17. V. The ornaments of the house, v. 18. 20. VI. The altar of incense, and the table, v. 24. 25. VII. The doors between the house and the oracle, v. 29. 36. There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us, that there is so much in these descriptions dark, and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematics, the mathematical description of a temple, in the midst of a heathen city, is incomprehensible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time, we may suppose that this, in the literal sense of it, was easy enough.

1. Afterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. 2. And the breadth of the door was ten cubits; and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side; and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits. 3. Then went he inward, and measured the post of...
the door two cubits, and the door six cubits, and the breadth of the door seven cubits. 4. So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits, and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple; and he said unto me, This is the most holy place. 5. After he measured the wall of the house six cubits; and the breadth of every side-chamber four cubits, round about the house on every side. 6. And the side-chambers were three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall, which was of the house for the side-chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. 7. And there was an enlarging and a winding about still upward to the side-chambers; for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. 8. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side-chambers were a full reed of six great cubits. 9. The thickness of the wall, which was for the side-chamber without, was five cubits; and that which was left was the place of the side-chambers that were within. 10. And between the chambers was the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. 11. And the doors of the side-chambers were toward the place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south; and the breadth of the place that was left was five cubits round about.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the guidance of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, though we are often at a loss to know both what this is, and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts, he was at length brought to the temple; v. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further, into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They that are willing to dwell in God's courts, shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright-privilege, of ministering in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him, by introducing him into this prophetic, evangelical, court of the temple, and employing him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spoke of the destroying of this temple, which his hearers understood of this second temple of Jerusalem, he spake of the temple of his body; (John ii. 19, 21.) and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously, when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the house of God, (1 Tim. iii. 15.) and all the members of that body, which are living temples, in whom the Spirit dwells.

3. The very posts of this temple, the door-posts, were as far one from the other, and, consequently, the door was as wide, as the whole breadth of the tabernacle of Moses, (v. 1.) Twelve cubits, Exod. xxvi. 16, 22, 25. In comparison with what had been under the law, we may say, This is the gate which leads into the church; the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, v. 4. For the New Jerusalem is exactly four-square, (Rev. xxi. 16.) denoting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, v. 7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have fast hold; though God builds high he builds firm; yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening of another; they had hold, but not in the wall of the house. By this spreading gradually, the side-chambers that were on the height of the house, in the uppermost story of all, were six cubits; whereas the lowest were but four; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up ourselves in our most holy faith, the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

12. Now the building that was before the separate place, at the end toward the west, was seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. 13. So he measured the house, a hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, a hundred cubits long. 14. Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, a hundred cubits. 15. And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which was behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side, and on the other side, a hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court; 16. The door-posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered; 17. To that above the door, even unto the inner house and without, and by all the wall round about, within and without, by measure. 18. And it was made with cherubims and palm-trees, so that a palm-tree was between a cherub and a cherub; and every cherub had two faces; 19. So that the face of a man was toward the palm-tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about. 20. From the ground unto above the door were cherubims and palm-trees made, and on the wall of the temple. 21. The posts of the temple were squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the
appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. 12. The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood; and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the Lord. 13. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 14. And the doors had two leaves apiece, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. 15. And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm-trees, like as were made upon the walls; and there were thick planks upon the face of the porch without. 16. And there were narrow windows and palm-trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side-chambers of the house, and thick planks.

Here is, 1. An account of a building that was before the separate place, before the temple, at the end toward the west, (v. 12.) which is here measured, and compared, (v. 13.) with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured, v. 15. and its galleries, or chambers, belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, v. 15. - 17. But what use was to be made of this other building, we are not told; perhaps, in this vision, it signified the setting up a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon supersede it.

2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with cherubims and palm-trees, placed alternately as in Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vi. 29. Each cherub is here said to have two faces; the face of a man toward the palm-tree on one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side, v. 19. These seem to represent the angels, who have more than the wisdom of a man, and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the palms of victory and triumph, which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints angels are in a special manner present, 1 Cor. xi. 10.

3. A description of the posts of the doors, both of the temple and of the sanctuary; they were squared, (v. 21.) not round like pillars; and the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary was more narrow than that of the temple; but here it was full as broad; for in gospel-times the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest than it had been under the Old Testament, (Heb. ix. 8.) and therefore the door is wider. These doors are described, v. 23, 24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them their doors, and they were two-leaved, folding doors.

4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an altar of wood, v. 22. No mention is made of its being overlaid with gold; but surely it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned; unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else it intimates, that the incense to be offered in the gospel-temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called a table; this is the table that is before the Lord. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do, is, to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

5. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, v. 25, 26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold or silver, or costly array, but with the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible.

CHAP. XLII.

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of, and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of. Here is, 1. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure, v. 1. - 13. And the uses for which they were designed, v. 13, 14. II. A survey of the whole compass of ground, which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it, v. 15. - 20.

1. THEN he brought me forth into the outer court, the way toward the north, and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north. 2. Before the length of a hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits. 3. Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, and over against the pavement which was for the outer court, was gallery against gallery in three stories. 4. And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit: and their doors toward the north. 5. Now, the upper chambers were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. 6. For they were in three stories, but had no pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground. 7. And the wall that was without over against the chambers, toward the outer court on the fore-part of the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits. 8. For the length of the chambers that were in the outer court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were a hundred cubits. 9. And from under these chambers was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the outer court. 10. The chambers were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. 11. And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they; and all their goings-out were both according to their fashions, and
accord to their doors. 12. And accordin to the doors of the chambers that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them. 13. Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which were before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the Lord shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; for the place is holy. 14. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the outer court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

The prophet has taken a very exact view of the temple and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the outer court, to observe the chambers that were in that square.

1. Here is a description of these chambers; which, as that which went before) seems to us very perplexed and intricate, through our unacquaintedness with the Hebrew language, and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe, in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of public worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances will not excuse us from the duties of the closet. We must not only worship in the courts of God's house, but must, both before and after our attendance there, enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read and meditate, and pray to our Father in secret; and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were many; there were three stories of them, and though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, v. 5, 6. There were many, that there might be conveniences for all such devout people as Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple night or day, Luke i. 37. In my Father's house are many mansions; in his house on earth there are so; multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet there is room.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within view of it, within reach of it, to teach us to prefer public worship before private—(The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so must we,) and to refer our private worship to the public. Our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in public, and to further us in our improvement of them as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were walks of five yards broad, (v. 4,) in which those that had odgings in these chambers might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences. For we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both; but man is made for society, and Christians for the communion of saints; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was High Priest in the second temple, that God will give him places to walk in among them that stand by, Zech. iii. 7. 11. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, v. 13, 14.

1. They were for the priests, that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business, and may not be non-residents; therefore they are called holy chambers, because they were for the use of them that ministered in holy things, during their ministration. Those that have public work for God and the souls of God's people, much in private, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their profiting may appear; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit the most holy things, those parts of the offerings which fell to their share; and there they were to eat them, and their families, in a religious manner; for the place is holy; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar; their linen garments, coats, and mantles, and other and their families, in a religious manner; for the place is holy; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

15. Now, when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about. 16. He measured the east side with the measuring-reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 17. He measured the north side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 18. He measured the south side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 19. He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 20. He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple, and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread extends; and that also is here measured, and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

1. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way five hundred reeds, (v. 16—19,) each reed above three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground
lying square, was above four miles round. Thus large were the suburbs, (as I may call them) of this mystical temple; signifying the great extent of the church in gospel-times, when all nations should be disenchanted, and the kingdom of the world made Christ’s kingdoms. Room should be made in God’s courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles that shall flow into them, as was foretold, Isa. xxviii. 18, 19. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment, when the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved, Rom. xi. 25.

2. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large. It was to make a separation, by putting a very large distance between the sanctuary and the profane place; and therefore there was a wall surrounding it, to keep off those that were uncleen, and to separate between the precious and the vile. Note, A difference is to be put between common and sacred things, between God’s name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances; and a distance to be put between our worldly and religious actions, as still to go about the worship of God with a solemn pause.

CHAP. XLIII.

The prophet having given us a view of the mystical temple, he now proceeds to shew us the Shechinah. God, as he was pleased to be deman. But it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe, in this and the next chapter, the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the Old Testament services. In the chapter we have, 1. Of session taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it, v. 1–6. 2. A promise given of the continuance of God’s presence with his people, upon condition of their return to, and continuance in, the instituted way of his worship, and their abandoning of idols and idolatry, v. 7–12. 3. A description of the altar of burnt-offerings, v. 13–17. 4. Directions given for the consecration of that altar, v. 18–27. Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses the servant of the Lord did, when the sanctuary was first set up.

1. AFTERTWARD he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: 2. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. 3. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city; and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. 4. And the glory of the Lord came into the house, by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. 5. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house. 6. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me.

After Ezekiel had patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted to a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said to him, Come up hither. He has seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but till the glory of God comes into it, it is but like the dead body he had seen in vision, (ch. xxxvii.) that had no breath, till the Spirit of life entered into them. Here therefore he sees the house filled with God’s glory.

1. He has a vision of the glory of God, (v. 2.) the glory of the God of Israel, that God who is in Heaven, and the acknowledged head of the three persons, and worship. The idols of the heathens have no glory but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel. This glory came from the way of the east, and therefore he was brought to the gate that leads toward the east, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ’s star was seen in the east, and he is that other angel, Isa. viii. 19, the Spirit of the Lord who leads. For he is the Morning Star, he is the Sun of Righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God. (1. ) The power of his word which he heard; His voice was like a noise of many waters, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of pouring streams is grateful, of a roaring sea dreadful, Rev. i. 15.—(2. ) The brightness of his appearance which he saw; The earth shined with his glory; for God is Light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none has seen or can see it. Note, That glory of God which shines in the church, shows itself by the world; as the morning star appeared for David, the brightness that was before him dispersed the clouds, Ps. xlviii. 12.

This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel here, he observed to be the same with the vision he saw, when he first received his commission, (ch. i. 4.) according to that by the river Chebar; (v. 3.) because God is the same, he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is no variableness. “It was the same” (says he) “as that which I saw when I came to destroy the city, that is, to foretell the city’s destruction;” which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to destroy it. As a judge, in God’s name, he passed a sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner when he sent him to speak words of terror, and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is, and will be, glorified. He kills, and he makes alive; he wounds, and he heals, Deut. xxxii. 39. To the same hand that destroyed we must look for deliverance; he has smitten, and he will bind up. Ovad.adem. The same hand which smote, The same hand inflicted the wound, and healed it.

2. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory, he fell upon his face, (v. 3.) as not able to bear the lustre of God’s glory, or, rather, as one willing to give him the glory of it by an humble and reverent adoration. But the spirit took him up, (v. 5.) when the glory of God was come into the house; and he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord in this same appearance departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple to his great satisfaction. See ch. x. 18, 19.—xi. 23. Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with a glory that shall prove the more lovely; and he may fill the house as he had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, and the temple of Solomon, Exod. xl. 34. 1 Kings viii. 10. Now we do not find that ever the Shechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have its accomplishment in that glory of the divine grace which shines so bright in the gospel-church, and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now with open face.
behold the glory of the Lord, in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

3. He receives instructions more immediately from the glory of the Lord; as Moses did when God had taken possession of the tabernacle; (Lev. i. 1.) I heard him speaking to me out of the house.

6. God's glory shining in the church, we must from thence expect to receive divine oracles. The man stood by me; we could not but hear the voice of God any more than to see the face of God, if such a man did not stand by on the Mediator. Or, if this was a created angel, it is observable that when God began to speak to Ezekiel, he stood by, and gave way; having no more to say. Nay, he stood by the prophet, as a learner with him; for to the principalities and powers, to the angels themselves, who desire to look into these things, is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 19. The man stood by him to conduct him thither where he might receive further discoveries, ch. xlv. 1.

7. And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places; 8. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them; they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. 10. Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. 11. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings-out thereof, and the comings-in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof; and the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. 12. This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.

God does here, in effect, renew his covenant with his people Israel, upon his retaking possession of the house, and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return, both for direction and encouragement; but it looks further, to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel-temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

10. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This con- viction is spoken to them, to make way for the con- fession designed through the Mediator; and it is a great mercy to them in their distress, if it becomes us, when he forgives, to upbraid ourselves with our unworthy conduct toward him. Let them now remember therefore,

(1.) That they had formerly defiled God's holy name, had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, v. 7. They and their kings had brought contempt on their own houses, and the whole religion to God, by their spiritual whoredom, their idolatry, and by worshipping images, which they called their kings, for so Moloch signifies; or lords, for so Baal signifies; but which were really the carcases of kings, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable as dead carcases, in their high places, set up in honour of them. They had defiled God's name, and defiled his holy name, and what were they? It was in setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men; (Isa. xxix. 13.) or, rather, setting up altars to their own devices, even to this very day. It is certain, that a more impudent affront could not be put upon the Divine Majesty. Thus they set up a separation wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them, and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their wills in opposition to his, and thrusting him out from what is his right; and see what injury they do to themselves for the nearer any come to God with their sins, the further they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it; Though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to his, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, there was but a wall between me and them, (so it is in the margin) so that it might have been expected they should have acquiesced themselves with him, and been in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourly. Note, It often proves too true, The nearer the church, the farther from God. They were, by profession, in covenant with God, and yet they had defiled the place of his throne, and of the soles of his feet, his temple, where he did both reside and reign Jerusalem is called the city of the Great King, (Ps. cxv. 1.) and his temple, Ps. cxxxii. 5. — xxviii. 3. Note, When God's ordinances are profaned, his holy name is polluted.

(2.) That, for this, God had a controversy with them in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins; Wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Note, Those that pollute God's holy name, must first be called to the full answer of it, and then to the full sentence of it. 2. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and, in order to that, to be ashamed of their iniquities; (v. 9.) "Now let them put away their whoredom; now that they have smacked so severely for it, and now that God is returning in mercy to them, and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols, and have no thoughts of doing so to drink it. They thought they felt the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of them. Let them put away their idols, those loathsome carcases of their kings, far from me; from being a provocation to me." This was reasonable counsel now that the prophet had the platform of the temple to set before them; for, (1.) If they see that platform, they will surely be ashamed of their idols; (v. 10.) when they see what mercy God has in store for them,
outstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous conduct toward him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them measure the pattern themselves; and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them; and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then, (2.) If they be ashamed of all that they have done, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct, particular account of it. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God, shall see and know more of it; and not till then, we are qualified for God's favours, when we are truly humbled for our own follies. "Show them the form of the house, let them see what a stately structure it will be, and withal show them the ordinances and laws of it." Note, With the foresights of our comforts, it is fit that we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God's house we must first be acquainted with the place, and then with the offices. We are qualified for God's favours, if we now know our duty, and may do it, and be blessed in our deed.

3. He promises that they shall be such as they should be, and then will be to them such as they would have him to be. (1.) The house of Je-
fra shall no more defile my holy mountain. This is pure gospel. The precept of the law says, You must not defile my name: the grace of the gospel says, You shall not. Thus what is required in the covenant, is promised in the covenant, Jer. xxviii. 19. (2.) Then I will dwell in the midst of them for ever; and the same again, v. 9. God secur

4. The general law of God's house is laid down, v. 12.) That, whereas formerly only the chancel, or sanctuary, was most holy, now the whole mountain of the house shall be so. The whole limit thereof, including all the courts and all the chamber of the Lord, shall be holy; and none but the Levites shall touch it, in gospel-times. (1.) The whole church shall have the privilege of the holy of holies, that of a near access to God. All believers have now, under the gospel, holiness to enter into the holiest, (Heb. x. 19.) with this advantage, that, whereas the High Priest entered in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and, wherever we are, we have through him access to the Father. (2.) The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press toward the perfection of holiness, as he who has called us is holy. All must now be most holy. Holiness becomes God's house for ever, and in gospel-times more than ever. Behold, this is the law of the house; the more we expect the protection of it, that will not submit to this law.

13. And these are the measures of the altar after the cubits: The cubit is a cubit and a hand-breath; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span: and this shall be the higher place of the altar. 14. And from the bottom upon the ground even to the lower settle shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser set-

This relates to the altar in this mystical temple, and that is mystical too; for Christ is our Altar. The Jews, after their return out of captivity, had an altar long before they had a temple; Ezra iii. 3. But this was an altar in the temple. Now here we have.

1. The measures of the altar, v. 13. It was six yards square at the top, and seven yards square at the bottom; it was four yards and a half high; it had a lower bench or shelf, here called a settle, a
I will accept you. And if God now accept our works, if our services be pleasing to him it is enough, we need no more. Those that give themselves to God, shall be accepted of God, their persons first, and then their performances, through the Mediator.

CHAPTER XIV.

In this chapter we have, I. The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince, v. 1-5. II. A reproach sent to the house of Israel for their former profanations of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future, v. 4-9. III. The degrading of those Levites that had formerly been guilty of idolatries, and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok, which had kept their integrity, v. 10-14. IV. Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests v. 15-31.

1. THEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary, which looketh toward the east, and it was shut. 2. Then said the Lord unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3. It is for the prince; the prince he shall sit in it to eat bread before the Lord: he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

The prophet is here brought to review what he had before once surveyed; for though we have often looked into the things of God, they will yet bear to be looked over again, such a copiousness there is in them. The lessons we have learned we should still repeat to ourselves. Every time we review the sacred fabric of holy things, which we have in the scriptures, we shall still find something new which we did not before take notice of. The prophet is brought a third time to the east gate, and finds it shut; which intimates that the rest of the gates were open at all times to the worshippers. But such an account is given of this gate's being shut as puts honour, 1. Upon the God of Israel. It is for the honour of him, that the gate of the inner court, at which his glory entered when he took possession of the house, was ever after kept shut, and no man was allowed to enter it, as it was the highest difference ever made between this and the other gates, that this was shut when the others were open, was intended both to perpetuate the remembrance of the solemn entrance of the glory of the Lord into the house, (which it would remain a traditional evidence of the truth of) and also to possess the minds of people with a reverence for the Divine Majesty, and with some awful thoughts of his transcendent glory: which was designed in God's charge to Moses at the bush, Put off thy shoe from off thy foot. God will have a way by himself.

2. Upon the prince of Israel, v. 3. It is an honour to him, that though he may not enter in by this gate, for no man may; yet, (1.) He shall sit in this gate to eat his share of the peace-offerings, that sacred food, before the Lord. (2.) He shall enter in by the way of the porch of that gate, by some little door or wicket, either in the gate, or adjoining to it, which is called the way of the porch. This was to signify that God puts some of his glory upon magistrates, upon the princes of his people, for he has said, Ye are gods. Some by the prince here understand the High Priest, or the sagan or second priest; and that he only was allowed to enter by this gate, for he was God's representative. Christ is...
Then brought he me the way of the north gate before the house: and I looked, and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord; and I fell upon my face.

And the Lord said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof; and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary.

And thou shalt say to the rebellions, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations.

In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations.

And ye have not kept the charge of my holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves.

Thus saith the Lord God, No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

This is much to the same purport with what we had in the beginning of ch. xlviii. As the prophet must look again upon what he had before seen, so he must be told again what he had before heard. Here, as before, he sees the house filled with the glory of the Lord, which strikes an awe upon his soul, so that his eyes fail prostrate at the sight, the humblest posture of adoration, and the expression of a holy awe; I fell upon my face, v. 4. Note, The more we see of the glory of God, the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

1. God charges the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him; (v. 5.) “Mark well, set thine heart, apply thy mind to the discovery; now make them all clear.

“Behold with thine eyes what is showed thee, particularly the entering in of the house, and every going forth of it, all the inlets and all the outlets of the sanctuary, those he must take special notice of. Note, In acquainting ourselves with divine things, we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of things themselves, as at finding the plain, practical way of conversing and complying with them, so that we may go in and out and find pasture.

2. Hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee, about the laws and ordinances of the house, which he was to instruct the people in. Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers, have need to be very diligent, careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are instructed with, nor make mistake concerning them.

II. He sends them upon an errand to the people, to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, v. 6. It is sad to think that the house of Israel should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew them; that a people in covenant with God should be rebellions against him. Who are his subjects, if the house of Israel be rebellious? But it is an instance of God's rich mercy, that, though they had been rebellious, yet, being the house of Israel, he does not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them, to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, which they have long since been pleased to kill them. The whole race of mankind is fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel; but our Lord Jesus, when he ascended on high, received gifts for men, even for the rebellions also; that, as here, the Lord God might dwell among them, Ps. lxxxviii. 18.

And thou shalt say to the rebellions, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations.

It is time for those that have continued long in sin, to reckon it long enough, and too long, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. "Let the time just suffice for us, for by this time, surely, you have surfeited upon your abominations, and are become sick of them," I Pet. iv. 3. (1.) That they had admitted those to the privileges of the sanctuary, that were not entitled to them; whereas God had said, The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death, they had not only connived at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but they themselves had permitted them. You brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh, and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary—which was a breaking of the covenant of circumcision, throwing down the hedge of their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world. Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, though they were not circumcised, the crime had not been great; but they were uncircumcised in heart too, unhumbled, unconverted, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice, they brought these with them to feast with them upon the sacrifice, because they were fond of their company, and this was one of their abominations, wherewith they polluted God's sanctuary; it was giving that which was holy unto dogs, Matt. vii. 5. Note, Those who are not much concerned for the wicked and profane to special ordinances, is a polluting of God's sanctuary, and a great provocation to him.

(2.) That they had employed these in the service of the sanctuary, who were not fit for it. Though none but priests and Levites were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all who were priests and Levites did not immediately attend on them, but chosen men of them, who were best qualified, who were most wise, serious, and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully: but, in making this choice, they had not regard to merit and qualification for the work; "You have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves, such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you immediately and cordially loved; let money be, or such as would comply with your humours, and would dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you; Thus you have not kept the charge of my holy things." Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if, to serve some secular, selfish purpose, they choose such as are unfit and unfaithful, will hereby have it laid to their door, that they have betrayed the holy things by lodging them in bad hands.

2. He must tell them their duty; (v. 9.) No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary till he has
first submitted to the laws of it.” But lest any should think that this excluded the penitent, believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is uncircumcised in heart, not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, Col. ii. 11. This circumcision of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to, and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles, witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought Greeks into the temple, Acts xxi. 28.

10. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. 11. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. 12. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up my hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13. And they shall not come near unto me to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed: 14. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. 15. But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God. 16. They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

The Master of the house, being about to set up house again, takes account of his servants the priests, and sees who are fit to be turned out of their places, and who to be kept in, and takes a course with them accordingly.

1. Those who had been treacherous are degraded and put lower. Those Levites or priests who were carried down in the stream of the ungodly and false way, whom went astray from God after their idols, (v. 10.) who had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, who ministered to them before their idols, (v. 12.) bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them, as Uriah did for Ahaz, and so caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, led them to sin, and hardened them in sin; for if the priests go astray, many will follow their pernicious ways. Perhaps in Babylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion. Now these priests who had thus prevaricated, were justly put under the marks of God’s displeasure; or if they were dead, (as it is probable that they were, if the crime were committed before the captivity,) the iniquity was visited upon their children. Or perhaps it was the whole family of Abia that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it.

8. They are sentenced to be deprived, in part, of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition of ordinary Levites. God has lifted up his hand against them, has said it, and sworn it, that they shall bear their iniquity, (v. 12.) assuredly they shall suffer for it, shall suffer disgrace for it; they shall bear their shame; (v. 13.) for though they have been charitably kept for a while, yet they shall not come near to do the office of a priest, those parts of the office that were peculiar to them, they shall not come near to any of the holy things within the sanctuary, v. 13. Note, Those who have robbed God of his honour, will justly be deprived of their honour. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to come near to God; and justly might they who have once gone away from him, and deserted his services, be so far excommunicated as to be one near to him, and put at an everlasting distance.

1. Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence. God dealeth not in severity, as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, v. 11, 14. They are deprived, but in part, of office of their office, and, it should seem, not at all at benefices of their employment. They shall help to slay the sacrifice, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar, but at the tables, ch. xl. 39. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof. Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service, may yet be fit to be employed in another; and even those who have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

2. Those who had been faithful are honoured and established, v. 15, 16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other; But the sons of Zadok, who kept their integrity in a time of general apostacy, who went not astray when others did, they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table. Note, The Lord will give such as these who have proved their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking, trying times, and will employ those in his service, who have kept close to his service, when others deserted it, and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability in duty, to be established in it. If we keep close to God, God will keep us close to him.

17. And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them while they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. 18. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat. 19. And when they go forth into the outer court, even into the outer court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them
in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments; and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. 20. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long; they shall only poll their heads. 21. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, or her that is put away; but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. 23. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause men to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister that hath no husband, they may defile themselves. 26. And after he is cleansed they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary, unto the inner court, to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin-offering, saith the Lord God. 28. And it shall be unto them for an inheritance; I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. 29. They shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30. And the first of all the first-fruit of all things, and every oblation of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's: ye shall also give unto the priest the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. 31. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

God's priests must be regulars, not seculars; and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by, and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given.

I. Concerning their clothes; they must wear linen garments, when they went in to minister, or do any service in the inner court, or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was woolen, because it would cause sweat, v. 17, 18. They must dress themselves cool, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so, because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves clean and fresh, and avoid every thing that was sweaty and filthy, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended to. Sweat came in with sin, and was a part of the curse; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. Clothes came in with sin, coats of skins did; and therefore the priests must use as little and as light clothing as possible, and not such as caused sweat. When they had finished their service, they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, (v. 19,) as before, ch. xiii. 14. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; or if smoke should proceed out of their heads, as it is explained, ch. xiii. 14. they shall approach to those things which are for the people, in their ordinary garments.

II. Concerning their hair; in that they must avoid extremes on both hands; (v. 20.) They must not shave their heads, in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they suffer their locks to grow long, as the beaux, or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must pull their heads, and keep their hair short; if a man, especially a minister, wear long hair, it is not becoming, (1 Cor. xi. 14,) it is effeminate.

III. Concerning their diet; they must be sure to drink no wine when they went in to minister, lest they should drink to excess, should drink, and for the law, v. 21. It is not for kings to drink wine, more than will do them good, much less for priests. See Lev. x. 9. Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

IV. Concerning their marriages; (v. 22.) here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been divorced, that was at least under the suspicion of immodesty, nor a widow, unless she were a priest's widow, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priests' families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in honour of their character. Their wives as well as themselves must be of good report.

V. Concerning their preaching and church-government.

1. It was part of their business to teach the people; and herein they must approve themselves both skilful and faithful; (v. 23.) They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither scrape what is lawful, nor venture upon what is unlawful; that they may not judge what is right, nor pollute themselves with what is profane. Ministers must take pains to cause people to discern between the clean and the unclean, that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

2. It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them; (Deut. xvii. 8, 9,) and in controversy they shall stand in judgment, v. 24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and, when they have passed a right judgment, shall have the courage to stand to it, and stand by it. They must judge, not according to their own fancies, or inclinations, or secular interests, but according to my judgments; that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, to the law and to the testimony, Sit liber judex—Let the judge be unbiased. Their business is to keep courts in God's name, to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go by the statute-book; They shall keep my statutes in all mine assemblies. God gives the arising and the going out of the mouth of his priests, and cause they are held in his name, to his glory. Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, are to preside in them, and in all their acts must keep
close to God's laws. Another part of their work, as church-governors, is, to hallow God's sabbaths, to do the public work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done; and to see that God's people also sanctify the Sabbath, and are not negligent to perform it.

VI. Concerning their mourning for dead relations; the rule here agrees with the law of Moses, Lev. xxvi. 1, 11. A priest shall not come near any dead body, (for they must be purified from dead works,) except of his next relations, v. 25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations, when they are removed by death, are not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a sin-offering, before they went in again to minister, v. 26, 27. Note, Though sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of sinning in it, either by excess or dissimulation; and those tears have too often need to be wept over again.

VII. Concerning their maintenance; they must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably; (v. 28.) "Ye shall give them no possession in Israel, no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life; for God has said, I am their Inheritance, and they need no other in reserve; I am their Possession, and I will give them an inheritance in the land, which I allowed them, (ch. xlvii. 10.) but their principal subsistence was by their office. What God appropriated to himself, they were the receivers of, for their own proper use and benefit; they lived upon the holy things; and so God himself was the Portion both of their inheritance and of their cup. Note, Those who have God for their Inheritance and their Possession, may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have all; and therefore may well reckon that we have enough.

Observe, 1. What the priests were to have from the people, for their maintenance and encouragement. (1.) They must have the flesh of many of the offerings, the sin-offering and trespass-offering, with the blood and their fat; and of the meat-offerings, and the meat-offerings, which they would supply them, and their Ephod and their garments. (2.) What they were to have. What we offer to God, will redound to our own advantage. (2.) They must have every dedicated, devoted thing in Israel, which was in many cases to be turned into money, and given to the priest. This is explained, v. 30. every oblation or free-will-offering, which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable; of all, of every sort of your oblations, shall be the priest's. We have the law concerning them, Lev. xxvii. (3.) They were to have the first of the dough, when it was going to the oven, as well as the first of their fruits, when they were going to the barn. God, who is the first, must have the first; and if it belong to him, his priests must have the second. (4.) We may all enjoy what we have, when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to begin the work with laying by for pious uses, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them, if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should eat that which is torn, or dead of itself, v. 21. Those that are in want of necessary food, must perhaps expect to be dispensed with in such a case. Poverty has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for, that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the people might expect from the priest for their recompense. They that are kind to a prophet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's reward, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house, (v. 30.) that God may cause it by commanding it, that the priest may cause it by praying for it; and it was part of the priest's work to bless the people in the name of the Lord, not only their congregations, but their families. Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house, to have the blessing of God upon it, and to have the blessing to rest in it; to dwell where we dwell, and to attend the entail of it upon those that shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates, is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blesses, he surely blesses, the habitation of those who thus are just, Prov. iii. 33. And ministers, by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part toward causing the blessing to rest there. Peace be to this house.

CHAP. XLV.

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet, in vision, 1. The division of the holy land: so much for the temple, and the priests that attended the service of it; (v. 1.) and the minister had his share for the altar of burnt-offering in the city; (v. 6.) so much for the prince, and the residue to the people, v. 7, 8, 11. The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people, v. 9., 12. III. The oblations, how they were to be divided in those oblations, v. 13., 17. Particularly in the beginning of the year, (v. 18., 20.) and in the passover and the feast of tabernacles, v. 21., 23. And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which, both for extent and for purity, should far exceed that of the Old Testament.

1. Moreover, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the Lord, a holy portion of the land: the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand. This shall be holy in all the borders thereof round about. 2. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3. And of this measure shall thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary and the most holy place. 4. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests, the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the Lord; and it shall be a place for their houses, and a holy place for the sanctuary. 5. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house, have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. 6. And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. 7. And a portion shall be for the prince on the one side and on the other side of the oblation of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation
of the holy portion, and before the possession of the city, from the west side westward, and from the east side eastward; and the length shall be over against one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border. 6. In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and my princes shall no more oppress my people; and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and, God having warranted them to do it, it would be an act of faith and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it. And it would be welcome news to the captives, to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that, whereas they were now but few in number, they should increase and multiply, so as to replenish it. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state after the return out of captivity, but was only foreshadowed in the Christian church, which was perfectly new, (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time,) and much enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

1. Here is the portion of land assigned to the sanctuary in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and purificies; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called (v. 1.) on obligation to the Lord; for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done with a single eye. It is a holy portion of the land, which is to be set out first as the first-fruits that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry, is an act of piety that bids as fair for perpetuity, and the benefit of posterity, as any other. This holy portion of the land was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share, and in time engross the whole land. So far the lands of the church shall extend no further; as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the statute of mortmain. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were 25,000 rods (so our translation makes it, though some make them only cubits) in length, and 10,000 in breadth; about eighty miles one way, and thirty miles another way, say some; or sixty-five miles one way, and ten miles the other way, so some. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister, were to have their dwellings in this portion of the land, that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas by the distribution of the land in Joshua's time, the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel-ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service lies, there must they live.

2. Next to the lands of the sanctuary, the city-lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained; (v. 6.) It shall be for the whole house of Israel; not appropriated, as before, to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, Neh. xi. 1. 2. The portion for the city was full as long, but only half as broad, as that for the sanctuary; for the city was enriched by trade, and therefore had the less need of lands.

3. The next allotment after the church-lands and the city-lands, is of the crown-lands, v. 7, 8. Here is no measurement of these, but they are to lie on the one side, and on the other side of the church-lands and city-lands, to intitute that the prince with his wealth and power was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share both together; others make it to be a thirteenth of the rest of the land, the other twelve being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of public affairs, he cannot have his dignity, and have abundance, that he may not be in temptation to oppress the people; which yet with many does not prevent that. But the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, My princes shall no more oppress my people; for God will make the officers peace, and the executors righteousness. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land, the princes were complained of for their exactions. But Nehemiah was one that did not do as the former governors, and yet kept a handsome court, Neh. v. 15, 16. But so much is said of the prince in this mystical holy state, to intitute that in the gospel-church magistrates should be as nursing-fathers to it, and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and the church religion has so long been subjected to the power of it, will restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more his people than theirs.

4. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people, according to their tribes, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the testimony of Israel so near them, and the throne of judgment.

9. Thus saith the Lord God, Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord God. 10. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of a homer, and the ephah the tenth part of a homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. 12. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels shall be your manch.
usages, and turn out those from employments under them, that do violence. Let them take away their exactions, ease their subjects of those taxes which they find heavy upon them, and let them observe judgment and justice according to law, as the duty of their place requires. Note, All princes, but especially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do justice; for of their people God says, They are my people, and they in a special manner rule for God.

2. That one neighbour do not cheat another in commerce; (v. 16.) Ye shall have just balances, in which to weigh both money and goods; a just ephah for dry measure for corn and flower, a just bath for the measure of liquids, wine, and oil; and the ephah and bath shall be one measure, the tenth part of a homer, or cor, v. 11. So that the ephah and bath contained (as the learned Dr. Cumberland has computed) seven wine gallons and four pints, and something more. An omer was but the tenth part of an ephah. (Exod. xvi. 36.) and the hundredth part of a chamur, or homer, and contained about six pints. The shekel is here settled; (v. 13.) it is twenty gerahs, just half a Roman ounce; in our money, 2s. 4d. and almost the eighth part of a farthing; as the aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By the shekels, the maneh, or pound, was reckoned; which, when it was set for a mere weight, (says Bishop Cumberland,) without respect to coinage, contained just 100 shekels, as appears by comparing 1 Kings xvi. 17. where it is said three manehs, or pounds, of gold went to one shield, with the parallel place, 2 Chron. ix. 16. where it is said 300 shekels of gold went to one shield. But when the maneh is set for a sum of money or coin, it contains but sixty shekels, as appears here; where twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty, shall be the maneh. But it is thus reckoned, because they had by way of mercy, with their money, twenty shekels, another twenty-five, another fifteen, all which made up one pound; as a learned writer here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to be very honest and just in all their dealings, very punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, and very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with God, and the reputation of it before men.

13. This is the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of a homoer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of a homorer of barley. 14. Concerning the ordinance of oil, the bath of oil, ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, which is a homorer of ten baths; for ten baths are a homer: 15. And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel, for a meat-offering, and for a burnt-offering; and for peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord God. 16. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17. And it shall be the prince's part to give burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings, in the feasts, and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the burnt-offerings, and the peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. 18. Thus saith the Lord God, In the first month, in the first day of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary: 19. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin-offering, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20. And so thou shalt do the seventh day of the month for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21. In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself, and for all the people of the land, a bullock for a sin-offering. 23. And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt-offering to the Lord seven bullocks and seven rams without blemish, daily the seven days; and a kid of the goats daily for a sin-offering. 24. And he shall prepare a meat-offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and a hin of oil for an ephah. 25. In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin-offering, according to the burnt-offering, and according to the meat-offering, and according to the oil.

Having laid down the rules of righteousness toward men, which is really a branch of true religion, he comes next to give some directions for their religion toward God, which is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. It is required that they offer an oblation to the Lord, out of what they have; (v. 13.) All the people of the land must give an oblation, v. 16. As God's tenants, they must pay a quitrent to their landlord: they had offered an oblation out of their real estates, (v. 1.) a holy portion of their land; now they are directed to offer an oblation out of their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as an acknowledgment of their receiving from him, their dependence on him, and their obligations to him. Note, Whatever our substance is, we must honour God with it, by giving him his dues out of it. Not that God has need of, or may be benefited by any thing that we can give him, Ps. 1. 9. No, but it is an oblation, we only offer it to him, the benefit of it returns back to ourselves, to his poor, who, as our neighbours, are ourselves, or to his ministers who serve continually for our good.

II. The proportion of this oblation is here determined, which was not done by the law of Moses. No mention is made of the tithe, but only of this oblation. The proportion of this is thus settled.

1. Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth part; out of every homorer of wheat and barley, which contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the whole, v. 13. (2.) Out of their oil, (and probably their wine too) they were to offer an hundredth part, for this oblation; out of every ephah of corn, which contained ten baths, they were to offer the tenth part of one bath, v. 14. This was given to the altar; for every meat-offering there was flour mingled with oil. (3.) Out of their flocks they were to give one lamb out of 500; that was the smallest pro
portion of all, v. 15. But it must be out of the fat pastures of Israel. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; the former were offered for the giving of glory to God, the latter for the fitching in of mercy, grace, and peace from God; and in burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, the offerings of atonement, the offerings of mourners at the throne of grace; but, in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to make reconciliation for them. Christ is our Sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we must have an eye, in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

11. This oblation must be given for the prince in Israel; the prince shall read it to the prince, and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the Prince in Israel, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hands we must put them, to be presented to the Father. Or, They shall give it with the prince; every private person shall bring his oblation, to be offered with that of the prince. For it follows, (v. 17.) It shall be the prince's part to provide all sacrifices, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. The people were to bring their oblations to him, according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by those under their charge, and that nothing be wanting that is requisite therefor; the magistrate is the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy thing when those that are above others in power and dignity, go before them in the service of God.

IV. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether required not instituted by the law of Moses: it is the annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary. (1.) On the first day of the first month, upon new-year's-day, they were to offer a sacrifice for the cleansing of the sanctuary, (v. 18.) to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year; and to implore grace for the preventing of iniquity in the year to come. They fell short of the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year. And, in token of this, the blood of this sin-offering was to be put upon the posts of the temple, the four corners, not of the altar, but the settle of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court, (v. 19.) to signify that by it atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, Levites, and people, even the sins that were found in all their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing, frequent cleansing; that above needs none. Those that worship God together, should often join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenants to be more careful for the future; for it is very reasonable to begin the year with this work; as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, 2 Chron. xxix. 17. They were here appointed to cleanse the sanctuary upon the first day of the month, because on the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the passover, an ordinance which, of all the other Old Testament institutions, had most in it of the Passover, and was the very instrument that they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight beforehand, by cleansing the sanctuary. (2.) This sacrifice was to be repeated on the seventh day of the first month, v. 20. And then it was intended to make atonement for every one that errs, and for him that is simple. Note, He that sins, errs, and is simple: he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shows himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, misadventure, or baddertvency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Sacrifices were appointed to be burnt for such sins as men were persuaded into, did before they were aware; which they would not have done, if they had known and remembered aitright, which they were overtaken in, and for which, afterward, they condemn themselves. But for presumptuous sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, Numb. xv. 30. By these repeated sacrifices ye shall reconcile the house; and will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will let it alone this year also.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed at the time appointed, v. 21. Christ is our Passover, that is sacrificed for us; we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the sword of the destroying angel, the sword of divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our passover-feast; as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of unleavened bread. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a sin-offering to be offered for himself and the people; a bullock on the first day, (v. 22.) and a kid of the goats every other day, (v. 23.) to teach us, in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great Sinoffering, by which transgression was finished, and an everlasting righteousness brought in. On every day of the feast there was to be a burnt-offering, purely for the honour of God, and no less than seven bullocks and seven rams, with their meat-offerings, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and yet no greater, v. 23, 24.

3. The feast of tabernacles; that is spoken of next, (v. 25.) and no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore often repeated, not only on the great annual day of the passover, and ever after, because they could not make the corners thereof perfect, Heb. x. 1, 3. See the necessity of our frequently repeating the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered once for all, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart, must be every day offered, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and keep to it.

CHAP. XLVI.

In this chapter, we have, I. Some further rules given both to the priests and to the people, relating to their worship, v. 1-15. II. A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, v. 16-18. III. A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices, and the baking of the meat-offerings, v. 19-24.

1. Thus saith the Lord God, The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new moon it shall be opened. 2. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate,
the priest shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate; then he shall go forth; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. 3. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the Lord, in the sabbaths, and in the new moons. 4. And the burnt-offering that the prince shall offer unto the Lord in the sabbath-day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. 5. And the meat-offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat-offering for the lambs as he shall be able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 6. And in the day of the new moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. 7. And he shall prepare a meat-offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram; and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 8. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. 9. But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. 10. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth: 11. And in the feasts, and in the solemnities, the meat-offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram; and to the lambs as he is able to give, and a hin of oil to an ephah. 12. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering or peace-offerings voluntarily unto the Lord, one shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt-offering and his peace-offerings as he did on the sabbath-day; then he shall go forth: and after his going forth one shall shut the gate. 13. Thon shall daily prepare a burnt-offering unto the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish; thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14. And thou shalt prepare a meat-offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of a hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat-offering continually, by a perpetual ordinance, unto the Lord. 15. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat-offering, and the oil, every morning, for a continual burnt-offering.

Whether the rules for public worship, here laid down, were designed to be observed, even in those things which were peculiar to the Jewish church, and were so observed under the second temple, is not certain; we find not in the history of that latter part of the Jewish church, that they governed themselves in their worship by these ordinances, as one would think they should have done, but only by the law of Moses, looking upon this then in the next age after as mystical, and not literal.

We may remark, in the law of Moses, 1. That the place of worship was fixed, and rules given concerning that, both to prince and people. 1. The east gate, which was kept shut at other times, was to be opened on the sabbath-days, in the new moons, (v. 1) and whenever the prince offered a voluntary offering, v. 12. Of the keeping of this gate ordinarily shut we read before; (ch. xlii. 2) whereas the other gates of the court were opened every day, it was opened only on high days, and on special occasions, when it was opened for the prince, who was to go in by the way of the porch of that gate, v. 2, 8. Some think he went in with the priests and Levites into the inner court, (for into that court this gate was the entrance,) and they observe that magistrates and ministers should join forces, and go the same way, in hand in hand, in procession the whole length of the court. But it should rather seem that he did not go through the gate, (as the glory of the Lord had done,) though it was open, but he went by the way of the porch of the gate, stood at the post of the gate, and worshipped at the threshold of the gate, (v. 2.) where he had a full view of the priests' performances at the altar, and signified his concurrence in them, for himself, and for the people of the land, that stood behind and at the door of that gate, v. 3. Thus must every prince show himself to be of David's mind, who would very willingly be a door-keeper in the house of his God, and, as the word there is, lie at the threshold, Ps. liii. 10. Note, The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God. Even princes themselves, when they draw near to God, must worship with reverence and godly fear; and that even they are unworthy to approach him. But Christ is our Prince, whom God causes to draw near and approach to him, Jer. xxx. 21. 2. As to the north gate and south gate, by which they entered into the court of the people, (not into the inner court,) there was this rule given, that whoever came in at the north gate should go out at the south gate, and whoever came in at the south gate should go out at the north gate, v. 9. Some think this was to prevent thrusting and justling one another; for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. We may suppose that they came in at the gate that was next their own houses, but that when they went away, God would have them go out at that gate which would lead them the furthest way about, that they might have time for meditation; being thereby obliged to go a great way round the sanctuary, they might have an opportunity to consider the holiness of it, and, if they improved their time well in fetching this circuit, they would call it the next way home. Some observe that this may remind us, in the service of God, to be still pressing forward, (Phil. iii. 13.) and not to look back; and, in our attendance upon ordinances, not to go back as we came, but more holy, and heavenly, and spiritual.

3. It is appointed that the people shall worship at the door of the east gate, where the prince does, he at the head and they attending him, both in the tabernacle, and in the temple, and in the New temple, and in the New temple, and in the New temple. But Christ is our Prince, whom God causes to draw near and approach to him, Jer. xxx. 21.
baths and in the new moons, (v. 3) and that, when they come in, and go out, the prince shall be in the midst of them, v. 10. Note, Great men should by their constant and reverent attendance on God in public worship, give a good example to their inferiors, both engaging them and encouraging them to do likewise. It is a very graceful, becoming thing for persons of quality to go to church with their servants, and tenants, and poor neighbours about them, and to behave themselves there with an air of seriousness and devotion; and those who thus honour God with their honour, he will not only hear them, but be pleased with them.

10. To those that ministered sacrifices were fixed. Though the prince is supposed himself to be a very hearty, zealous friend to the sanctuary, yet it is not left to him, nor, not in concert with the priests, to appoint what sacrifices shall be offered, but God himself appoints them: for it is his prerogative to institute the rites and ceremonies of religious worship. 1. Every morning, as duly as the morning-came, they must offer a lamb for a burnt-offering, v. 13. It is strange that no mention is made of the evening sacrifice; but Christ being come, and having offered himself now in the end of the world, (Heb. ix. 26.) we are to look upon him as the Evening Sacrifice, about the time of the offering up of which he died. 

2. On the sabbath-days, whereas the law of Moses, for the princes to be of the burnt-offering, (Num. xxviii. 2.) it is here appointed, that (at the prince's charge) there shall be six lambs offered, and a ram besides, (v. 4.) to intimate how much we should abound in sabbath-work, now in gospel-time, and what plenty of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise we should offer up to God on that day; and it with such sacrifices God is well pleased, surely we have a great deal of reason to be so. The sabbath offering in the beginning of their months, there was, over and above the usual sabbath-sacrifices, the additional offering of a young bullock, v. 6. Those who do much for God and their souls, stately and constantly, must yet, upon some occasions, do yet more.

4. All the sacrifices were to be without blemish; so Christ, the great Sacrifice, was, (1 Pet. i. 19.) and such are those who are to present themselves to God as living sacrifices, should aim and endeavour to be, blameless, and harmless, and without rebuke.

5. All the sacrifices were to have their meat-offerings annexed to them; for so the law of Moses had appointed, to show what a good table God keeps in his house, and that we ought to honour him with the fruit of our ground as well as with the fruit of our cattle, because in both he has blessed us, Deut. xxviii. 4. In the beginning, Cain offered the one, and Abel the other. Some observe, that the meat-offerings here are much larger in proportion than they were by the law of Moses. Then it was three tenth-deals to a bullock, and two to a ram, (so many tenth parts of an ephah,) and half a hin of oil at the most; (Num. xvi. 6.–9.) but here, for every bullock and lamb, a bullock, and a lamb, and a bullock, an ephah of flour, and a hin of oil, v. 7. These unbloody sacrifices shall be more aboundéd in; or, in general, it intimates, that as now, under the gospel, God abounds in the gifts of his grace to us, more than under the law, so we should abound in the returns of praise and duty to him. But it is observable that in the meat-offering for the lambs, the prince is allowed to offer as he shall choose, (v. 5, 7, 11.) as his hand and heart shall attach unto. Note, Princes themselves must spend as they can afford; and even in that which is laid out in works of piety, God expects and requires that we should do according to our ability; every man as God has prospered him, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. God has not made us to serve with an offering, (Isa. xliii. 25.) but considers our frame and state. Yet this will not countenance those who pretend a disability that is not real, or those who by their extravagances in other things disable themselves to do the good they should. And we find those praised, who, in an extraordinary case of charity, went not only to their power, but beyond their power.

16. Thus saith the Lord God, If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall he his sons'; it shall be their possession by inheritance. 17. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons' for them. 18. Moreover, the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance by oppression, to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession; that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

We have here a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown-lands. If he have a son that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he please, as a token of his favour, and in recompence for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever, (v. 16.) provided it do not go out of the family: there may be a case for parents, when their children are grown up, to be more kind to one than another, as Jacob gave to Joseph one portion above his brethren, Gen. xlv. 23. 2. Yet if he have a servant that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, v. 17. But if he see cause, he may give him lands to the year of Jubilee, and then they must return to the family again, v. 17. The servant might have the rents, issues, and profits, for such a term, but the inheritance, the Jon profitterarum—The right of proprietorship, shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit that a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that, John viii. 35. The servant abides not in the house for ever, as the son does.

3. What estates he gives his children, must be of his own; (v. 18.) He shall not take of the people's inheritance, under pretence of having many children, and providing for them: if he will, let him find means to forgo his estates, or to force them to sell them, and so thrust his subjects out of their possession; but let him and his sons be content with their own. It is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown, by encroaching upon the rights and properties of his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will not but a poor prince. when the people are scattered every man from his possession, when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression, choosing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, be it ever so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is, in the best manner, at their service: for the more they can gain their affections, by protecting their rights, than to gain their estates by invading them.

19. After he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and behold, there was a place on the two sides westward. 20. Then said he unto me, This is the place where the
priests shall boil the trespass-offering and the sin-offering, where they shall bake the meat-offering; that they bear them not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people. 21. Then he brought me forth into the outer court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and, behold, in every corner of the court there were a court. 22. In the four corners of the court there were courts joined of forty cubits long, and thirty broad: these four corners were of one measure. 23. And there was a new building round about in them, round about them four, and it was made with boiling-places under the rows round about. 24. Then said he unto me, These are the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

We have here a further discovery of buildings about the temple, which we did not observe before, and those were places to boil the flesh of the offering.

v. 20. That he kept such a plentiful table at his altar, needed large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniences of that kind. Observe,

1. Where those boiling-places were situated. There were some at the entry into the inner court, (v. 19.) and others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, v. 21.—23. These are the places, where, it is likely, there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost. Pity that holy ground should be waste ground.

2. What use they were put to. In those places they were to boil the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering, those parts of them which were allotted to the priests, and which were more sacred than the flesh of the peace-offerings, of which the offerers also had a share. There also they were to bake the meat-offering, their share of it, which they had from the altar for their own tables, v. 20. Care was taken that they bare them not out into the outer court, to sanctify the people. Let them not pretend to sanctify the people with this holy flesh, and so impose upon them; or let not the people imagine that by touching those sacred things they were sanctified, and made ever the better, or more acceptable to God. It should seem from Hagg. ii. 12. that there were those who had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitions vanities.

CHAP. XLVII.

In this chapter, we have, I. The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtues; the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the fishers bringing forth of those waters, the banks of them, v. 1.—12. II. An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the strangers that sojourned among them, v. 13.—23.

1. AFTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the front of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. 2. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 3. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. 4. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through: the waters were to the loins. 5. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. 6. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. 7. Now, when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea; which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 9. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live; and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. 10. And it shall come to pass, that the fisheries shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11. But the midst places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed: they shall be given to salt. 12. And by the river, upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning, that from thence we conclude the other parts of his vision have a mystical and spiritual meaning also; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, the keeping of the temple clean, and the carrying off of those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy, Zech. xiv. 8. may explain it, of living waters, that shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea. And there is plainly a reference to this in St.
John's vision of a pure river of water of life, Rev. xxii. 1. That seems to represent the glory and joy, which is grace perfected. This here seems to represent the grace and joy, which is glory begun. Most interpreters agree, that these waters signify the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the Holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which spread itself far, and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not all at once, but by degrees. Now observe, 1. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but he is told there, v. 1. (r. 1.) Waters issued out from the threshold of the house eastward, and from under the right side of the house, the south side of the altar. And again, v. 2. There ran out waters on the right side; signifying, that from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa. ii. 3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and ended their preparation for the work of the gospel, that it might refresh these waters to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand, and preach the words of this life, Acts x. 20. They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must begin at Jerusalem. Luke xiv. 24. But that is not all; Christ is the temple, he is the Door, from him these living waters flow, out of his chest into his house, Ps. cxiii. 5. Some observe that they came forth on the right side of the house, to intimate that gospel-blessings are right-hand blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at Wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie at the threshold of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountain-head of comfort and grace; the very entrance into God's word gives light and life, Ps. i. 1. as the gate of the river of Zion. All my springs are in thee, Ps. lxxvii. 7. They came from the side of the altar, for it is in and by Jesus Christ, the great Altar, (who sanctifies our gifts to God,) that God has blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy, heavenly places. From God as the Fountain, in him as the Channel, flows the river, which makes glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High, Ps. xlv. 4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth; here the streams of our comfort arise from under the threshold; there they proceed from the throne, the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxi. 1. The prophet gives the outline of these waters. They went forth eastward, (v. 3.) toward the east country, (v. 8.) for so they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it ran down from the holy mountains, and when they had followed it about a thousand cubits, they went over across it, to try the depth of it, and it was to the ankles, v. 3. Then they walked along on the bank of the river on the other side, a thousand cubits more, and then, to try the depth of it, they waded through it the second time, and it was up to their knees, v. 4. They walked along by it a thousand cubits more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle; the waters were to the loins. They then walked a thousand cubits further, and attempted to repass it the fourth time, but found it impracticable; the waters were risen, by the addition either of brooks that fell into it above ground, or by springs under ground, so that they were waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over, v. 5. Note, (1.) The waters of the sanctuary are running waters, as those of a river, not standing waters, as those of a pond. The gospel, when it was first preached, the world observe the process of the work; the soul is still pressing forward; it is an active principle, plus ultra—onward still, till it comes to perfection. (2.) They are increasing waters. This river, as it runs constantly, so, the farther it goes, the fuller it grows. The gospel-church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook; but by degrees it came forth to the ankles, to the knees, many, many cubits, and the bolder people added to it daily, till the whole country was watered, and the seed grew up to a great tree. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised, and grace, where it is true, is growing like the light of the morning, which shines more and more to the perfect day. (3.) It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the gospel in the world, observe the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit, and walk after them, under a divine guidance, as Ezekiel here did. (4.) It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them; not only to look on the surface of these waters, but to go to the bottom of them as far as we can; to be often digging, often diving, into the mysteries of the kingdom, to observe and examine those matters, who covet to be intimately acquainted with these things. (5.) If we search into the things of God, we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ankles; others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees, or the loins; and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate into, grace can do for, but despairs of. To find the bottom, must, as St. Paul, sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, Rom. xi. 33. It has been often said, that in the scripture, like these waters of the sanctuary, there are some places so shallow, that a lamb may wade through them, and others so deep, that an elephant may swim in them. And it is our wisdom, as the prophet here, to begin with that which is shallow, and then to advance, and to wash with those things before we proceed to that which is dark and hard to be understood; it is good to take our work before us.

3. The extent of this river; It issues toward the east country, but from thence it either divides itself into several streams, or fetches a compass, so that it may flow down to the desert, and so goes into the sea, either into the Dead sea, which lay south-east, or the sea of Tiberias, which lay north-east, or the Great sea, which lay west, v. 8. This was accomplished when the gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, (Acts vii. 1.) and afterward the nations about; may, and those that lay most remote, even in the edge of this sea, were brought into the kingdom, and washed with those things before we proceed to that which is dark and hard to be understood; it is good to take our work before us.

4. The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary, wherever they come and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Blessing brought waters were filled and supplied at the lake of Sodom, that standing monument of divine vengeance, even those waters shall be healed, (v. 8.) shall become sweet, and pleasant, and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the gospel would make, wheresover it came in its power; as great a change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the-
Dead sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love, and those that were dead in trespasses and sins, were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The gospel was as that salt which Elisha cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho, with which he healed them. 2 Kings ii. 20, 21. Christ coming into the world to be his Physician, sent his gospel as the great medicine, the Pourn- pharmacie; there is in it a remedy for every malady, whether the rivers come, they make things to live. (v. 9.) both plants and animals; they are the water of life. Rev. xxii. 1, 17. Christ came, that we may have life, and for that end sends his gospel; every thing shall live whither the river comes. The grace of God makes dead sinners alive, and living saints lively; every thing is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is according as it is received, and as the mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for, (v. 11.) with respect to the marshes and miry places thereof, that are set in the midst of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed or settled in the moisture of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, they shall not be healed; the same gospel which to others is a savour of life unto life, shall to them be a savour of death unto death, which they shall be given to salt, to perpetual barrenness. Deut. xxxix. 23. They that will not be watered with the grace of God, and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts' lusts, and left for ever unfruitful. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Never fruit grow on thee more for ever. They shall be given to salt, to be monuments of divine justice, as Lot's wife, that was turned into a pillar of salt, to sea-coast others.

5. The great plenty of fish that should be in this river; every living, moving thing shall be found here, shall live here, (v. 9.) shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly, so that there shall be a very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. There shall be as great plenty of the river-fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there is of salt-water fish, v. 10. There shall be great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes in the rising generations, and the dew of their youth. In the creation, the waters brought forth the fish abundantly, (Gen. i. 20, 21.) and they still live in and by the waters that produced them; so believers are begotten by the word of God (1 Pet. i. 23.) that river of God, by it they live, from it they have their sanctuary and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish upon dry ground; so David was, when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance, thither will thefishers flock, and there they will cast their nets; and therefore, to increase the replenishing of these waters, and their being made every way useful, it is here foretold that thefishers shall stand upon the banks of this river, from En-gedi, which lies on the border of the Dead sea, to Eir-galaim, another city, which joins to that sea, and all along shall spread their nets. The Dead sea, which before was shunned as noisome and noxious, shall be frequented; gospel-grace marks the barren places which were waste; these shall be fruitful and good for nothing, to become serviceable to God and man.

6. The trees that were on the banks of this river; many trees on the one side and on the other (v. 7.) made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye; the shelter of these trees also would be a convenience to the fishery. But that is not all; (v. 13.) they are trees for meat, and the fruit of them shall not be consumed, for it shall produce fresh fruit every month. The leaf shall be for medicine, and it shall not fade. This part of the vision is copied out into St. John's vision very exactly, (Rev. xxi. 2.) where, on either side of the river, is said to grow the tree of life, which yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations. Christians are supposed to be these trees; ministers especially; trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord (Isa. li. 3.) set by the rivers of water, the waters of the sanctuary, (Ps. i. 3.) grafted into Christ the Tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, rooted in him, Col. ii. 7. There is a great variety of these trees, through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued by that one Spirit who works all in all. They grow on the bank of the river, for they keep close to holy ordinances, through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are fruit-trees, designed, as the fig-tree and the olive, with their fruits to honour God and man. Judg. ix. 9. The fruit thereof shall be for meat, for the lips of the righteous feed many. The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees are for medicine, for bruises and sores, margin. Great care is taken here, as their fruits, do good to those about them, they strengthen the weak, and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerful and do good like a medicine, not only to themselves, but to others also. They shall be enabled by the grace of God to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; their leaf shall not fade, or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life at their root but sap in all their branches; their profession shall not wither, (Ps. i. 3.) neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. Ps. xxxii. 14, 15. Or, The reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, fruit to life eternal; that is indeed fruit which shall not be consumed. They bring new fruit according to their months, some in one month, and others in another; so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or, Each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which denotes an abundant disposition to fruit-bearing; they shall never be very fruitful, but shall constantly bring forth fruit, so that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; it is not to be ascribed to any thing in themselves, but to the continual supplies of divine grace, with which they were watered every moment; (Isa. xxvii. 3.) for whoever planted them, it was that which gave the increase.

13. Thus saith the Lord God, This shall be the border whereby ye shall inherit the land, according to the twelve tribes of Israel; Joseph shall have two portions. 14. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another; concerning the which I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers; and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. 15. And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad; 16. Hamath, Bernothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the bor-
order of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. 17. And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side. 18. And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side. 19. And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward. 20. The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side. 21. So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel. 22. And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord God.

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state; from the city to the country.

1. The land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance; (v. 14.) I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers, promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Though the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God has not forgotten his oath which he swore to their fathers. Though God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be ever mindful of his covenant. I lifted up mine hand to give it, and therefore it shall without fail fall to you for an inheritance. Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what God who cannot lie has promised.

2. It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it are fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours, and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan, when Joshua was to put the people in possession of it, Num. xxxiv. 1, &c. That begins with the salt sea in the south, goes round and ends there. This begins with Hamath about Damascus in the north, and so goes round and ends there, v. 20. Note, It is God that appoints the bounds of our habitation; and his Israel shall always have cause to say that the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places. The lake of Sodom is here called the east sea, for, it being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a salt sea, as it was in Numbers.

3. It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes, to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that; (v. 13, 21.) Ye shall inherit it one as well as another, v. 14. The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another. As the tribes returned out of Babylon, this seems unequal, because some tribes were much more numerous than the other, and indeed the most were of Judah and Benjamin, and very few of the other ten tribes; but as the twelve tribes stand, in type and vision, for the gospel-church, the Israel of God, it was very equal, because each tribe in the vision had an equal number of each of the twelve tribes sealed for the living God, just 12,000 of each, Rev. vii. 5, &c. And to these sealed ones these allotments did belong. It intimates likewise that all the subjects of Christ's kingdom have obtained like precious faith. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are all alike welcome to Christ, and made partakers of him.

4. The strangers which sojourn among them, which shall beget children, and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, shall have inheritance among the tribes, as if they had been native Israelites, (v. 22, 23.) which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would be the same thing in the kingdom of heaven; not those only of their own nation and religion, but those, whoever they were, that had an opportunity of shewing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come and settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the Divine Majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel-times, when the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both put upon a level before God, both made one in Christ, in whom there is no difference, Rom. x. 12. This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that better country, (Heb. xi. 16.) in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, Isa. xvi. 5.

CHAP. XLVIII.

In this chapter, we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter. 1. The portions of the twelve tribes, seven to the north of the sanctuary, (v. 1, 2.) and six to the south, v. 23, 29. II. The allotment of land for the sanctuary, and the priests, (v. 8, 11.) for the Levites, (v. 12, 14.) for the city, (v. 15, 20.) and for the princes, v. 21, 22. Much of this we had before, ch. xlv. 1, 2. A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it, (v. 30, 33.) which seals up and concludes the vision and prophecy of this book.

1. Now these are the names of the tribes.

From the north end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus northward, to the coast of Hamath, (for these are his sides east and west,) a portion for Dan. 2. And by the border of Dan, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Asher. 3. And by the border of Asher, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Naphtali. 4. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Manasseh. 5. And by the border of Manassseh, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Ephraim. 6. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east side even unto the west side, a portion for Reuben. 7. And by the border of Reuben, from the east side unto the west side, a portion for Judah. 8. And
by the border of Judah, from the east side unto the west side, shall be the offering which they shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east side unto the west side: and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. 9. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the Lord shall be of five and twenty thousand in breadth, and of ten thousand in breadth. 10. And for them, even for the priests, shall be this holy oblation; toward the north five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length: and the sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the midst thereof. 11. It shall be for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray. 12. And this oblation of the land that is offered shall be unto them a thing most holy, by the border of the Levites. 13. And over against the border of the priests the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length shall be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. 14. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the Lord. 15. And the five thousand that are left in the breadth, over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs; and the city shall be in the midst thereof. 16. And these shall be the measures thereof; the north side four thousand and five hundred, and the south side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east side four thousand and five hundred, and on the west side four thousand and five hundred. 17. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. 18. And the residue in length, over against the oblation of the holy portion, shall be ten thousand eastward, and ten thousand westward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion; and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19. And they that serve the city shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20. All the oblation shall be five and twenty thousand by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation four-square, with the possession of the city. 21. And the residue shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city over against the five and twenty thousand of the oblation toward the east border, and westward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west border, over against the portions for the prince: and it shall be the holy oblation; and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof. 22. Moreover, from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city being in the midst of that which is the prince's, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. 23. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east side unto the west side, Benjamin shall have a portion. 24. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east side unto the west side, Simeon shall have a portion. 25. And by the border of Simeon, from the east side unto the west side, Issachar a portion. 26. And by the border of Issachar, from the east side unto the west side, Zebulun a portion. 27. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east side unto the west side, Gad a portion. 28. And by the border of Gad, at the south side southward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward the great sea. 29. This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, saith the Lord God.

We have here a very short and ready way taken for the dividing of the land among the twelve tribes, not so tedious and so far about as the way that was taken in the time of Joshua. The distribution of spiritual and heavenly blessings there is not that danger of murmuring and quarrelling that there is in the participation of temporal blessings. When God gave to the labourers every one his penny, those that were uneasy at it, were soon put to silence with, May I not do what I will with my own? And such is the equal distribution here among the tribes. In this distribution of the land, we may observe, 1. That it differs very much from the division of it in Joshua's time, and agrees not with the order of their birth, or their blessing by Jacob or Moses. Simeon here is not divided in Jacob, nor is Zebulun a haven of ships; a plain intimation that it is not so much to be understood literally as spiritually; though the mystery of it is very much hidden from us. In good-times old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. The Israel of God is cast into a new method. 2. That the tribe of Dan, which was last provided for in the first division of Canaan, (Josh. xix. 40,) is first provided for here, v. 1. Thus in the gospel, the last shall be first, Matth. xix. 30. God, in the dispensations of his grace, does not follow the same method that he does in the disposals of his providence. But Dan had now his portion thebeads where he had only one city before, northward, on the border of Damascus, and furthest of all from the sanctuary, because that tribe had revoluted to idolatry.
3. That all the ten tribes, which were carried away by the king of Assyria, as well as the two tribes, which were long after carried to Babylon, have their allotment in this visionary land: which some think had its accomplishment in the particular persons and families of those tribes which returned with Judah and Benjamin, of which we find many instances in Ezra and Nehemiah: it is probable that there were several instances of this in the history of the church, though not recorded at several times, which are not recorded; and the Jews having Galilee, and other parts, that had been the possessions of the ten tribes, put into their hands, in common with them, they enjoyed them. Grotius says, if the ten tribes had repented, and returned to God, as the chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin did, and the priests and Levites, (Ezra i. 5.) they should have tared as those two tribes did, but they forfeited the benefit of this glorious prophecy by sin. However, we believe it has its designed accomplishment in the establishment and enlargement of the gospel-church, and the happy settlement of all those who are Israelites indeed, in the sure and sweet enjoyment of the privileges of the new covenant, in which there is enough for all, and enough for all.

4. That every tribe in this visionary distribution had its particular lot assigned it by a divine appointment; for it was never the intention of the gospel to pluck up the hedge of property, and lay all in common; it was in a way of charity, not of legal right, that the first Christians had all things common; (Acts ii. 44.) many precepts of the gospel supported and confirmed this, which every man should know of his own. And we must not only acknowledge, but acquiesce in the hand of God, appointing us our lot, and be well pleased with it, believing it fittest for us.

He shall choose our inheritance for us, Ps. lxxvi. 4.

5. That the tribes lay contiguous; by the border of one tribe was the portion of another, all in a row, in exact order, so that, like stones in an arch, they fixed, and strengthened, and wedged in, one another. Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together! It was a figure of the communion of churches and saints under the gospel-government; thus though they are many, yet they are one, and should hold together in holy love and mutual assistance.

7. That the sanctuary was in the midst of them; there were seven tribes to the north of it, and the Levites, the prince’s and the city’s portion, with that of five tribes more, to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be, in the heart of the kingdom, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other, would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish or congregation, though dispersed, and having no occasion otherwise to know each other, yet by meeting stately to worship God together should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

8. That where the sanctuary was, the priests were: For them, even for the priests, shall this holy oblation be, v. 10. As, on the one hand, this speaks of reward to ministers, that which is given for their support and maintenance is reckoned a holy oblation to the Lord, so it speaks their duty, which is, that since they are appointed and maintained for the service of the sanctuary, they ought to attend continually to this very thing; to reside on their curtes. Those that live upon the altar must serve at the altar, not take the wages to themselves, and devote the work upon others; but how can they serve the altar, his altar they live upon, if they do not live near it?

9. Those priests had the priests’ share of these lands, that had approved themselves faithful to God in times of trials, (v. 1.) It shall be the priests of Zadok, who, it seems, had signalized themselves in some critical juncture, and went not astray when the children of Israel, and the other Levites, went astray. God will put honour upon them, and has special favours in reserve for them, who keep their integrity in times of general apostasy. They are swimming upward, and so they will find at last, that are swimming against the stream.

10. The land which was appropriated to the ministers of the sanctuary, might by no means be alienated. It was in the nature of the first-fruits of the land, and was therefore holy to the Lord; and though the priests and Levites had both the use of it, and the inheritance of it to them and their heirs, yet they might not sell it, or exchange it, v. 14. It is a privilege to convert that to other uses, which is dedicated to God.

11. The land allotted for the city and its suburbs is called a profane place, (v. 15.) or common; but that the city was a holy city above other cities, for the Lord was there, but, in comparison with the sanctuary, it was a profane place. Yet it is too often true in the worst sense, that great cities, even though they be inhabited by the name, and have worship performed in them, are profane places, and it ought to be sadly lamented. It was the complaint of old, From Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land, Jer. xxiii. 15.

12. The city is made to be exactly four-square, and the suburbs extending themselves equally on all sides, as the Levites' cities did in the first division of the land, (v. 16. 17.) which never being literally fulfilled in any city, intimates that it is to be understood spiritually of the beauty and stability of the gospel-church, that city of the living God, which is formed according to the wisdom and counsel of God, and is made firm and immovable by his promise.

13. Whereas, before, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were principally of Judah and Benjamin, in whose tribe it lay, now, the head city lies not in the particular lot of any of the tribes, but they that serve the city, and bear office in it, shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel, v. 19. The most eminent men must be picked out of all the tribes of Israel, for the service of the city, because many eyes were upon it, and there was great resort to it from all parts of the nation, and from other nations. They that live in the city are said to serve the city, for, wherever we are, we must study to be serviceable to the place, some way or other, according as our capacity is. They must not come out of the tribes of Israel to serve the city, to take their ease, and enjoy their pleasures, but to serve the city, to do all the good they can there, and in so doing they would have a good influence upon the whole.

14. Care was taken that those who applied themselves to public business in the city, as well as in the sanctuary, should have an honourable, comfortable maintenance: lands are appointed, the increase whereof shall be food unto them that serve the city, v. 18. Who goes a warfare at his own charges? Magistrates, that attend the service of the state, as is as ministerial, that attend the service of the church, should have all due encouragement and support in so doing; and for this cause they we tribute also.

15. The prince had a lot for himself, suited to...
or the geometrical cubic, which, for better expediency, is supposed to be mostly used in surveying lands, which, some say, contained six cubits above three cubic and a half, so making 1600 cubits the same with 1600 paces, that is, an English mile. But our being left at this uncertainty, is an intimation that these things are to be understood spiritually, and that what is principally meant, is, that there is an exact and just proportion observed by Infinite Wisdom in modelling the gospel-church, much though we cannot discern, we shall when we come to heaven.

2. The number of its gates. It had twelve gates in all, three on each side; which was very agreeable when it lay four-square; and these twelve gates inscribed to the twelve tribes. Because the city was to be served out of all the tribes of Israel, (v. 19.) it was fit that each tribe should have its gate; and Levi being here taken in, to keep to the number twelve, Ephraim and Manasseh are made one in Joseph, v. 32. On the north side were the gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, v. 31. On the east, the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, v. 32. On the south, the gates of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, v. 33. And on the west, the gates of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, v. 34. And in St. John's vision, the new Jerusalem (for so the holy city is called there, though not here) has twelve gates, three of a side, and on them are written the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, Rev. xxi. 13, 12. Note, Into the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant, there is a free access by faith for all that come of every tribe, from every quarter. Christ has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Whoever will may come, and take of the water of life, of the tree of life, freely.

3. The name given to this city; From that day, when it shall be new-erected according to this model, the name of it shall be, not as before, Jerusalem—the vision of peace, but, which is the original of that, and more than equivalent to it, Jehovah Shammah—The Lord is there, v. 35. This intimated,

(1.) That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and his residence among them, both in his ordinances and in his providences; they should have no occasion to ask, as their fathers did, Is the Lord among us, or is he not? For they shall see, and know, that he is there, and shall wonder that, though their troubles were many and threatening, they were like the bush, which burned, but was not consumed, because the Lord was there. But when God departed from their temple, when he said, Miseranus hine—Let us go hence, their house was soon left unto them desolate. Being no longer his, it was not much longer theirs.

(2.) That the gospel-church should likewise have the presence of God in it, though not in the Shechinah, as of old, yet in a token of no less sure, than of his Spirit. Where the gospel is faithfully preached, gospel-ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, The Lord is there; for faithful is he that has said it, and he will be as good as his word. 

1. I have heard, says the prophet, even unto the end of the world. The Lord is there in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there; and then whether else shall we have to fear or to despair? Nay, it is the gospel-church that the Lord is there in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for. This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for the Lord is there; and then whether else shall we have to fear or to despair? 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(3.) That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this, that the Lord is there. St. John’s representation of that blessed state does indeed far exceed this, in many respects. That is all gold, and pearls, and precious stones; it is much larger than this, and much brighter, for it needs not the light of the sun. But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss, they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be, that God himself shall be with them, (Rev. xxii. 3.) that he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them, Rev. vii. 15. And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that the Lord is there. Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to ourselves a place in that city, that we may be for ever with the Lord.
AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET DANIEL.

THE book of Ezekiel left the affairs of Jerusalem under a doleful aspect, all in ruins, but with a joyful prospect of all in glory again. This of Daniel truly follows. Ezekiel told us what was seen, and what was foreseen, by him in the former years of the captivity: Daniel tells us what was seen, and foreseen, in the latter years of the captivity: when God employs different hands, yet it is about the same work. And it was a comfort to the poor captives, that they had first one prophet among them and then another, to show them how long, and a sign that God had not quite cast them off. Let us inquire,

I. Concerning this prophet; his Hebrew name was Daniel, which signifies the judgment of God; his Chaldee name was Beltschazzar. He was of the tribe of Judah, and, as it should seem, of the royal family; he was betimes eminent for wisdom and piety. Ezekiel, his contemporary, but much his senior, speaks of him as an oracle, when thus he upbraids the king of Tyre with his conceitedness of himself: Thou art wiser than Daniel, Ezek. xxviii. 3. He is likewise there celebrated for success in prayer, when Noah, Daniel, and Job are reckoned as three men that had the greatest interest in heaven of any other, Ezek. xiv. 14. He began betimes to be famous, and continued long so. Some of the Jewish Rabbins are loath to acknowledge him to be a prophet of the higher form, and therefore rank his book among the Hagiographa, not among the prophesies, and would not have their disciples pay much regard to it. One reason they pretend is, because he did not live such a mean, mortified life as Jeremiah and some other of the prophets did, but lived like a prince, and was a prime minister of state; whereas we find him persecuted as other prophets were, (ch. vi.) and mortifying himself as other prophets did, when he ate no pleasant bread, (ch. x. 3.) and fasting and sick when he was under the power of the Spirit of prophecy, ch. viii. 27. Another reason they pretend is, because he wrote his book in a heathen country, and there had his visions, and not in the land of Israel; but, by the same reason, Ezekiel also must be expunged out of the roll of prophets. But the true reason is, he speaks so plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming, that the Jews cannot avoid the conviction of it, and therefore do not care to hear of it. But Josephus calls him one of the greatest of the prophets, nay, the angel Gabriel calls him a man greatly beloved. He lived long an active life in the courts and councils of some of the greatest monarchs the world ever had, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius; for we mistake if we confine the privilege of an intercourse with heaven to speculative men, or those that spend their time in contemplation; no, who was more intimately acquainted with the mind of God than Daniel, a courtier, a statesman, and a man of business. The Spirit, as the wind, bloweth where it listeth. And if those that have much to do in the world, plead that as an excuse for the coldness and the slightness of their converse with God, Daniel will condemn them. Some have thought that he returned to Jerusalem, and was one of the masters of the Greek synagogue; but nothing of that appears in scripture, it is therefore generally concluded that he died in Persia, at Susa, where he lived to be very old.

II. Concerning this book. The first six chapters of it are historical, and are plain and easy; the six last are prophetical, and in them are many things dark, and hard to be understood; which yet would be more intelligible if we had a more complete history of the nations, and especially the Jewish nation, from Daniel's time to the coming of the Messiah. Our Saviour intimates the difficulty of apprehending the sense of Daniel's prophecies, when speaking of them, he says, Let him that readeth understand, Matth. xxiv. 15. The first chapter, and the three first verses of the second chapter, are in Hebrew; thence to the eighth chapter is in the Chaldean dialect; thence to the end is in Hebrew. Mr. Broughton observes, That, as the Chaldeans were kind to Daniel, and gave cups of cold water to him when he requested it, rather than the king's wine, God would not have them lose their reward, but made that language which they taught him, to have honour in his writings through all the world unto this day. Daniel, according to his computation, continues the holy story from the first surprising of Jerusalem by the Chaldean Babel, when he himself was carried away captive, until the last destruction of it by Rome, the mystical Babel, for so far forward his predictions look, ch. ix. 27. The fables of Susanna, and of Bel and the Dragon, in both which Daniel is made a party, are apochryphal stories, which we think we have no reason to give any credit to, they never being found in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but only in the Greek, nor ever admitted by the Jewish church. There are some, both of the histories and the prophecies of this book, that bear date in the latter end of the Chaldee monarchy, and others of both, that are dated in the beginning of the Persian monarchy. But both Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which he interpreted, and his own visions, point at the Greek and Roman monarchies, and very particularly at the Jews' troubles under Antiochus, which it would be of great use to them to prepare for; as his fixing the very time for the coming of the Messiah, was to all them that waited the consolation of Israel, and is to us, for the confirming of our belief, That this is he who should come, and we are to look for no other.
CHAP. I.

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the beginning of Daniel's life, his original and education, than we have of any other of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremia, and Ezekiel began immediately with divine visions; but Daniel began with the study of human learning, and was afterward honoured with divine visions; such a distinction shows God's wisdom in ordering all things for the service of his church. We have here, I. Jehoiakim's first captivity, (v. 1, 2,) in which Daniel, with others of the seed royal, was carried to Babylon. II. The election made of Daniel, and some other young men, to be brought up in the Chaldean literature, that they might be fitted to serve the government, and the provision made for them, v. 3-7. III. Their pious refusals to eat the porridge that the king's messengers brought them, being determined to live upon pulse and water, which, having tried it, the master of the eunuchs allowed them to do, finding that it agreed very well with them, v. 8-16. IV. Their wonderful improvement, above all their fellows, in wisdom and knowledge, v. 17-21.

1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god. 3. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4. Children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; 7. Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel, the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

We have, in these verses, an account, 1. Of the first descent which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and his success in that expedition; (v. 1, 2,) he besieged Jerusalem, soon made himself master of it, seized the king, took whom he pleased, and what he pleased, away with him, and then left Jehoiakim to reign as tributary to him, which he did about eight years longer; but then re- belling, and putting him to death, he carried them captive. Most interpreters think the seventy years are to be dated, though Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor the captivity completed, till about nineteen years after. In that first year Daniel was carried to Babylon, and there continued the whole seventy years, (see v. 21,) during which time all nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son, Jer. xxv. 11. So that this one prophet saw within the compass of his own time, the rise, reign, and ruin of that monarchy; and that it was res unius etatis—the affair of a single age; such short-lived things are the kingdoms of the earth, but the kingdom of heaven is everlasting. The righteous, that see them taking root, shall see their fall, Joel v. 5. Prov. xxix. 16. Mr. Brughton observes the proportion of times in God's government since the coming out of Egypt; thence to their entering Canaan forty years, thence seven years to the dividing of the land, thence seven Jubilees to the first year of Samuel, in whom prophecy began; thence to this first year of the captivity seventy years, 490; (ten Jubilees,) thence to the return, one seventy, thence to the death of Christ, seven times seven, and then thence to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years. 11. The improvement he made of this success; he did not destroy the city or kingdom, but did that which just accomplished the first threatening of mischief by Babylon; it was that denounced against Hezekiah for showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, (Isa. xxxix. 6, 7,) that the vessels and the children should be carried away, and if they had been humbled and reformed by this, hitherto the king of Babylon's power and success should have gone, but no further. If lesser judgments do the work, God will not send greater; but if not, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Let us see what was now done.
of their own nation; or because he knew that there were no such witty, sprightly, ingenious young men to be found among his Chaldeans, as abounded among the youth of Israel; and if that were so, it was much for the honour of the Jewish nation, as of an uncommon genius above other people, and a fruit of the blessing. But it was a shame that a people which had so much wit, should have so little wisdom and grace. No doubt, observe, this was an instance by which the king of Babylon gave the choice of these youths, v. 4. They must not choose such as were deformed in body, but comely and well-favoured, whose countenances were index of ingenuity and good humour; but that is not enough, they must be skilful in all wisdom and cunning, or well-seen in knowledge, and understanding science, who were quick and sharp, and could give a ready answer in their affairs. This is an instance of the policy of this rising monarch, now in the beginning of his reign, and was a good omen of his prosperity, that he was in care to raise up a succession of persons fit for public business. He did not, like Ahasuerus, appoint them to choose him out young men for the service of his lusts, but young men for the service of his government. It is the interest of princes to have wise men employed under them; it is therefore their wisdom to take care for the finding out and training up of such. It is the misery of this world, that so many who are fit for public stations are buried in obscurity, and so many who are unfit for them are preferred to them.

First. For their education. He ordered that they should be taught the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. They are supposed to be wise and knowing young men, and yet they must be further taught; Give instruction to a wise man, and he will increase in learning. Note, Those that would do good in the world when they are grown up, must learn when they are young. That is the learning age; if that time be lost, it will hardly be redeemed. It does not appear that Nebuchadnezzar designed they should learn anything that was not useful among the Chaldeans, magic and divination; if he did, Daniel and his fellows would not defile themselves with them. Nay, we do not find that he ordered them to be taught the religion of the Chaldeans; by this it appears that he was at this time no bigot; if men were skilful and faithful, and fit for his business, it was not material to him what religion they were. But that they had but little learning. They must be trained up in the language and laws of the country, in history, philosophy, and mathematics; in the arts of husbandry, war, and navigation; in such learning as might qualify them to serve their generation. Note, It is real service to the public to provide for the good education of youth.

Secondly. For their maintenance. He provided for them. Provided they had necessary religion, but dainties, for their encouragement in their studies; they had daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank, v. 5. This was an instance of his generosity and humanity; though they were his captives, he considered their birth and quality, their spirit and genius, and treated them honourably, and studied to make their captivity easy to them. There is a respect owing to those who are well-born and well-educated, when they are fallen into distress. With a liberal education there should be a liberal maintenance.

III. A particular account of Daniel and his fellows; they were of the children of Judah, the royal tribe, and, probably, of the house of David, which was grown a numerous family; and God told Hezekiah, that of the children that should issue from him, some should be taken, and made eunuchs, or chamberlains, in the palace of the king of Babylon. The prince of the eunuchs changed the names of Daniel and his fellows, partly to show his authority over them, and partly to make them appear as if some of being naturalized, and made Chaldeans. Their Hebrew names, which they received at their circumcision had something of God, or Jah in them; Daniel—God is my Judge; Hanuniah—The grace of the Lord; Mishael—He that is the strong God; Azariah—The Lord is a Help; to make them forget the God of their fathers, the Guide of their youth, they give them names that savour of the Chaldean idolatry; Belteshazzar signifies, the keeper of the hid treasures of Bel; Shadrach—the inspiration of the sun, which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshach—of the goddess Shaca, under which name Venus was worshipped; Abed-negu—The servant of the shining fire, which they worshipped also. Thus, though they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their masters, yet they did what they could by fair means, insensibly to wean them from the former, and instil the latter into them. Yet see how comfortably they were provided for: though they suffered for their father’s sins, they were preferred for their own merits; and the land of their captivity was made more comfortable to them than the land of their nativity at this time would have been.

8. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king?

11. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hanuniah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat. 16. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.

We observe here, very much to our satisfaction,
1. That Daniel was a favourite with the prince of the eunuchs, (v. 9.) as Joseph was with the keeper of the prison: he had a tender love for him. No doubt, Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuity, his sweetness, and his tenderness; he was greatly beloved, (ch. ix. 23.) and yet it appears here, God brought him into favour with the prince of the eunuchs, for every one does not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Note, The interest which we think we make for ourselves, we must acknowledge to be God’s gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are in favour, it is God that has brought them into it; and it is by him that they find good understanding. Herein was again verified that word, (Ps. cvi. 46.) He made them to be hallowed of all those that carried them captive. Let young ones know that the way to be acceptable is to be tractable and dutiful.

2. That Daniel was still firm to his religion. They had changed his name, but they could not change his nature; whatever they pleased to call him, he still retained the spirit of an Israelite indeed. He would apply his mind as closely as any of them all to his books, and took pains to make himself master of the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans; but he was resolved that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat; he would not meddle with it, nor with the wine which he drank; v. 8. And here, Daniel’s application of it to his fellows, they conformed in the same resolution, as appears, v. 11. This was not out of sulleness, or peevishness, or a spirit of contradiction, but from a principle of conscience. Perhaps it was not in itself unlawful for them to eat of the king’s meat, or to drink of his wine. But, (1.) They were scrupulous concerning the meat, lest it should be sinful to rear up in them objects of which we would let those among them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swine’s flesh; or they were afraid lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol. The Jews were distinguished from other nations very much by their meats; (Lev. xx. 26.) and these pious young men, being in a strange country, thought themselves obliged to keep up the honour of their being a peculiar people. Though they could not keep up their dignity as princes, they would not lose it as Israelites; for on that they most valued themselves. Note, When God’s people are in Babylon, they have need to take special care that they partake not in her sins. Providence seemed to lay this meat before them; being captives, they must eat what they could get, and must not displease their masters yea, and in command be against it, they must abide by that; though Providence says, Kill, and eat; conscience says, Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth. (2.) They were jealous over themselves, lest, though it should not be sinful in itself, it should be an occasion of sin to them; lest, by indulging their appetites with these dainties, that divinity of their masters yea, and in command be against it, they must abide by that; though Providence says, Kill, and eat; conscience says, Not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth. (Ps. cxv. 4.) and Solomon’s precept, Be not desireous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat; (Prov. xxiii. 3.) and accordingly they form their resolution. Note, It is very much to the praise of all, and especially of young people, to be dead to the delights of sense; still to use such language to God as he teaches us to look upon them with indifferency. Those that would excel in wisdom and piety, must learn betimes to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. (5.) However, they thought it unseasonable now, when Jerusalem was in distress, and they themselves in captivity. They had no heart to drink wine in bowls, so much were they grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Though they had royal blood in their veins, yet they did not think it proper to have royal dainties in their months when they were thus brought low. Note, It becomes us to be humble under humbling providences. Call me not Naomi, call me Mahal. See the benefit of affliction; for the account Jerimiah gives of the princes and great men now at Jerusalem, it appears that they were very corrupt and wicked, and defiled themselves with things offered to idols, while these young gentlemen that were in captivity, would not defile themselves, no, not with their portion of the king’s meat. How much better it is with those that retain their integrity in time of affliction, than with those that retain their iniquity in the heights of prosperity! Observe, The great thing that Daniel avoided, was, defiling himself with the pollutions of sin; that is the thing we should be more afraid of than of any outward trouble. Daniel, having taken up this resolution, requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself, not only that he might not be compelled to do it, but that he might not be tempted to do it; that the heart might not be laid before him; that he might not see the portion appointed him of the king’s meats, nor look upon the wine when it was red; it will be easier to keep the temptation at a distance than to suffer it to come near, and then be forced to put a knife to our throat. Note, We cannot better improve our interest in any with whom we have found favour than make known it to them.

3. That God wonderfully owned him herein; when Daniel requested that he might have none of the king’s meat or wine set before him, the prince of the eunuchs objected, that if he and his fellows were not found in as good case as any of their companions, he should be in danger of having anger, and of losing his head. Daniel, to satisfy him that there would be no danger of any bad consequence, desires the matter might be put to a trial. He applies himself further, to the under-officer, Melzar, or the steward; (v. 9.)—Prove us for ten days; during that time let us have nothing but pulse to eat, nothing but herbs and fruits, or parched peas or lentils, and nothing but water to drink, and see how we can live upon that, and prove ourselves and our God acceptable.” v. 12. People will not have the benefit of abstinence and a spare diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Trial was accordingly made; Daniel and his companions lived for ten days upon pulse and water, hard fare for young men of genteel extraction and education, and which one would rather expect they should have counted against them, as being polluted for; but at the end of ten days they were compared with the other children, and were found fatter and fatter in flesh, of a more healthful look, and a better complex than all those which did eat the portion of the king’s meat, v. 15. This was in part a natural effect of their temperance, but it must be ascribed to the special blessing of God, which will give strength and vigour to them that are penitent of herbs better than a stalled ox. By this it appears that man lives not by bread alone; pulse and water shall be the most nourishing food if God speak the word. See what it is to keep ourselves pure from the pollutions of sin, it is the way to have that comfort and satisfaction which will be health to the navel and marrow to the bones, while the pleasures of sin are a rattling wind. 

4. That his master commended him. The steward did not force them to eat against their consciences, but, as they desired, gave them pulse and water, (v. 16.) the pleasures of which they enjoyed, and we have reason to think were not envied the enjoyment. Here is a great example of temperance and contentment with mean things; and (Epictetus said) “He that lives according to nature will
never be poor, but he that lives according to opinion will never be rich." This wonderful abstinen-
ness of these young men in the days of their youth con-
tributed to the fitting of them, (1.) For their eminently clear and unclouded, and fit for contemplation, and
saved for the best employments a great deal both of
life and time, and thus they prevented those
diseases which attend the business of age, that owe their rise to the intemperance of youth. (2.) For their eminent sufferings. They
that had thus inured themselves to hardship, and
died a life of self-denial and mortification, could
the more easily venture upon the fiery furnace and the den of lions, rather than sin against God.

17. As for these four children, God gave
them knowledge and skill in all learning and
wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in
all visions and dreams. 18. Now, at the
end of the days that the king had said he
should bring them in, then the prince of the
eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchad-
nezzar. 19. And the king communed with
them: and amongst them all was found none
like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azar-
iah: therefore stood they before the king.
20. And in all matters of wisdom and un-
derstanding, that the king inquired of them,
he found them ten times better than all the
magicians and astrologers that were in all
his realm. 21. And Daniel continued even
unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Concerning Daniel and his fellows, we have here,
1. Their great attainments in learning, v. 17.
They were very sober and diligent, and studied
hard; and we may suppose their tutors, finding
them of an uncommon capacity, took a deal of pains
with them, but, after all, their achievements are
ascribed to God only: it was he that gave them
knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: for
every good and perfect gift is from above, from the
Father of lights; it is the Lord our God that gives
men power to get this wealth; the mind is furnished
only by him that formed it. The great learning
with which God gave these four children was, (1.) A
balance for the scales: they had, by the gift of
their fathers, been deprived of the honours and
pleasures that would have attended their noble ex-
trication; but, to make them amends for that, God,
in giving them learning, gave them better honours
and pleasures than those they had been deprived of.
(2.) A recompense for their integrity: they kept to
their religion, even in the minutest instances of it,
and would not so much as stain themselves with
the king's meat or wine, but became in effect, Na-
zrites; and now God rewarded them for it with
an eminency in learning; for God gives to a man
that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge,
and joy with them, Eccl. ii. 26. To Daniel he gave
even in his own eyes; they could not fail to
be men of a peculiar dignity and wisdom which God gave him. Nay, he
was endued with a prophetic spirit, by which he
was enabled to converse with God, and to receive
the notices of divine things in dreams and visions,
Num. xii. 6. According to this gift given to
Daniel, we find him, in this book, all along employ-
ed in dreams and visions, interpreting or enter-
taining them; for as every one has received the gift,
A ND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

2. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

3. And the king said unto them, Have ye skill to shew me the interpretation of these dreams? They made answer and said, My lord, the dream be to them, but how to shew the interpretation thereof is not in them.

4. Then the king said, In whose hand shall be the power to shew the interpretation of these dreams? There was fear in the heaven, and none was able to shew the king this matter.

5. Then Daniel came in and stood before the king.

6. And the king said, I have in my dream no pleasure, but such a one as troubleth me.

7. I dreamed, and mine spirit was troubled; for there was in mine hand a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

8. Then said I, O Daniel, my servant, shew me the interpretation of the dream unto me.

9. Then Daniel spake and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghil.

10. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts, and rewards, and great honour: therefore shew me the dream and the interpretation thereof.

11. They answered and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.

12. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you; for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me till the time be changed; therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.

13. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth; and there is none other that can shew it before the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

14. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 15. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

We meet with a great difficulty in the date of this story; it is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, v. 1. Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and, it should seem, he was three years under tutors and governors, before he was presented to the king, ch. 1. 5. How then could this happen in the second year? Perhaps though three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so farward, that he was taken, in consequence of his being a Hebrew, to be kept one year at school, and so in the second year he became thus considerable. Some make it to be the second year after he began to reign alone, but the fifth or sixth year since he began to reign in partnership with his father. Some read it, and in the second year, (the second after Daniel and his fellows stood before the king,) in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, or in his reign, this happened; as Joseph, in the second year after his skill in dreams, showed, expounded Pharaoh's, so Daniel, in the second year after he commenced master in that art, did this service. I would much rather take it in some of these ways, than suppose, as some do, that it was in the second year after he had conquered Egypt, which was the thirty-sixth year of his reign, by cause it appears, by what we meet with in Babylon, that Daniel was famous both for wisdom, and prevalence in prayer, long before that; and therefore this passage, or story, which shows how he came to be so eminent for both these, must be laid early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Now here we may observe,

1. The perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was in, by reason of a dream which he had dreamed, but had forgotten; (v. 1.) He dreamed a dream, a dream consisting of diviers distinct parts, or which filled his head as much as if it had been many dreams. Solomon speaks of a multitude of dreams, strangely incoherent, in which there are divers vanities, Eccl. v. 7. This dream of Nebuchadnezzar's had nothing in the thing itself but what might be paralleled in many a common dream; but it was so presented to men things as foreign as this here; but there was something in the impression it made upon him, which carried with it an incontrovertible evidence of its divine original, and its prophetic significance.

Note. The greatest of men are not exempt from any, they lie most open to those cares and troubles of mind, which disturb their repose in the night, while the sleep of the labouring man is sweet and sound, and the sleep of the sober, temperate man free from confused dreams; the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep at all for care, and the excesses of glutons and drunkards will not suffer them to sleep quietly for dreaming. But this recorded here was not from natural causes. Nebuchadnezzar was a tyrant of God's Israel, but God here troubled him; for he that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it. He had his guards about him, but they could not keep trouble from his spirit. We know not the unseasonableness of many that live in great pomp, and, one would think, in pleasure too. We look into their houses, and are tempted to envy them; but, could we look into their hearts, we should pity them rather. All the treasures and all the pleasures of the children of men, which this mighty monarch had the command of, could not procure him a little respite, when by reason of the trouble of his mind his sleep brake from him; but God gave his beloved sleep, who return to him as their Rest.

Vol. iv—51
2. The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers, whether they could tell him what his dream meant. God had foretold to Daniel that he should be immediately sent for, to show the king his dreams, v. 2. There are many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things; though we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it; so it was with this king. His dream had slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but was confident he had known it if he had known it. God ordered it so that Daniel might have the more honour, and, in him, the God of Daniel. Note, God sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of men's minds as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bed-chamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honor. He tells them that he had dreamed a dream, v. 3. They speak to him in the Syrian tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldee, but now they differ much. And from henceforward Daniel uses that language, or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same reason that those words, Jer. x. 11. are in that language, because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry, and to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. This was a part of God, which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to; but ch. viii. and forward, being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They, in their answer, complimented the king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, v. 4. But the king insisted upon it, that they must tell him the dream itself; because he had forgotten it, and could not tell it them. And if they could not do this, they should all be put to death as deceivers, (v. 5.) themselves cut to pieces, and their houses made a dung-hill. If they could, they should be rewarded and preferred, v. 6. And they knew, as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he was able to promote them to great honour, and give them that wages of unrighteousness, which, like him, they loved so dearly: no question therefore that they would do their utmost to gratify the king; if they do not, it is not for want of good will, but for want of power; Providence so ordering it, that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame as of old the magicians of Egypt had been; that, how much soever his people were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians, having reason on their side, insist upon it, that the king must tell them the dream, and then, if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, v. 7. But arbitrary power is deaf to reason; the king faulted them in offering so much to conceal the dream without any colour of reason, suspects that they could tell him, but would not; instead of upbraiding them with impotence, and the deficiency of their art, as he might justly have done, he charges them with a combination to affront him; Ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me. How unreasonable and absurd is this imputation! If they could not tell him the dream themselves, what was, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with lying and corrupt words; but to say this of them, when they honestly confessed their own weakness, only shows what baseless things indulged passions are, and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour, in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both. When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, though the request was highly rational and just, he tells them they must tell it himself; they were then told (v. 8.) till the time be changed, (v. 9.) either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, though now he is so hot upon it, or till they may hope he has so perfectly forgotten his dream, (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him as he catches at them,) that they may tell him what they please, and make him believe it was his dream, and, when the thing which is going, is quite gone from him, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to dispute them. And therefore, without delay, they must tell him the dream. In vain do they plead, (1.) That there is no man on earth that can retrieve the king's dream, v. 10. There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was: whether they will hold or no, is the question. But never were any rules offered to be given, by which to discover what the dream was; they cannot work unless they have something to work upon. They acknowledge that the gods may indeed declare unto man what is his thought, (Amos iv. 13.) for he understands our thoughts after off; (Ps. cxxxix. 2.) what they will be before we think them, what they are when we know them, but not reserved or hid from us. And we have forgotten them. But those who can do this, are gods that have not their dwelling with flesh, (v. 11.) and it is they alone that can do this. As for men, their dwelling is with flesh, the wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirits, and their powers and operations; but the gods, that are themselves pure spirits, know what is in man. See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of many gods, whereas there is but one, and can be but one infinite; yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teaches, and the works of nature prove; that there is a God, who is a Spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men, and all their thoughts, so as it is not possible that any man should. This confession of the divine omniscience is here extrated from these idolaters, to the honour of God, and their own condemnation, who, though they know there is a God in heaven, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols, that have eyes and see not, ears and hear not. (2.) That there is nothing on earth that would expect or require such a thing, v. 10. This intimates that they were kings, lords, and potentates, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God, and the gospel of Christ, are dispensed to the poor. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects, but they think that never any reason is quite so unreasonably required of them as that, where no other hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain, when passion is in the throne reason is under feet: he was angry and very furious, v. 12. Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason, to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury what they cannot support with equity.
We have found already in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer: as a prince, he had power with God and man; by prayer he had power with God, by prudence he had power with men, and in both he prevailed; thus did he find favour and good understanding in the sight of both. In these verses, we have a remarkable instance of both.

1. Daniel by prudence knew how to deal with men, and he prevailed with them. When Arioch, the captain of the guard, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel, (for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, devours one as well as another,) he answered with counsel and wisdom; (v. 14.) he did not stretch himself out to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, v. 16. The king, being now sensible of his error in not sending for Daniel sooner, whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed with to reprieve the judgment, and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a soft answer, by that yielding with meekness, which makes a great difference, where the word of a king is, there is favour, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repealed; and so some read it here, (v. 14.) Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch, the king's provost-marshal.

11. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition and in thanksgiving. Offerings and prayers are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe, 1. His humble petition for this mercy, that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time, he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men, whether there was anything in their art, in their books, in their knowledge, or in their memory, but went to his house, there to be alone with his God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift.

Observe, (1.) He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He made the thing known to them, who had been all along his bosom friends and companions, that they would desire mercy of God concerning this secret, v. 17, 18. Though Daniel was, probably, their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter. Thereunto the prophet, The union of forces produces greater force. See Esth. iv. 16. Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; it is good to have the company of wise friends with whom we have fellowship with God, and an interest at the throne of grace; and it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St. Paul bespeaks his friends to pray for him. Thus we must show that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

(2.) He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon, the general mercy of God; that they would desire mercy of the God of heaven concerning this secret, v. 18. We ought in prayer to look up to God as the God of heaven, a God above us, and who has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who can do every thing. Our Saviour has
taught us to pray to God as our Father in heaven. And whatever good we pray for, our dependence must be upon the mercies of God for it, and an interest in those mercies we must desire; we can expect nothing by way of recompense for our merit, but all as the gift of God's mercies. They desire mercy concerning this thing and the other thing, that occasions us trouble and fear. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burdens. Secret things belong to the Lord our God, and therefore, if there be any mercy desired, or any light or comfort wanted, let us in faith pray for the very thing itself, that God may apply it to our souls. We must apply ourselves; and though we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our view, and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hid, nothing is hard.

(3.) Their plea with God was, the imminent peril they were in; they desired mercy of God in this matter, that so Daniel and his fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon, that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked.

Note. When the lives of good and useful men are in danger, it is time to be earnest with God for mercy. Some secret things are appointed by God for us, and we must apply ourselves to God in prayer, and with some degree of passion and vehemence, and this will be very welcome and acceptable with God. Let us learn to be earnest and importunate in our prayers.

(4.) The mercy which Daniel and his fellows prayed for, was bestowed. The secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night-vision, v. 19.

Some think he dreamed the same dream when he was asleep, that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed; it should rather seem that when he was awake, and continuing instant in prayer, and watching in the same, the dream itself, and the interpretation of it, was very effectually communicated to him by the ministry of an angel, abundantly to his satisfaction.

Note. The effectual fervent prayer of righteous men availeth much. There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ has said, Thus knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

First. He who is给自己 for this mercy, when he had received it; Then Daniel blessed God of heaven, v. 19. He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seem whether he would own it to be his dream or no, but is confident that it is so, and that he has gained his point, and therefore he immediately turns his prayers into praises. As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks, in a full assurance that he had done it, and in both he had an eye to God as the God of heaven. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

(1.) The honour he gives to God in his thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a great variety and copiousness of expression; Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever. There is that for ever in God, which is to be esteemed and praised, and preserved changing and eternal in him. And it is to be blessed for ever and ever; as the matter of praise is God's eternal perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlasting in the doing. [1.] He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself; Wisdom and might are his. Wisdom and courage; so some.

Whatever is fit to be done, he will do; whatever he will do, he will do successfully; then will he be able to do it in the best manner; for he has infinite wisdom to design and contrive, and infinite power to execute and accomplish; with him are strength and wisdom, which in men are often parted. [2.] He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has a universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Does every thing lie open to mutation? It is God that changes the times and the seasons, and the face of them. No change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God. Are all the prophecies that were known to him; does he move and depose? Do they alculate? Are they laid aside? Is it God that removes kings? Are the poor raised out of the dust, to be set among princes? It is God that sets up kings; and the making and removing of kings is a flower of his crown, who is the Fountain of all power, King of kings and Lord of lords. Are there men that excel others in wisdom, and who are great in the kingdom, and much admired by the common rate, contemplative, penetrating men? It is God that gives wisdom to the wise, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it or no; they have it not of themselves, but it is he that gives knowledge to them that know understanding; which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it, and make it our business to know him. [3.] He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praises him.

First. For that God could make such a discovery; (v. 22.) He reveals the deep and secret things, which are hid from the eyes of all living; it was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom, when none else could; (Job xxxvii. 27, 28.) It is he that reveals things to us, that are hid from us, and himself perfectly discern and distinguish that which is most closely and most industriously concealed, for he will bring into judgement every secret thing, the truth will be evident in the great day. He knows what is in the darkness, and what is done in the darkiness, for that hides not from him, Ps. cxxxv. 11, 12. The light dwells with him, and he dwells in the light; (1 Tim. vi. 16.) and yet he is invisible and darkness is his pavilion. Some understand it of the light of prophecy and divine revelation, which dwells with God, and is derived from him; for he is the Father of lights, of all lights, they are all at home in him.

Secondly. For that God had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the God of his fathers; Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were beloved for their fathers' sake. He praises God who is the Fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him; wisdom to know this great secret, and might to hear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift; Thou hast made this known to me, v. 23. What was hid from the celebrated Chaldeans, who made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive Jew, a bable, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the spirit of prophecy then when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known to him, which was the saving of the lives of him and his friends? Much more was given him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul to us, and not to the world, to us, and not to the wise and prudent.

(2.) The respect he puts upon his companions in this thanksgiving. Though it was by his prayers, principally, that this discovery was obtained, and to him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him, both in the discovery, and in the value of it, It is what was destined for them, and in enjoying of it, Thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. Either they were present with Daniel when the discovery was made to him; or, as soon as he knew it, he told it them, זָעֵרָה, זָעֵרָה— I have found it, I have found it; that they who had assisted him with their prayers.
might assist him in their praises; his joining them with him is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well become those that are taken into communion with God. Thus, St. Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us, we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

24. Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, the king that had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah that will make known unto the king the interpretation. 26. The king answered, and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27. Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29. (As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass:) 30. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaring of the dream, and the interpretation of it.

1. He immediately bespeaks the reverting of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, v. 24. He went with all speed, v. 25. and told the king that his commission was superseded; Do not therefore destroy the wise men of Babylon. Though there were those of them perhaps that deserved to die, as magicians, by the law of God, yet here, that which they stood condemned for was not a crime worthy of death or of bonds; and therefore let them not die, and be unjustly destroyed, but let them live, and be justly shewed, as having been guilty, to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shows common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives even of bad men, Matt. v. 45. A good man is a common good. To Paul in the ship God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who were not condemned not according to the benefit done to them, ch. iii. 8.

2. He offered his service, with great assurance, to go to the king, and tell him his dream, and the interpretation of it; and was admitted accordingly, v. 24, 25. Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to gratify himself and the king, he pretended he had sought him to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he sought him. But courtiers' business is every way to humour the prince, and make their own services acceptable.

3. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians, and to give honour to God, upon this occasion: not that that was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good; (v. 26.) Art thou able to make known unto me the dream? What! Such a babe in this knowledge, such a stripling as thou art, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this, the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it. Note, In transmitting divine revelation to the children of men, it has been God's usual way to make use of the weak and foolish things and persons of the world, and such as were despised and despairs of, to confound the wise and mighty, that the excellency of the power might be of him, 1 Cor. i. 27, 28. Daniel from this takes occasion,

(1.) To put the king out of conceit with his magicians and soothsayers, whom he had such great expectations from; (v. 27.) This secret they cannot show to the king; it is out of their power, the rules of their art will not reach to it. Therefore let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do; but rather despise them, and cast them off, because they cannot do it. Brought in words it generally: This secret no sages, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail-cookers, can show unto the king; let not the king therefore consult them any more.

Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction, should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions, we are baffled in our hopes from them; bitherto they come, and no further; let us therefore say to them, as Job to his friends, Ye are nothing, miserable comforters are ye all.

(2.) To bring him to the knowledge of the one living and true God, the God whom Daniel worshipped; Though they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for the secret is a God in heaven, that reveals secrets, v. 28. Note, To feel the insufficiency of the means should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. There is a God in heaven, and it is well for us there is, who can do that for us, and make known that to us, which none on earth can, particularly the secret history of the work of redemption, and the secret designs of God's love to us therein, the mystery which was hid from ages and generations, divine revelation helps us out there where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that, not only to kings, but to the poor of this world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

4. He confirmed the king in his opinion, that the dream he was so solicitous to recover the idea of, was really well worth inquiring after, that it was of great value, and of vast consequence; not a common dream, the idle disport of a licentious and luxurient fancy, not worth remembering or telling again, but that it was a divine discovery, a ray of light darted into his mind from the upper world, relating to the most affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it made known to the king what shall be in the latter days, (v. 28.) in the times yet to come, reaching as far as the setting up of Christ's kingdom
in the world, which was to be in the latter days, 
Heb. i. 1. And again, (v. 29.) "The thoughts which came into thy mind, were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are;"

"Omnia quae sequi voluntar vota duurna, Tempore sopito reddit amara quiet.

The sentiments which he uttered throughout the day, often mingled with the grateful murmurs of the night. (Clarke.)"

"but they were predictions of what should come to pass hereafter, which he that reveals secrets makes known unto thee; and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint, and pursuing it thus." Note, Things that are to come pass hereafter, are secret things; and he that reveals them has revealed of those things, especially with reference to the last days of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently inquired into and considered by every one of us. Some think that the thoughts which are said to have come into the king's mind upon his bed, what should come to pass hereafter, were his own thoughts when he was awake. Just before he fell asleep, and dreamed this dream, he was much in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to; and so the dream was an answer to those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make, he thus prepares men for.

3. He solemnly professes that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sagacity of his own. (v. 30.) "But as for me, this secret is not found out by me, but is revealed to me, and that not for any wisdom that I have more than any living, to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery." Note, It well becomes those whom God has highly favoured and honoured, to be very humble and low in their own eyes; to lay aside all opinion of their own wisdom and worthiness, that God alone may have the praise of the government which he has given, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freedom of his good will toward them, and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him not for his own sake, but, (1.) For the sake of his people, for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king; for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and who might be said to have been the cause of it; (2.) Not for any wisdom of mine, but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thine heart; that thou mightest have satisfaction given thee as to what thou wast before considering, and thereby instruction given thee how to behave toward the church of God." God revealed this thing to Daniel, that he might make it known to the king. Prophets receive it, that they may give; that the discoveries made them may not be lodged with themselves, but communicated to the persons themselves that are concerned.

31. Thou, O king, sawest, and beheld, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. 32. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass. 33. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and dominion, and glory, and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven, hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39. And after thee shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall break the power of all the earth. 40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces, and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. 41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay; so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dreams is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his dream and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet in his maintenance and education; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been
made much easier to him than to others of his brethren. And now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expense he had been at upon him: and for receiving this prophet, though not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet’s reward: such a reward as a prophet only could give, and for which that wealthy, mighty prince was now glad to be beholden to him. Here is  

I. The dream itself, v. 31, 45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now, behold, a great image is set before him in a dream; which might intimate to him what the images were, which had restored so many nations upon and made such a respect to, they were mere dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination he might shut his eyes, and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expense and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man erect; it stood before him, as a living man; and because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it, were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the brightness of this image was excellent; and because they were formidable to their enemies, and dreaded by all about them, the form of this image is said to be terrible; both the features of the face and the postures of the body made it so. But that which was most remarkable in this image, was the restoration of it: The head of gold, the richest and most durable metal; the breast and arms of silver, the next to it in worth; the belly and sides, or thighs, of brass; the legs of iron, still baser metals; and lastly, the feet part of iron and part of clay. See what the things of this world are; the further we go in them, the less valuable they appear. In the life of man, youth is great, and but a man, but the old man is a servant of servants, and is half clay; a man is then as good as dead. It is so with the world; later ages degenerate. The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold; but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of a hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable to his knowledge. He has a head of gold, but it is tarnished, and has his feet as a man, but they are iron and clay. Some have observed that in Daniel’s visions the monarchies were represented by four beasts, (ch. 7.) for he looked upon that wisdom from hence, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing. But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, this was represented by a gay and pompous image of a man, for he was an admirer of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. To him the sight was so charming, that he was impatient to see it again.  

But what became of this image? The next part of the dream shows it as calcined, and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarry by an unknown power, without hands, and this stone fell upon the feet of the image, that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces; and then the image must fall, of course, and so the gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small, that they became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, and there were not to be found a thousandth part of them. But this stone cut out of the mountain became itself a great mountain, and filled the earth. See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes: when he pleases, a little one shall become a thousand. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold, and silver, and brass, and iron, might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The stobs of the heathen are silver and gold, as this image was; and they shall perish from off the earth, and from under these heavens, Jer. x. 11. Isa. ii. 18. And whatever power destroys idolatry, is in the ready way to magnify and exalt itself; as this stone, when it had made the image to pieces, became a great mountain.  

II. The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him it is fit that we take the explication of it. It should seem Daniel had his fellows with him, and speaks for them as well as for himself, when he says, We will tell the interpretation, v. 36. Now,  

1. This image represented the kingdoms of the earth, that should successively bear rule among the nations, and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church. It was the same power, only lodged in four several nations, the two former lying eastward of Judea, the two latter westward. (1.) The head of gold signified the Chaldean monarchy, which is now in being; (v. 37, 38.) Thou, O king, art, or, rather, shalt be, a king of kings; a universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries; or, Thou art the first of many kings; a king of kings, that exerts great authority, stands firm, and shines bright, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power.  

Note. The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth, (v. 38.) that wheresoever the children of men dwell, in all the nations of that part of the world, he was ruler over them all, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which they had a property in, but these were made subject to him. The beasts of the field, the fowls of the heaven, was lord of all the woods, forests, and chases, and none were allowed to hunt or fowl without his leave. Thus thou art this head of gold; thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, for seventy years. Compare this with Jer. xxxix. 9, 11, especially Jer. xxvii. 3–7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Scythians; but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here described till Christ’s time. It is called a head, for its wisdom, eminency, and absolute power, a head of gold for its wealth; (Isa. xiv. 4.) it was a golden city. Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring it into all the Assyrian kings, about fifteen monarchs in all, and compare that it lasted above 1600 years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor any thing like it; therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this head of gold; and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotic rule than any of the kings that went before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty-five years current. Evil-merodach twenty-three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years. (2.) The breast and arms of silver signified the monarchy of the Medes and Persians; of which the
king is told no more than this, *There shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, (v. 39.)* not so rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. Cyrus was king of Persia, and Darius king of the Persian monarchy; but in Alexander himself it shall by the power of the sword bear rule over all the earth; for Alexander boasted that he had conquered the world, and then sat down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

(4.) The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Greek monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt; the former governed by the family of the Seleucide, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagizde, from Ptolemæus Lagus; these they make the two legs and feet of this image; Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion, that it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended; because it was in the end of this last empire, and when it was at its height, that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The Roman kingdom was strong as iron, (v. 40.) witness the prevalence of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom broke in pieces the Grecian empire, and afterward quite destroyed the nation of the Jews. Toward the latter end of the Roman monarchy, it grew very weak, broken into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet. Some of these were weak as clay, others strong as iron, v. 42. Endeavours were used to unite and cement them for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain: *They shall not cleave one to another, v. 43.* This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles, and the plebeians; the old constitution did not entirely cease; there were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, whose parties were as iron and clay. Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when, for the strengthening of the empire against the invasions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried; but the politicians had not the desired effect, when the day of that empire came.

2. The stone cut out without hands represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom in the kingdoms of the world. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, for it should be neither raised nor supported by human power or policy; no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. This was the stone which the builders refused, because it was not cut out by their hands, but it is now become the head-stone of the corner.

(1.) The gospel-church is a kingdom, which Christ is the sole and sovereign Monarch of; in which he rules by his word and Spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom not of this world, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

(2.) The God of heaven was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judgment, to set him as King upon his holy hill of Zion, and to bring into obedience to him a willing people. Being set up by the God of heaven, it is often in the New Testament called the kingdom of heaven, for its original is from above, and its tendency is upward.

(5.) It was to be set up *in the days of these kings,* the kings of the fourth monarchy; of which particular notice is taken, Luke ii. 1. That Christ was born when, by the decree of the emperor of Rome, all the world was taxed, which was a plain indication that that empire was become as universal as any earthly empire ever was. When these kings are contesting with each other, and in all the struggles each of the contending parties hopes to find its power accreased from the decay of its opposite, Christ was willing to have his own counsel. These kings are all enemies to Christ's kingdom, and yet it shall be set up in defiance of them.

(4.) It is a kingdom that knows no decay, is in no danger of destruction, and will not admit any succession or revolution. It shall never be destroyed by any foreign force invading it, as many other kingdoms are, fire and sword cannot waste it; the combined powers of earth and hell cannot deprive either the subjects of their Prince, or the Prince of his subjects; nor shall this kingdom be left to other people, as the kingdoms of the earth are. As Christ is a Monarch that has no successor, (for he himself shall reign for ever,) so his kingdom is a monarchy that has no revolution. The kingdom of God was founded upon the Jews and the Jewish tabernacles; (Matth. xxii. 44.) but still it was Christianity that ruled the kingdom of the Messiah. The Christian church is still the same; it is fixed on a rock, much fought against, but never to be prevailed against by the gates of hell.

(5.) It is a kingdom that shall be victorious over all opposition. It shall break in pieces and consume these kingdoms, as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands brake in pieces the image, v. 44. 45. The kingdom of Christ shall wear out all other kingdoms, shall outlive them, and flourish when they are sunk with their own weight, and so wasted, that their place knows them no more. All the kingdoms that appear against the kingdom of Christ shall be broken with a rod of iron, as a potter's vessel is broken in pieces, when it is cast into the fire; no part of them shall be left; the whole monarchy is to be committed to the kingdom of Christ, tyranny, and idolatry, and every thing that is in opposition shall, as far as the gospel of Christ gets ground, be broken. The day is coming when Jesus Christ shall have put down all rule, principality, and power, and have made all his enemies his footstool; and then this prophecy will have its full accomplishment, and not till then, I Cor. xv. 24, 28. Our Saviour seems to refer to this, (Matth. xxii. 44.) when speaking of himself as the Stone set at naught by the Jewish builders, he says, *On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

(6.) It shall be an everlasting kingdom. Those kingdoms of the earth that had broken in pieces all about them, at length came, in their turn, to be in like manner broken; but the kingdom of Christ shall break other kingdoms in pieces, and shall itself stand for ever. His throne shall be as the days in heaven, his seed, his subjects, as the stars of heaven, not only so innumerable, but so immutable. Of the increase of Christ's government and peace there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign for ever, not only to the end of time, but when time and days shall be no more, and God shall be all in all to eternity.

Daniel having thus interpreted the dream, to the satisfaction of Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him no interruption, so full was the interpretation, that he had no question to ask, and so plain, that he had no objection to make, he closes all with a solemn asser
tion. [1.] Of the divine original of this dream; The great God, (so he calls him, to express his own high thoughts of him, and to beget the like in the mind of this great king;) he has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, which the gods of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped, to show things that are to come hereafter, which we may know that we are gods; (Isa. xli. 23.) and by this proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he declares the end from the beginning, Isa. xlv. 10. [2.] Of the unbounded certainty of the things for tell of this dream. He who makes known these things, is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them; and we are sure that his counsel shall stand, and cannot be altered, and therefore the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Note, Whatever God has made known, we may depend upon.

46. Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. 48. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. 49. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

One might have expected that when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting, he would have been curaged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it, and that another kingdom of another nature should be the everlasting kingdom; but, instead of raining it as an affront, he received it as an oracle, and here we are told what the expressions were of the king. He left it made no mention of it. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet, from this wonderful discovery which he had made both of his secret thoughts, in telling him the dream, and of things to come, in telling him the interpretation of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration; and therefore he fell upon his face, and bowed with reverence. This is the true custom of the country by prostration to give honour to kings, because they have something of a divine power in them; I have said, Ye are gods. And therefore this king, who had often received such veneration from others, now paid the like to Daniel, whom he supposed to have in him a divine knowledge; which he was so struck with an admiration of, that he contained himself, not only that Daniel was a man, and that himself was a king. Thus did God magnify divine revelation, and make it honourable, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation to him, and burn incense. Herein he cannot be justified, but may in some measure be excused, when Cornelius was thus ready to worship Peter, and John the angel, who both knew better. But though it is not here mentioned, yet we have reason to think that Daniel refused these honours that he paid him, and said, as Peter to Cornelius, Stand up, I myself also am a man; or, as the angel to St. John, See thou do it not; for it is not said that the oblation was offered unto him, though the king commanded it, or rather, said it; for so the word is. He said, in his haste, Let an oblation be offered to him. And that Daniel did say something to him which turned his eyes and thoughts another way, is intimated in what follows, (v. 47.) The king answered Daniel. Note, It is possible for a man to hear the words of God's word, who yet have no true love for the word. Herod feared John, and heard him gladly, and yet went on in his sins, Mark vi. 20.

2. He readily acknowledged the God of Daniel to be the great God, the true God, the only living and true God. If Daniel will not suffer himself to be worshipped, he will (as Daniel, it is likely, directed him) worship God, by confessing, (v. 47.) Of a truth your God is a God of gods; such a God as there is no other; above all gods in dignity, over all gods in dominion. He is a LORD of kings, from whom they derive their power, and to whom they are accountable; and he is both a Discoverer and a Revealer of secrets; what is most secret he sees, and can reveal; and what he has revealed, is what was secret, and which none but himself could reveal, 1 Cor. ii. 10.

3. He preferred Daniel; made him a great man, v. 48. God made him a great man indeed, when he took him into communion with himself; a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar could make him; but because God had magnified him, therefore the king magnified him. Does wealth make a man wise? The king made many gifts; he gave and had no reason to refuse them, when they all put him into so much the greater capacity of doing good to his brethren in captivity. These gifts were grateful returns for the good services he had done, and not aimed at, or intended for, by him, as the rewards of divination were by Balaam. Does power make a man great? He made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, which, no doubt, had great influence upon the other provinces; he made him likewise chancellor of the university, chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon, to instruct them whom he had thus outdone; and since they could not do what the king would have them do, they shall be obliged to do what Daniel would have them do. Thus it is fit that the servant be a servant to the wise in heart. Seeing Daniel could reveal this secret, (v. 47.) the king thus advanced him. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to advance and employ those who receive divine revelation, and are much conversant with it, who, as Daniel here, showed himself to be well acquainted with the kingdom of heaven. Joseph, like Daniel here, was advanced the higher for the sureness of his interpreting of his dreams; and he called him Zaph- uath-thonaeh—a revealer of secrets, as the king of Babylon here calls Daniel; so that the preambles to their patents of honour are the same; for, and in consideration of, their good services done to the crown in revealing secrets.

4. He preferred his companions for his sake, and upon his special instance and request, v. 49. Daniel himself sat in the gate of the king, as president of the council, chief justice, or prime minister of state, or perhaps chamberlain of the household; but he used his interest for his friends as became a good man, and procured places in the government for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. They that helped him in their prayers shall share with him in his honours; such a grateful sense had he even of
that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which, no doubt, they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares it that it may be easy to them.

**CHAP. III.**

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we left Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in honour and power, princes of the provinces, and preferred for their information, as the children of Israel, and therefore they had in him, I know not whether I should say, It were well if this honour had all the saints: so, there are many whom it would not be good for; the saints' honour is reserved for a better field, but here we have those three men as much under the king's displeasure as then they were in his favour, and yet more truly, more highly honoured by their God than there they were honoured by his prince; both by the grace wherewith he enabled them rather to suffer than to sin, and by the miraculous and glorious deliverance which he wrought for them out of their sufferings. It is a very memorable story, a glorious instance of the power and goodness of God, and a great encouragement to the constancy of his people in trying times. The apostle refers to it when he mentions, among the believing heroes, those who by faith quenched the fiery wrath of God (Heb. xi. 34). We have here, I. Nebuchadnezzar's erecting a golden image and dedicating it, and his requiring all his subjects, of what rank or degree soever, to fall down and worship it, and the general resistance of his people with that command, v. 1.-7. II. Information given against the Jewish princes for refusing to worship this golden image, v. 8.-12. Their constant persisting in that refusal, notwithstanding his rage and menaces, v. 13.-18. III. The casting of them into the fiery furnace for their refusal, v. 19.-23. IV. Their miraculous preservation in the fire by the power of God, and their invitation out of the fire by the favour of the king, who was by this miracle convinced of his error, v. 24.-33. V. The honour which the king gave to God hereupon, and the favour he showed to those faithful worriers, v. 28.-30.

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was three score cubits, and the breadth thereof of six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4. Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages. 5. That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: 6. And whose falleth not down and worshipeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

We have no certainty concerning the date of this story, only, that if this image which Nebuchadnezzar dedicated had any relation to that which he dreamed of, it is probable that it happened not long after that; some reckon it to be about the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, a year before Jehoiachin's captivity, in which Ezekiel was carried away.

1. A golden image set up to be worshipped. Babylon was full of idols already, yet nothing shall serve this imperious prince, but they must have one more; for those who have forsaken the one only living God, and begin to set up many gods, will find the gods they set up so unsatisfying, and their desire after them so insatiable, that they will multiply them without measure, wander after them endlessly, and never know when they have sufficient. Nebuchadnezzar is this creature of novelty and variety, they choose new gods. They that have more than one more. Nebuchadnezzar the king, that he might extort the prerogative of his crown, to make: what god he thought fit, set up this image, v. 1. Observe, (1.) The valubleness of it: it was an image of gold, not all gold surely; rich as he was, it is probable that he could not afford that, but overlaid with gold. Note, The worshipers of false gods are apt to put more to mind changes in setting up images, and worshipping them: they lavish gold out of the bag for that purpose, (Isa. xlvii. 6,) which shames our niggardliness in the worship of the true God. (2.) The vastness of it: it was three score cubits high, and six cubits broad. It exceeded the ordinary stature of a man fifteen times; for that is reckoned but four cubits, or six feet; as if its being monstrous would make amends for its being ineffaceable. But why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this image? Some suggest that it was to clear himself from the imputation of being turned Jew, because he had lately spoken with great honour of the God of Israel, and had preferred some of his worshipers. Or, perhaps, he set it up as an image of himself, and designed to be himself worshipped in it; proud princes affected to make some honour of them; Alexander did so, pretending himself to be the son of Jupiter Olympus. He was told that in the image he had seen in his dream, he was represented by the head of gold, who was to be succeeded by kingdoms of baser metal; but here he sets up to be himself the whole image, for he makes it all of gold. See here, [1.] How the good impressions that were then made upon him were quite lost and quickly gone on it. [2.] How that very dream and the interpretation of it, which then made such good impressions upon him, now had a quite contrary effect. Then it made him fall down as an humble worshipper of God; now it made him set up for a bold competitor with God. Then he thought it a great thing to be the golden head of the image, and owned himself obliged to God for it; but, his mind rising with his condition, now he thinks that too little, and, in contradiction to God himself and his oracle, he will be all in all,
2. A general convention of the states summoned to attend the solemnity of the dedication of this image. v. 2. Messengers are dispatched to all parts of the kingdoms, to gather together the princes, dukes, and lords, all the peers of the realm, with all officers civil and military, the captains and commanders of the forces, the judges, the treasurers, or general receivers, the counsellors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces; they must all come to the dedicating of this image, upon pain and penalty; neither shall they fail to return to the great men, for the greater honour of his idol; it is therefore mentioned to the glory of Christ, that kings shall bring presents unto him. If he can bring them to pay homage to his golden image, he doubts not but the inferior people will follow of course. In obedience to the king’s summons, all the magistrates and officers of that vast kingdom leave the services of their particular countries, and come to Babylon, to the dedicating of this golden image; long journeys many of them took, and expensive ones, upon a very foolish errand; but as the idols are senseless things, such are the worshippers.

3. A proclamation made, commanding all manner of persons present before the image, upon the signal given, to fall down prostrate, and worship the image, under the style and title of The golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. A herald proclaims this aloud throughout this vast assembly of grandees, with their numerous train of servants and attendants, and a great crowd of people, no doubt, that were not sent for; let them all take notice, (1.) That the king does strictly charge and command all manner of persons to fall down, and worship the golden image; whatever other gods they worship at other times, now they must worship this. (2.) That they must all do this just at the same time, in token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service; and that, in order hereunto, notice shall be given by a concert of music, which would likewise serve to adorn the solemnity, and to sweeten and soften the minds of those that were loath to yield, and to bring them to comply with the king’s command. This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal, sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is owing to God who is a Spirit.

4. The general compliance of the assembly with this command, v. 7. They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind instruments and hand instruments, the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, the melody of which they thought was ravishing, and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay; and immediately they all, as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, all the people, nations, and languages, fell down, and worshipped the golden image. That way that sense directs, the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship has been set up and maintained.

8. Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews. 9. They spake, and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10. Thou O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11. And whose fell not down and worshipped, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12. There are certain Jews, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. 13. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14. Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15. Now, if ye be ready, at that time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace: and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. 18. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up.

It was strange that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would be present at this assembly, when, it is likely, they knew for what intent it was called together. Daniel, we may suppose, was absent, as his business calling him away, and having leave from the king to withdraw; unless we suppose that he stood so high in the king’s favour, that none durst complain of him for his non-compliance; but why did not his companions keep out of the way? Surely because they would obey the king’s orders as far as they could, and would be ready to bear a public testimony against this gross idolatry. They did not think it needful now to come down to the image, but, being in office, thought themselves obliged to stand up against it, though it was the image which the king their master set up, and would be a golden image to them that worshipped it. Now.

1. Information is brought to the king by certain Chaldeans against these three gentlemen, that they did not obey the king’s edict, v. 8. Perhaps these Chaldeans that accused them, were some of those magicians or astrologers that were particularly
called Chaldeans, (ch. ii. 2, 4.) who bore a grudge to Daniel's companions for his sake, because he had elysed them, and so had these his companions. They by their prayers had obtained the mercy which saved the lives of these Chaldeans, and beheld, how they requite them, evil for good; for their love they are their adversaries! Thus Jeremiah stood before God, and asked for a pit for his life, Jer. xviii. 20. We must not think it strange if we meet with such ungrateful men. Or perhaps they were such of the Chaldeans as expected the places to which they were advanced, and envied them their preferment; and who can stand before envy? They appeal to the king himself concerning the edict, with all due respect to his majesty, and almost contempt of his power; king, live for ever! (as if they aimed at nothing but his favour, and to serve his interest, when really they were putting him upon which would endanger the ruin of him and his kingdom;) they beg leave, 1. To put him in mind of the law he had lately made, That all manner of persons without exception of nation or language, should fall down and worship this golden image; they put him in mind also of the penalty which by the law was to be inflicted upon requisants, that they were to be cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, y. 10, 11. It cannot be denied but that this was the law; whether a righteous law or no, ought to be considered. 2. To inform him that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, had not conformed to this edict, y. 12. It is probable that Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to enslave them, but in making the law, for then he would himself have had his eye upon them, and would not have needed this information; but their enemies, that sought an occasion against them, laid hold on this, and were forward to accuse them. To aggravate the matter, and incense the king the more against them, (1.) They put him in mind of the dignity to which the criminals had been preferred. Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had set them over the affiars of the province of Babylon. It was therefore very ungrateful, and an insuperable piece of insolence, for them to disobey the king's command, who had shared so much of the king's favour. And besides, the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous, it would be a bad example. For if he had bad bad respects to his station, and therefore it was necessary that it should be severely animadverted upon. Thus princes that are incensed enough against innocent people, commonly want not those about them who do all they can to make them worse. (2.) They suggest that it was done maliciously, contumaciously, and in contempt of him and his authority; They have set no regard upon thee; for they serve not the gods which thou servest, and which thou requirest them to serve, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."  

II. These three pious Jews are immediately brought before the king, and arraigned and examined upon this information. Nebuchadnezzar fell into a great passion, and in his rage and fury commanded them to be seized, y. 13. How little was it in his heart to have a mind so little and so great a rule over so many nations, when at the same time he had no rule over his own spirit, that there were so many who were subjects and captives to him, when he was himself a perfect slave to his own British passions, and led captive by them! How unit was he to rule reasonable men, who could not himself be ruled by reason? It needed not be a surprise to him to hear that these three men did not now serve his gods, for he knew very well they never had done it, and their religion, which they had always adhered to, forbade them to do it. Nor had he any reason to think that they did it in contempt of his authority, who had in all instances showed themselves respectful and dutiful to him as their prince. But it was especially unseasonable at this time, when he was in the midst of his devotions, dedicating his golden image, to be in such a rage and fury, and such a disposition to make the discretion of a man, one of his subjects, should at least have deferred this action. True devotion calms the spirit, quiets and meekens it, but superstition, and a devotion to false gods, inflames men's passions, inspire them with rage and fury, and turn them into brutes. The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion, so was the wrath of this king; and yet when he was in such a heat, these three men were brought before him with an undaunted courage, and an unshaken constancy.  

III. The case is laid before them in short, and it is put to them whether they will comply or no. 1. The king asked them whether it was true that they had not worshipped the golden image, when others did, y. 14. "Is it of purpose?" (so some read it,) Was it designedly and deliberately done, or was it only through inadvertency, that you have not served my gods? What! you that I have nourished and brought up, that have been educated and maintained at my charge, that I have been so kind to, and done so much for; you that have been in such reputation for wisdom, and therefore should better have known your duty to your prince; what! do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image after which I have set up?" Note, The faithfulness of God's servants to him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors, who think it strange, that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. 2. He was willing to admit them to a new trial; if they did on purpose not do it before, yet it may be, upon second thoughts, they will change their minds; it is therefore repeated to them upon what terms they now stand, v. 15. (1.) The king is willing that music shall play again, only for their sakes, to soften them into a compliance; and if they will not, like the deaf adder, step their ears, but will hearken to the voice of the charmers, and will worship the golden image, well and good, their former omission shall be pardoned. But, (2.) The king is resolved, if they persist in their refusal, that they shall immediately be cast into the fiery furnace, and shall be burned as soon as possible; the king was so angry with them that he would not hear reason. Thus does the matter lie in a little compass. Turn, or burn; and because he knew they buoyed themselves up in their refusal with a confidence in their God, he insolently sets him at defiance; And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Let him, if he can. Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, ch. i. 47. Proud men are still ready to say, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice? Or, as Nebuchadnezzar, Who is the Lord, that I should fear his power?  

IV. They give in their answer, which they all agree in, that they still adhere to their resolution, not to worship the golden image, v. 16—18. We have here such an instance as is not paralleled; we call these the three children, (and they were indeed young men,) but we should rather call them the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any immoderate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they readily trust themselves upon the trial, or go out of their way, to court martyrdom, but when they were duly called to the fiery trial, they quitted themselves bravely, with a
conduct and courage that became sufferers for so good a cause. *The king was not so daringly bold in making this idol, but they were as daringly good in witnessing against it. They keep their temper admirably well, do not call the king a tyrant, or an idolater, (the cause of God not the wrath of man,) but, with an exemplary calmness and sedate-ness of mind, they deliberately give in their answer, which they resolve to abide by. Observe, this effect, this answer; it was some of the effects of death, and the noble negligence with which they look upon the dilemma that are put to: O Nebuchadnez- zar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. They do not in suffering deny him an answer, nor stand mute; but they tell him that they are in no care about it. There needs not an answer; (so would our friends and resolve the matter) they seem to be careful to the death. But the king is resolved they shall die if they do not: the matter therefore is determined, and why should it be disputed! But it is better read, "We want not an answer for thee, nor have it to seek, but come prepared." (1.) They needed no time to deliberate concerning the matter of their answer; for they did not in the least hesitate whether they should comply, or not. They were so determined, that one would think they might have considered awhile before they had resolved; life is desirable, and death is dreadful. But when the sin and duty that were in the case were immediately determined by the letter of the second commandment, and no room was left to question that, the life and death that were in the case were not to be considered. Note, Those that make their duty their main care, need not be careful concerning the event. 2. Their believing confidence in God, and their dependence upon him, v. 17. This was it that enabled them to look with so much contempt upon death, death in pomp, death in all its terrors; they trusted in the living God, and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore feared not the wrath of the king, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to him that is invisible; (Heb. xi. 23, 27.) "If it be so, if we are brought to this strict, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace, unless we serve thy gods, know then," (1.) That though we worship not thy gods, yet we are not atheists; there is a God whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully adhere." (2.) That we serve this God, we have devoted ourselves to his honour, we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provided for us, and reward us. (3.) Thus we are well assured that this God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; whether he will or no, we are sure he can either prevent our being cast into the furnace, or rescue us out of it. Note, The faithful servants of God will find him a Master able to bear them out in his service, and to control and overrule all the powers that are armed against them. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst. (4.) "That we have reason to hope: he will deliver us;" partly, because in such a vast array of idolatries, it would be very much for the honour of his great name to deliver them; and, partly, because Nebuchadnezzar had defined him to do it; *Who is that God that shall deliver you's from this fiery furnace? Not *that God that shall deliver thee; but God himself that is \(_{\text{3.3.27}}\) slaying.\

**Daniel, III.**

1. One of the first things necessary to the reform of idolatries, and the cultivation of the graces of the heart, is the altogether abhorrence of all that is fleshly, that no respect or affection should be had to it. Thus it was with those that were in the fiery furnace; (Dan. iii. 10.) *They had not made any preparation for this event.* The consequence is, that we must have a fresh view of the greatness of God's power, and that no respect should be had to the power of any creature, or that which is of any kind, or in any shape, unless it be of God, and be for the glory of God. This is an act of the heart, an act of the soul, an act of conscience.

2. Note, Their reverence to God, in this action, was worth observing: (Dan. iii. 10.) *They had not made any preparation for this event.* The consequence is, that we must have a fresh view of the greatness of God's power, and that no respect should be had to the power of any creature, or that which is of any kind, or in any shape, unless it be of God, and be for the glory of God. This is an act of the heart, an act of the soul, an act of conscience.

3. Their firm resolution, however, to adhere to their profession of faith in God, and to stand their ground, though it would be a most unpardonable sin; (Dan. iii. 10.) *They had not made any preparation for this event.* The consequence is, that we must have a fresh view of the greatness of God's power, and that no respect should be had to the power of any creature, or that which is of any kind, or in any shape, unless it be of God, and be for the glory of God. This is an act of the heart, an act of the soul, an act of conscience. 

4. Note, Their reverence to God, in this action, was worth observing: (Dan. iii. 10.) *They had not made any preparation for this event.* The consequence is, that we must have a fresh view of the greatness of God's power, and that no respect should be had to the power of any creature, or that which is of any kind, or in any shape, unless it be of God, and be for the glory of God. This is an act of the heart, an act of the soul, an act of conscience.
young men, and rising men. But there is enough in that one word of God, wherewith to answer and silence these and many more such like carnal reasonings; Thou shalt not bow down thyself to an image, nor worship them. They know they must obey God rather than man; they must rather suffer than sin; and must not do evil, that good may come. And therefore none of these things move them; they are resolved rather to die in their integrity than live in their iniquity. While their brethren, who yet remain in their own land, were worshiping images of theirs, these here in Babylon would not be brought to it by constraint, but as if they were good by antiphrasis, were most zealous against idolatry in an idolatrous country. And truly, all things considered, the saving of them from this sinful compliance was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the saving of them out of the fiery furnace was in the kingdom of nature. These were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note, A steadfast, self-denying adherence to God and duty, in lesser instances, will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater. And in this we must be resolute, never under any pretence whatsoever, to worship images, or to say, A confederacy, with them that do so.

19. Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. 20. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22. Therefore, because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. 23. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors. Did we not cast these men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. 26. Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-ego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-ego, came forth of the midst of the fire. 27. And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

In these verses, we have,

1. The casting of these three faithful servants of God into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had himself known and owned so much of the true God, that, one would have thought, though his pride and royal contempt might have led him to wish to be worshiped, yet that what these young men now said, (when he had formerly found to be wiser than all his wise men,) should have revived his convictions, and at least have engaged him to dispense with them: but it proved quite otherwise.

2. Instead of being convinced by what they said, he was exasperated, and made more outrageous, v. 19. It made him full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against these men. Note, British passions, the more they are indulged, the more violent they grow, and even change the composure, to the great reproach of the wisdom and reason of a man. Nebuchadnezzar, in this heat, exchanged the awful majesty of a prince upon his throne, for the frightful fury of a wild bull in a net. Would men in a passion but view their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly, and turn all their displeasure against themselves.

3. Instead of mitigating their punishment, in consideration of their quality, and the pests of honour they were in, he ordered it to be heightened, that they should heat the furnace seven times more, or with such a mixture of other fuels, that they should put seven times more fuel to it; which, though it would not make their death more grievous, but rather despatch them the sooner, was designed to signify that the king looked upon their crime as seven times more heinous than the crimes of others, and so made their death more ignominious. But God brought glory to himself out of this foolish injustice, by delivering them in the king's rage; for though it would not have made their death the more grievous, yet it did make their deliverance much more illustrious.

3. He ordered them to be bound in their clothes, and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; which was done accordingly, v. 20, 21. They were bound, that they might not struggle, or make any resistance; were bound in their clothes, for haste, or that they might be consumed the more slowly and gradually. But God's providence ordered it for the increase of the miracle, in that their clothes were not so much as singed. They were bound in their coats or mantles, their hosen or breeches, and their hats or turbans, as if, in detestation of their crime, they would have made their clothes to be burnt with them. What a terrible death was this—To be cast bound into the midst of a burning fiery furnace? v. 23. It makes one's flesh tremble to think of it, and horror to take hold on one. It is amazing that the tyrant was so hard-hearted as to inflict such a punishment, and that the confessors were so stout-hearted as to submit to it rather than sin against God. But what is this to the second death, to that furnace into which the tares shall be cast in bundles, to that lake which burns eternally with fire and smoke. Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it: but hell-fire tortures, and does not kill; the pain of damned sinners is more exquisite, and the smoke of their tor
ment ascends for ever and ever, and they have no rest, no intermission, no cessation of their pains, who have worshipped the beast and his image, (Rev. xiv. 10, 11.) whereas their pain would be soon over that were cast into this furnace for worshipping this Babylonian beast and his image.

4. It was a remarkable providence, that the men, the mighty men, that bound them, and threw them into the furnace, were themselves consumed or suffocated by the flame, v. 22. The king’s commandment was urgent, that they should dispatch them quickly, and be sure to do it effectually; and therefore they resolved to go to the very mouth of the furnace, that they might throw them into the midst of it, but they were not to take time to arm themselves accordingly. The apocryphal additions to Daniel say that the flame ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. Probably, God ordered it so, that the wind blew it directly upon them with such violence that it smothered them. God did thus immediately plead the cause of his injured servants, and take vengeance for them on their persecutors, whom he punished, not only in the very act of their sin, but by it. But these men were only the instruments of cruelty; he that bade them do it had the greater sin; yet they suffered justly for executing an unjust decree, and it is very probable that they did it with pleasure, and were glad to be so employed. Nebuchadnezzar himself was reserved for a further recompense from the Lord, as it is said, ‘The arm of the Lord is not shortened, nor his strength diminished, according to his pleasure.’ Ps. lxxxiii. 13. Therefore the same men will be punished, not only for the cruelties they have been guilty of, but for employing those about them in their cruelties, and so exposing them to the judgments of God.

1. The deliverance of these three faithful servants of God out of the furnace. When they were cast into the midst of the fiery furnace, though the fire might well conclude that we should hear of them, that their very bones would be calcined; but, to our amazement, we here find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego are yet alive.

2. Nebuchadnezzar finds them walking in the fire: He was astonished, and rose up in haste, v. 24. Perhaps the slaying of the men that executed his sentence, was calculated to strike him, as well as we might have reason to think it would be; or it was some unaccountable impression upon his own mind that astonished him, and made him rise up in haste, and go to the furnace, to see what was become of these he had cast into it. Note, God can strike those with astonishment, whose hearts are most hardened, both against him, and against his people. He that made the soul, can make his sword to approach to it, even to that of the greatest tyrant. In his astonishment he calls his counsellors about him, and appeals to them whether we did not cast three men bound into the fire. It seems, it was done by order, not only of the king, but of the counsel. They durst not but concur with him, which his forced them to do; so they were tied, and set them at liberty; thus God’s people have their hearts enlarged, through the grace of God, by those very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamp- per them. (2.) They had no hurt, made no complaint, felt no pain, or un easiness in the least: the flame did not scorch them, the smoke did not stifle them, they were alive, and as well as ever, in the midst of the flames. See how the God of nature can, when he pleases, control the powers of nature, to make them serve his purposes. Now was fulfilled, in the letter, that gracious promise, Isa. lxxiii. 2. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. By faith they believe the righteousness of the king, and quench the fiery darts of the wicked. (3.) They walked in the midst of the fire: the furnace was large, so that they had room to walk: they were unhurt, so that they were able to walk; their minds were easy, so they were disposed to walk, as in a paradise or garden of pleasure.

6. The men and the arms of the Lord were magnified, v. 30. When the king perceived that the God of Daniel was able to preserve the men that were in the furnace, v. 30. The king therefore therefore be seized; of them out privily, no, verily, but he will come himself and fetch them out, Acts xvi. 37. Observe the respectful title that he gives them; when he was in the heat of his fury and rage against them, it is probable that he called them rebels and traitors, and all the ill names he could invent; but now he owns them for the servants of the Most High God; a
God who now appears able to deliver them out of his hand. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince the prodest of men, that he is the Most High God, and above them, and too hard for them, even in those things wherein they deal proudly and prematurely, Exod. xviii. 11. He will likewise let them know who are his servants, and that he owns them, and will stand by them. Elijah prayed, (1 Kings xviii. 36.) Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant. Nebuchadnezzar now embraces those whom he had abandoned, and is very officious about them, now that he perceives them to be the favourites of Heaven. Note, What persecutors have done against God's servants, when God opens their eyes, they must as far as they can undo again.

How the fourth, whose form was like the Son of God, withdrew, and whether he vanished away, or visibly ascended, we are not told, but of the other three we are informed, (1.) That they came forth out of the midst of the fire, as Abraham their father out of Ur, the fire of the Chaldees, into which, says this tradition of the Jews, he was cast, for refusing to worship idols, and out of which he was delivered, as those his three children were; when they had their discharge, they did not tempt God by staying in any longer, but came forth as brands out of the burning. (2.) That it was made to appear to the full satisfaction of all the amazed spectators, that they had not received the least damage by it, for when they came together to view them, and found that there was not so much as a hair of their head singed. Here that was true in the letter, which our Saviour spake figuratively, for an assurance to his suffering servants, that they should sustain no real damage; (Luke xxi. 18.) There shall not a hair of your head perish. Their clothes did not so much as change colour, or melt away, much less were their bodies in the least scorched or blistered in, the fire had no power on them. The Chaldeans worshipped the fire, as a sort of an image of the sun, so that, in restraining the fire now, God put contempt, not only upon their king, but upon their god too, and showed that his voice divides the flames of fire as well as the floods of water, (Ps. xxxii. 7.) when he pleases to make a way for his people through the midst of the fire, and our God only that is the consuming Fire; (Heb. xii. 29.) other fire, if he but speak the word, shall not consume.

28. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. 29. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill; because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort. 30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

The strict observations that were made, super visum corporis—on inspecting their bodies, by the princes and governors, and all the great men who were present upon this public occasion, and who could not be supposed partial in favour of the confessors, contributed much to the clearing of this miracle, and the magnifying of the power and grace of God in it. That indeed a notable miracle has been done, is manifest, and we cannot deny it, Acts xii. 24. Let us now see what effect it had upon Nebuchadnezzar.

1. He gives glory to the God of Israel, as a God able and ready to protect his worshippers; (v. 28.) Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Let him have the honour both of the faithful allegiance which his subjects bear to him, and the powerful protection he grants to them, rather of which can be paralleled between any other nation and their gods. The king does himself acknowledge and adore him, and thinks it is fit that he should be acknowledged and adored by all. Blessed be the God of Shadrach. Note, God can extort confessions of his blessedness even from these that have been ready to curse him to his face. (1.) He gives him the glory of his power, that he was able to protect his worshippers against the most mighty and malignant enemies: There is no other god that can deliver after this sort, (v. 29.) no, not this golden image which he had set up. For this reason, there was no other god that obliged his worshippers to cleave to him only, and to suffer death rather than worship any other, as the God of Israel did; for they could not engage to bear them out in so desperate a case. But he could none the more deliver them as no other can, he may demand such obedience as no other now. (2.) He gives him the glory of his goodness, that he was ready to do it; (v. 28.) He has sent his angel, and delivered his servants. Bel could not save his worshippers from being burnt at the mouth of the furnace, but the God of Israel saved his from being burnt when they were cast into the midst of the furnace, because they refused to worship any other god. Note, This Nebuchadnezzar was plainly given to understand that all the great success which he had had, and should yet have, against the people of Israel, which he gloried in, as if he had therein overpowered the God of Israel, was owing purely to their sin; if the body of that nation had faithfully adhered to their own God, and the worship of him only, as these three men did, the stock and name would have been preserved out of his hand as these three men were. And this was a necessary instruction for him at this time.

2. He applauds the constancy of these three men in their religion, and describes it to their honour, (v. 28.) though he is not himself persuaded to own their God for his, and to worship him; because, if he do so, he knows he must worship him only, and renounce all others, and he calls him the God of Shadrach, not my God; yet he commands them for cleaving to him, and not serving or worshipping any other God but their own. Note, There are many who are not religious themselves, and yet will own that they are clearly in the right that are religious, and are steadfast in their religion. Though they are not themselves persuaded to close with it, yet they will have it, and they shall all have it, clave to it. If men have given up their names to that God who will alone be served, let them keep to their principles, and serve him only, whatever it cost them. Such a constancy in the true religion will turn to men's praise, even among them that are without, when steadiness, treachery, and double dealing, are what all men will cry shame on. He commands them that they did this, (1.) With a generous contempt of their lives, which they valued not, in comparison with the favour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience. They yielded their own bodies to be cast into the fiery furnace rather than they would not only not forsake their God, but not affront him, by once paying that homage to any
other, which is due to him alone. Note, Those shall have their praise, if not of men, yet of God, who prefer their souls before their bodies, and will rather lose their lives than forsake their God. Those know not the value and value nobly, who do not think it worth suffering for. (2.) They did it with a glorious contradiction to their prince: they changed the king's word, they went contrary to it, and thereby put contempt upon both his precepts and threatenings, and made him repent and revoke both. Note, Even kings themselves must own that, when their commands are contrary to the commands of God, he is more to be obeyed and trusted in, than the king himself, in had they did it, with a gracious confidence in their God. They trusted in him that he would stand by them in what they did, that he would either bring them out of the fiery furnace, back to their place on earth, or lead them through the fiery furnace, forward to their place in heaven; and in this confidence they became fearless of the king's wrath, and regardless of their own lives. Note, A steadfast faith in God will produce a steadfast faithfulness to God. Now this honourable testimony, thus publicly borne by the king himself to these servants of God, we may well think, would have a good influence upon the rest of the Jews that were, or should be, captives in Babylon. Their neighbours could not with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do that which was done by those who were preserved by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these his servants, would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, for which end they were sent into captivity; and when it had been that blessed effect on them, they might be assured that God would deliver them out of that captivity, as now he delivered their brethren out of this.

3. He issues out a royal edict, strictly forbidding any to speak evil of the God of Israel, v. 29. We have reason to think that both the sins and the troubles of Israel had great occasion, though no just occasion, to the Chaldeans to blaspheme the God of Israel, and, it is likely, Nebuchadnezzar himself had encouraged it; but now, though he is no true convert, nor is wrought upon to worship him, yet he resolves never to speak ill of him again, nor to suffer others to do so; Whoever shall speak any thing amiss, any error, (so some,) or rather any reproach or blasphemy, whoever shall speak with contempt of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cast into the fiery furnace, and from hence he shall be cut in pieces, as Agag was by the sword of Samuel, and their houses shall be demolished, and made a dunghill. The miracle now wrought by the power of this God, in defence of his worshippers, publicly in the sight of the thousands of Babylon, was a sufficient justification of this edict. And it would contribute much to the glory of the Jews, their captivity, to be by this law screened from the fiery darts of reproach and blasphemy, with which otherwise they would have been continually annoyed. Note, It is a great mercy to the church, and a good point gained, when its enemies, though they have not their hearts turned, yet have their mouths stopped, and their tongues tied. If a heathen prince band, or even the king of the Jews, philosophers, much more should Christian princes do it; nay, in this thing, one would think that men should be a law to themselves, and that those who have so little love to God, that they care not to speak well of him, yet could never find in their hearts, for we are sure they could never find cause, to speak any thing amiss of him.

4. He not only reverses the attainers of these three men, but restores them to their places in the government, (makes them to prosper, so the word is,) and prefers them to greater and more advantageous trusts than they had been in before; He promoted them in the province of Babylon, which was much to their honour, and the comfort of their children in captivity there. Note, It is the wish of princes to prefer and employ men of steadfastness in religion; for these are most likely to be faithful to them, who are faithful to God; and it is likely to be well with them, when God's favourites are made theirs.

CHAP. IV.

The penman of this chapter is Nebuchadnezzar himself; the story concerning him here recorded is given in his own words, as he himself drew it up, and published it; but Daniel, a prophet, by inspiration, inserts it in his history, and so it is become a part of sacred writ, and a very obvious instance of the mysterious working of God. Note, Nebuchadnezzar, in a certain measure, is a rival with God Almighty for the sovereignty as perhaps any mortal man ever was; but here he fairly owns himself conquer'd, and gives it under his hand, That the God of Israel is above him. Here is, 1. The preface to his narrative, wherein he acknowledges God's dominion over him, v. 1., 2. II. The narrative itself, wherein he relates, 1. His dream, which puzzled the magicians, v. 1., 18. 2. His interpretation, by Daniel, who showed him that it was a prognostication of his own fall, advising him therefore to repent and reform, v. 19., 27. 3. The accomplishment of it in his running through the fiery furnace, v. 28., 30. 4. The conclusion of the narrative, with an humble acknowledgment and adoration of God as Lord of all, v. 37. This was extorted from him by the sight of the glory which has all men's hearts in his hand, and stands upon record a lasting proof of God's sovereignty, a monument of his glory, a trophy of his victory, and a warning to all not to be carried away by the speciousness, while they lift up or harden their hearts against God.

1. NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. 2. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

Here is,

1. Something of a form which was usual in writs, proclamations, or circular letters, issued out by the king, v. 1. The royal style which Nebuchadnezzar makes use of, has nothing in it of pomp or fancy, but is plain, short, and unaffected; Nebuchadnezzar the king. If at other times he made use of great swelling words of vanity in his title, now he had them all aside; for he was old, he was lately recovered from a distraction which had humbled and mortified him, and proved to the dread of the breath of contemplation of God's greatness and sovereignty. The declaration is directed, not only to his own subjects, but to all to whom this present writing shall come; to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth. He is not only willing that they should all hear of it, though it carry the account of his own infancy, (which perhaps none durst have published,) that he had not done it himself, and therefore Daniel published the original paper,) but he strictly charges and commands all manner of persons to take notice of it: for all are concerned, and it may be profitable to all. He salutes those to whom he writes, in the usual form, Peace be multiplied unto you. Note, It becomes kings with their commands to dispense their good wishes, and, as fathers of the country, to bless their subjects. So the common form with us: We send greeting. Omniaque his praebet

Vol. iv.—5 l.
literae feminenverirt, salutem.—To all to whom these presents shall come, health; and sometimes, Salutem semperiteram—Health and salvation everlasting.

II. Something of substance and matter. He writes thus:

1. To acquaint others with the providences of God that had related to him; (v. 2.) I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God (so he calls the true God) has wrought toward me. He thought it seemly, (so the word is,) that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and the world, now that he was restored, to relate these illustrious transactions, both by the example of them, the vast and memorable places, and record for future ages, how justly God had humbled him, and how graciously he had at length restored him. All the nations, no doubt, had heard what befell Nebuchadnezzar, and rang of it; but he thought it fit that they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it, and might speak of it not as a matter of news, but as a matter of religion. The events concerning him were not only wonders to be admired, but signs to be instruct ed by, signifying to the world that Jehovah is greater than all gods. Note, We ought to show to others God's dealings with us, both the rebukes we have been under, and the favours we have received; because they are signs not only of God's eternal disposal, but of his scattered dispensations upon himself, as this here did upon Nebuchadnezzar, yet we must not conceal it, as long as it may redound to the glory of God. Many will be forward to tell what God has done for their souls, because that turns to their own praise, who care not for telling what God has done against them, and how they have deserved it; whereas we ought to give glory to God, not only by praising him for his mercies, but by confessing our faults, and acknowledging the punishment of our iniquity, and in both taking shame to ourselves, as this mighty monarch here does.

2. To show how much he was himself affected with them, and convinced by them, v. 3. We should always speak of the word and works of God with concern and seriousness, and show ourselves affected with those great things of God, which we desired not, but should take notice of.

(1.) He admires God's doings. He speaks of them as one amazed; How great are his signs and how mighty are his wonders? Nebuchadnezzar was now old, had reigned above forty years, and had seen as much of the world and the revolutions of it as most men ever did; and yet never till now, when himself was nearly touched, was he brought to admire surprising events as God's signs and his wonders. Now, How great, how mighty, are they? Note, The more we see events to the Lord's doing, and see in them the product of divine power, and the conduct of a divine wisdom, the more marvellous they will appear in our eyes, Ps. cxviii. 23.—lxxvi. 2.

(2.) He infers from hence God's dominion. This is that which he is at length brought to subscribe to; His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and not like his a kingdom which he saw and let pass; but, in a dream, hastening towards a period. He now owns that there is a God that governs the world, and has an universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men. And it is the glory of this kingdom, that it is everlasting; other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but God's dominion is from generation to generation. It should seem, Nebuchadnezzar is now humbled, and here refers to what Daniel had foretold of a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up, that should never be destroyed, (ch. ii. 44.) which, though meant of the kingdom of the Messiah, he understood of the providential kingdom. Thus we may make a profitable practical use and application of those prophetic scriptures, which yet we do not fully, and perhaps not rightly, taking the meaning of.

4. I. Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in his house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. 6. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7. Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers; and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. 8. But at the last Daniel came in before me, (whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods,) and before him I told the dream, saying, 9. O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. 10. Thus were the visions of my head in my bed: I saw, and, behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. 12. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. 13. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watch and a holy one came down from heaven. 14. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hewn down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. 15. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16. Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. 17. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. 18. This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou,
O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof; forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Nebuchadnezzar, before he relates the judgments of God that had been brought upon him for his pride, gives an acount of the fair warning he had of them before they came, which if he had duly regarded, they might have been prevented. But therefore he was told of them, and of the issue of them, before they came to pass, that, when they did come to pass, by comparing them with the prediction of them, he might see, and say, that they were the Lord's doing; and might be brought to believe that there is a divine revelation in the world, as well as a Divine Providence, and that the works of God agree with his word.

Now, in the account he here gives of his dream, by which he had notice of what was coming, we may observe,

I. The time when this alarm was given him; (v. 4.) He was at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace. He had conquered Egypt, and with it completed his victories, and ended his wars, and made himself monarch of all those parts of the world, which was about the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth year of his reign, Ezck. xxix. 17. Then he had this dream, which was accomplished about a year after; seven years his distraction continued, upon his recovery from which he penned this declaration, lived about two years after, and died in his forty-fifth year. He had undergone a long fatigue in his wars, had made many a tedious and dangerous campaign in the field; but now at length he is at rest in his house, and there is no adversary, nor evil occurring. Note, God can reach the greatest of men with his terrors then when they are most secure, and think themselves at rest and flourishing.

II. The impression it made upon him; (v. 5.) I saw a dream, which made me afraid. One would think no little thing would frighten him that had been a man of war from his youth, and used to look the perils of war in the face without change of countenance; yet, when God pleases, a dream strikes a terror upon him. His bed, no doubt, was soft, and easy, and well guarded, and yet his own thoughts upon his bed make him uneasy, and the visions of his head, the creatures of his own imagination, trouble him. Note, God can make the greatest of men uneasy, even then when they say to their souls, Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry; can make those who have been the troublers of the world, and have tormented thousands, to be their own tormentors, their own tormentors; and those that have been the terror of the mighty, a terror to themselves. By the construction which this dream put him into, and the impression it made upon him, he perceived it to be, not an ordinary dream, but sent of God on a special errand.

III. His consulting, in vain, with the magicians and astrologers concerning the meaning of it. He had not now forgotten the dream, as before, ch. ii. 1. He had it ready enough, but he wanted to know the interpretation of it, and what was figured by it, v. 6. Orders are immediately given to summon all the wise men of Babylon, that were such foals as to pretend by magic, divinations, inspecting the entrails of beasts, or observations of the stars, to predict things to come; they must all come together, to see if any, or all of them in consultation, could interpret the king's dream. It is probable that these people had sometimes, in a like case, given the king some sort of satisfaction, and by the rules of their art had answered the king's queries so as to please him, whether it were right or wrong, hit or missed; but now that his expectation from them was disappointed, he told them the dream, (v. 7.) but they could not tell him the interpretation of it; though they had boasted, with great assurance, (ch. ii. 4, 7.) that if they had but the dream told them, they would without fail interpret it. But the key of this dream was in a sacred prophecy; (Ezek. xxxi. 3.) which God had revealed to Daniel, and had bid him tell Nebuchadnezzar here, to a sure cut down, for his pride; and that was a book they had not studied, or acquainted themselves with, else they might have been let into the mystery of this dream. Providence ordered it so that they should be first puzzled with it, that Daniel's interpreting it afterwards might redound to the glory of the God of Daniel. Now was fulfilled what Isaiah foretold, ch. xliv. 13, 17; that when the ruin of Babylon was drawing on, her enchantments and sorceries, her astrologers and stargazers, should not be able to do her any service.

IV. The court he made to Daniel, to engage him to expound his dream to him; At the last Daniel came in, v. 8. Either he declined associating with the rest, because of their badness; or they had been denied the art which the king would rather that his own magicians should have the honour of doing it if they could, than that Daniel should have it; or Daniel being governor of the wise men, (ch. ii. 48.) was, as usual, last consulted. Many make God's word their last refuge, and never have recourse to it till they are driven off by all other arts. He compliments Daniel highly, very highly, takes notice of the name which he had himself given him, in the choice of which he thinks he was very happy, and that it was a good omen, his name was Belteshazzar, from Bel, the name of my god; he applauds his rare endowments, he has the spirit of the holy gods, so he tells him to his face; (v. 9.) with which we may suppose that Daniel was so far from being puffed up, that he was rather very much grieved to hear that which he had by gift from the God of Israel, the true and living God, ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar's god, a dunghill deity. Here is a strange medley in Nebuchadnezzar, but such as is commonly found in those that side with their corruptions against their convictions. 1. He retains the language and dialect of Babylonia, and makes Belteshazzar, his idolatrous deity; and upon that the holy God of Israel would not allow them to convert to the faith and worship of the living God. He is an idolater, and his speech bewrayeth him. For he speaks of many gods, and is not brought to acquaintance in one as sufficient, no, not in him who is all-sufficient. And some think, when he speaks of the spirit of the holy gods, that he supposes there are some evil, malignant deities, whom men are concerned to worship, only to prevent them doing them a mischief, and some who are good, beneficent deities, and that by the spirit of them Daniel was animated. He also owns that Bel was his god still, though he had once and again acknowledged the God of Israel to be Lord of all, ch. ii. 47.—iii. 20. He also applauds Daniel, not as a servant of God, but as master of the magicians, (v. 9.) supposing his knowledge to differ from theirs, not in kind, but only in degree; and he consulted him not as a prophet, but as a celebrated magician; so endeavouring to save the credit of the art, when those blundered and were nonsensical, who were masters of the art. See how close his idolatry sat to him; he has got a notion of many gods, and has chosen Bel for his god, because he can have no certain notion of his choice, though the absurdity of both had been evidenced to him, more than once, beyond contradiction. He, like other heathens, would not change his gods, though they were no gods, Jer. 6.
11. Many persist in a false way, only because they think they cannot in honour leave it. See how loose his convictions sat, and how easily he had dropped them: he once called the God of Israel a God of gods, ch. ii. 47. Now he sets him upon a level with the rest of those whom he calls the holy gods. 

Note. If convictions be not speedily prosecuted, it is a thousand to one but in a little time they are quite lost and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar, not God, is the subject of his consciousness, and by his own hand had been brought to make of the sovereignty of the true God, soon went backward, and relapsed to the same veneration he had always had for his false gods. And yet, 2. He professes a great opinion of Daniel, whom he knows to be a servant of the true God, and of him only. He looked upon him as one that had such an insight, such a foresight, as none of his magicians had; I know that no secret troubles thee. Note, The spirit of prophecy quite outdoes the spirit of divination, even the enemies themselves being judges; for so it was adjudged here, upon a fair trial of skill.

V. The particular account he gives him of his dream.

1. He saw a stately flourishing tree, remarkably and all the limbs of the wood. This tree was planted in the midst of the earth, (v. 10.) fitly re-presenting him who reigned in Babylon, which was about the midst of the then known world. His dignity and eminency above all his neighbours were signified by the height of this tree, which was exceeding great, it reached unto heaven: he overtopped those about him, and aimed to have divine honours given him; nay, he overpowered those about him; and the potent armies he had to command of, with which he carried all before him, are signified by the strength of this tree; it grew, and was strong. And so much were Nebuchadnezzar and his growing greatness the talk of the nations, so much had they their eye upon him, (some a jealous eye, all a wondering eye,) that the sight of this tree is said to be to the end of all the earth. This tree had every thing in it that was pleasant to the eye, and good for food; (v. 12.) The leaves thereof were fair; denoting the pomp and splendour of Nebuchadnezzar's court, which was the wonder of strangers, and the glory of his own subjects. Nor was this tree for sight and state only, but for use. (1.) For protection; the boughs of it were for shelter, both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects from the heat, and protection to their nations from invasion. (2. 2.) For provision. The Assyrian was compared to a cedar, (Ezck. xxxii. 6.) which affords shadow only; cut this tree here had much fruit, in it was meat for all, and all flesh was fed of it. This mighty monarch, it should seem by this, not only was great, but did good; he did not impose his will upon his subjects, but gave them encouragement to the contrary; nor was his power made use of to the injury and interest abroad brought wealth and trade to it. They that exercise authority would be called benefactors, (Luke xxi. 25.) and the most effectual course they can take to support their authority is, to be really benefactors. And see what is the best that great men with their weight and power can attain to, and that is, to have the honour of having many to live upon them, and to be maintained by them; for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them.

2. He heard the doom of this tree read, which he perfectly remembered, and relates it here, perhaps, word for word as he heard it. The sentence was passed upon it by an angel, whom he saw come down from heaven, and heard proclaim this sentence aloud. This angel is here called a watcher, or watchman; not only because angels by their nature are spies, and all eyes are upon them, but because they are sleep, but because by their office they are ministering spirits, and attend continually to their ministrations, watching all opportunities of serving their great Master. They, as watchers, encamp round them that fear God, to deliver them, and bear them up in their hands. This angel was a messenger, or ambassador, (so some read it,) and a holy one. Holiness becomes God's house; therefore angels attend, and are employed by him, are holy ones; they preserve the purity and rectitude of their nature, and are in every thing conformable to the divine will.

Let us review the doom passed upon the tree.

(1.) Orders are given that it be cut down; (v. 14.) now also the axe is laid to the root of this tree. Though it is ever so high, ever so strong, that can not secure itself from the hand of him that slays it; the branches and fowls, that are sheltered and sustained by the boughs of it, are driven away and dispersed; the branches are cropped, the leaves shaken off, and the fruit scattered. Note, Worldly prosperity in his highest degree is a very uncertain thing; and it is no uncommon thing for those that have lived in the greatest pomp and power, to be stripped of all that which they trusted in, and gloried in. By the turns of providence, those who made a figure become captives, those who lived in plenty, and above what they had, are reduced to straits, and live far below what they had, and these perhaps are brought to be beheld to others, who once had many depending upon them, and making suit to them. But the trees of righteousness, that are planted in the house of the Lord, and bring forth fruit to him, shall not be cut down, nor shall their leaf wither.

(2.) Care is taken that the root be preserved; (v. 15.) Leave the stump of it in the earth, exposed to all weather; there let it lie neglected and buried in the grass; let the beasts that formerly sheltered themselves under the boughs, now repose themselves upon the stump; but, that it may not be raked to pieces, or trodden to dirt, and to show that it is yet reserved for better days, let it be hooped round with a bar of iron, over which it shall stand firm. Note, God in judgment remembers mercy; and may yet have good things in store for those whose condition seems most forlorn. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, that through the scent of water it will bud; Job xiv. 7-9.

(3.) The meaning of this is explained by the angel himself to Nebuchadnezzar; (v. 16.) whoever is a man symbolic by this tree, he is sentenced to be deposed from the honour, state, and dignity of a man, to be deprived of the use of his reason, and to be and live like a brute, till seven times pass over him; Let a beast's heart be given unto him. This is surely the saddest and sorriest of all temporal judgments, worse a thousand times than death, and though like it, least felt by man, yet to be paddled by him, by his heart and his understanding, more than any other. Nay, whatever outward affliction God is pleased to lay upon us, we have reason to bear it patiently, and to be thankful that he continues to us the use of our reason, and the peace of our conscience. But those proud tyrants who set their heart as the heart of God, (Ezck. xxviii. 2.) justly may be deprived of the heart of man, and have a beast's heart given them.


(4.) The truth of it is confirmed; (v. 17.) This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones. God has determined it, as a righteous Judge; he has signed the seals to know the time determined, and the decree gone forth. And, [1.] The angels of heaven have subscribed to it; as attesting it, approving it, and applauding it. It is by the decree of the watchers; not that the great God needs the counsel or concurrence of the angels in any thing he determines or does, but as he uses their ministration in executing his counsels, so he is sometimes represented, after events were past, mingled or mixed up in the matter with them: "Whom shall I send? Isa. vi. 8. Who shall persuade Ahaz? 1 Kings xxii. 20. So it denotes the solemnity of this sentence. The king's brevies, or short writs, pass, Teste me jube-—In my presence; but charters used to be signed, His testibus—In presence of us which names are underwritten; such was Nebuchadnezzar's doom, it was by the decree of the watchers.

[2.] The saints on earth petitioned for it, as well as the angels in heaven; The demand is by the word of the holy ones. God's suffering people, that had long groaned under the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, cried to him for vengeance; they made the demand, and God gave this answer to it; for when the oppressed cry to God, he will hear, Exod. xxii. 27. So it is written, in Abah's time, that there should be no more rain, at Elias's word, when he made intercession against Israel, 1 Kings xvii. 1.

(5.) The design of it is declared; therefore orders are given for the cutting down of this tree, to the intent that the living may know that the Most High rules. This judgment must be executed, to convince the unthinking, unbelieving world, that verily there is a God that judges in the earth, a God that governs the world, that not only has a kingdom of his own in it, and administers the affairs of that kingdom, but rules also in the kingdom of men, in the dominion that one man has over another, and gives that to whomever he will from him promotion comes, Ps. lxv. 6, 7. He advances men to power and dominion that little expected it, and crosses the projects of the ambitious and aspiring. Sometimes he sets up the basest of men, and serves his own purposes by them; mean men, as David from the sheep-fold; he raises the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes, Ps. exii. 7, 8. Nay, sometimes he sets up bad men, to be a scourge to a provoking people. Thus he can do, thus he may do, thus he often does, and gives not account of any of his acts; by himself, or by Nebuchadnezzar it was designed that the living should be made to know this. The dead know it, that are gone to the world of spirits, the world of retribution, they know that the Most High rules; but the living must be made to know it, and lay it to heart, that they may make their peace with God before he be too late.

Thus has Nebuchadnezzar fully and faithfully related his dream, what he saw, and what he heard, and then demands of Daniel the interpretation of it, (v. 18.) for he found that no one else was able to do it, but is confident that he was; For the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, or of the Holy God; the proper title of the God of Israel. Much may be expected from those that have in them the Spirit of the Holy God. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had any jealousy that it was his own doom that was read by this dream, does not appear; perhaps he was so vain and secure as to imagine that it was some other prince that was a rival with him, of whose fall he had the pleasing prospect given him in this dream: but, be it for him or against him, he is very solicitous to know the meaning of it, and desires of God, upon Daniel to give it him. Note, When God gives us general warnings of his judgments, we should be desirous to understand his mind in them, to hear the Lord's voice crying in the city.

19. Then Daniel, (whose name was Bel- teshazzar,) was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. 20. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21. Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23. And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hiew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24. This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25. That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

We have here the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; and when once it is applied to himself, and it is declared that he is the tree in the dream, (Mututum nomine, de te fabula narratur—Change but the name, the fable speaks of thee,) when once it is said, Thou art the man, there needs little more to be said for the explication of the dream; out of his own mouth he is judged; so shall his doom be himself has decided it. The thing was so plain, that Daniel, upon hearing the dream, was restrained for one hour, v. 19. He was struck with amazement and terror at so great a judgment coming upon
speak a prince: his flesh trembled for fear of God. He was likewise struck with confusion, when he found himself under a necessity of being the man that must bring to the king those heavy tidings, which, having received so many favours from the king, he had rather he should have heard from any one else; so far is he from desiring the woful day, that he dreads it, and the thoughts of it trouble him. They that came after the ruined sinner, are said to meet with this day, as they that went before, and saw it coming, (as Daniel here,) were affrighted, Job xlvii. 20.

1. The preface to the interpretation is a civil compliment which, as a courtier, he passes upon the king. The king observed him to stand as one astonished, and thinking he was loath to speak out for fear of offending him, he encouraged him to deal plainly and faithfully with him; Let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. This he speaks either, (1.) As one that sincerely desired to know the truth. Note, Those that consult the oracles of God must be ready to receive them as they are, whether they be for them or against them, and must accordingly give their ministers leave to be free with them. Or, (2.) As one that despised the truth, and set it at defiance when God spake, as he saith, Is. xlii. 28. We are tempted to think that this was his meaning; *Let it not trouble thee, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me; nor will I lay it to heart.* But whether he have any concern for himself or no, Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes, *The dream be to them that hate thee.* Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thine enemies, not on thine head.

2. The interpretation itself is only a repetition of the dream, with application to the king. As for the tree which thou sawest flourishing, (v. 20, 21.) it is thou, O king, v. 22. And willing enough would the king be to hear this, as before he heard, Thou art the head of gold, but for that which follows. He shows the king his present prosperous state in the glass of his own dream; Thy greatness is grown, and reaches as near heaven as human greatness can do, and thy dominion is to the end of the earth, ch. ii. 37, 38. As for the dream which passed over him, (v. 22.) it is the decret of the Most High, which comes upon my lord the king, v. 24. He must not only be deposed from his throne, but driven from men, and being deprived of his reason, and having a beast's heart given him, his dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and with them he shall be a fellow-commoner, he shall eat grass as oxen, and, like them, lie out all the months, and be covered with dust and ashes to the seventh hour of the day; for seven times over him, seven years; and then he shall know that the Most High rules: and when he is brought to know and own that, he shall be restored to his dominion again, v. 26. Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, shall remain as firm as the stump of the tree in the ground, and thou shalt have it, after thou shalt have known that the beast doth rule. God everhad the heavens, because it is in heaven that he has prepared his throne, (Ps. ciil. 19.) from thence he beholds all the sons of men, Ps. xxxiii. 13. The heavens, even the heavens, are the Lord's; and the influence which the visible heavens have upon this earth, is intended as a faint representation of the dominion the God of heaven has over this lower world, and the power of the heavens against him, Isa. xlvii. 18. Note, Then only we may expect comfortably to enjoy our right in, and government of, both our selves and others, when we dutifully acknowledge God's title to, and dominion over, us and all we have.

3. The close of the interpretation is the pious counsel which Daniel, as a prophet, gave the king; (v. 27.) whether he appeared concerned or not at the interpretation of the dream, a word of advice would be very seasonable, if careless, to awaken him, if troubled, to comfort him; and it is not inconsistent with the dream and the interpretation of it, for Daniel knew not but it might be conditional, like the prediction of Nineveh's destruction. Observe, (1.) How humbly he gives his advice, and with what tenderness and respect; *O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee; take it in good part, as coming from love, and well meant, and let it not be misconstrued.* Note, Sinners need to be courted to their own good, and accosted gently, to do well for themselves. The apostle beseeches men to suffer the word of exhortation, Heb. xiii. 22. We think it a good point gained, if people will be persuaded to take good counsel kindly; nay, if they will take it patiently. (2.) What his advice is; he does not counsel him to enter into a course of hypocrisy, for the preventing of the distemper in his head, but to break off a course of sin that he was in; to reform his life; he wrote to the Jews, *Break off thy iniquity by showing mercy to these poor; purifying those oppressed ones, setting them at liberty, or making their captivity easy to them.* Note, It is necessary, in repentance, that we not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; not only do no wrong to any, but do good to all. (3.) What the motive is, with which he backs this advice; *If it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.* Though it should not wholly prevent the judgment, yet by this means a reprove may be obtained, as by Ahah's humbling himself; 1 Kings xxi. 29. Either the trouble may be the longer before it comes, or the shorter when it does come; yet he cannot assure him of this, but it may be, it may prove so. Note, The very probability of preventing a temporal judgment, is conducive enough to a work so good in itself as the leaving off our sins, and reforming of our lives, much more the certainty of preventing our eternal ruin. *This would be a healing of thine errors,* (so some read it;) "thus the quarrel will be taken up, and all will be well again."

29. All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30. The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee: 32. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.
The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's dream accomplished, and Daniel's application of it to him justified and confirmed. How he took it we are not told, whether he was pleased with Daniel or displeased; but here we have—

1. God's presence with him; All this came upon him, but not till twelve months after, (ver. 29.) so long there was a lengthening of his tranquillity, though it does not appear that he broke off his sins, or showed any mercy to the poor captives, for this was still God's quarrel with him, that he opened not the house of his prisoners, Isa. xiv. 17. Daniel having counselled him to repent; God so far confirmed his word, that he gave him space to repent: let him alone this year also, this one year more, before he brought this judgment upon him. Note, God is therefore long-suffering with provoking sinners, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2. His pride and haughtiness, and abuse of that power which he had by the place of the kingdom of Babylon, in pomp and pride, pleasing himself with the view of that vast city, which, with all the territories thence to belonging, was under his command, and he said, either to himself or to those about him, perhaps some foreigners to whom he was showing his kingdom and the glory of it, Is it not this great Babylon? Yes, it is great, of vast extent, no less than forty miles in the city, and two or three miles within; it is full of inhabitants, and they full of wealth; it is a golden city, and that is enough to speak it great, Isa. xiv. 4. See the grandeur of the houses, walls, towers, and public edifices; every thing in Babylon he thinks good; and this great Babylon I have built. Babylon was built many ages before he was born, but because he had fortified and beautified it, and we may suppose much of it was rebuilt during his long and prosperous reign, he boasts that he has built it; as Augustus Caesar boasted concerning Rome, Lateritiam inveni, marmoream reliqui—I found it brick, but I left it marble. He boasts that he built it for the house of the kingdom, the metropolis of his empire. This vast city, compared with the countries that belonged to his dominions, was but a poor house. He built it for himself and his sons, and all that were subject to him, and what he did it by the might of his power; he built it for his security and convenience, yet, as if he had no occasion for it, boasts that he built it purely for the honour of his majesty. Note, Pride and self-conceit are sins that most easily beget great men, who have great things in the world. Truly it takes the glory to themselves which is due to God only.

3. His punishment for his pride. When he was thus strutting, and vaunting himself, and adorning his own shadow, while the proud word was in the king's mouth, the powerful word came from heaven, by which he was immediately deprived, (1.) Of his kingdom as a king; The kingdom is departed from thee. When he had the greatest possible bulwarks for the preserving of his kingdom, now, in an instant, it is departed from him; when he thought it so well guarded, that none could take it from him, behold, it departs of itself. As soon as he becomes utterly incapable to manage it, it is of course taken out of his hands. (2.) He is deprived of his honour as a man; he no longer enjoys the advantage of that means loses his dominion; They shall drive thee from men, ver. 32. And it was fulfilled; (ver. 33.) he was driven from men the same hour.

On a sudden he fell stark mad, distracted in the highest degree that ever any man was. His understanding and memory were gone, and all the faculties of a rational soul broken, so that he became a perfect brute in the shape of a man. He went naked, and on all fours, like a brute; did himself shun the society of reasonable creatures, and run wild into the fields and woods; and was driven out by his own servants, who, after some time of trid, despairing of his return to his right mind, abandoned him, and looked after him no more. He had not the spirit of a beast of prey, (that of the royal lion,) but of the unoffending ox, and less sensible creature, for he was made to eat grass as oxen; and, probably, he did not speak with human voice, but lowed like an ox. Some think that his body was all covered with hair; however, the hair of his head and beard, being never cut or combed, grew like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.

Let us pause a little, and view this miserable spectacle; and let us receive instruction from it. [1.] Let us see here what a mercy it is to have the use of our reason, how thankful we ought to be for it, and how careful we ought to be not to do anything which may either provoke God, or may have a natural tendency, to put us out of the possession of our own souls. Let us learn how to value our own reason, and our present estate in the midst of those that are under the yoke, and especially those; nor let us forget the prevailing power of meekness, patience, and reason; or be very tender in our censures of them and conduct toward them, for it is a temptation common to men, and a case which, some time or other, may be our own. [2.] Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness; Is this Nebuchadnezzar the Great? What, this desppicable animal, which is meaner than the poorest beggar? Is this he that looked so glorious on the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politics enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now has not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back; Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms? Isa. xiv. 16. Never let the wise man then glory in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his strength. [3.] Let us see here how God resists the proud, and delights to abuse them, and put contempt upon them. Nebuchadnezzar would be more than a man, and therefore God justly makes him less than a man, and puts him upon a level with the beasts, that set up for a rival with his Maker. See Job xi. 11—13.

34. And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me; and I blessed the Most High; and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: 35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reckoned as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? 36. At the same time my reason returned unto me; and, for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom; and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and exalt and
nourish the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his distraction, and his return to his right mind, at the end of the days prefixed, of the seven years; so long he continued a monument of God's justice, and a trophy of his victory over the children of pride; and he was made more so by being struck mad, than if he had been in an instant struck dead with a thunderbolt. Yet it was a mercy to him that he was kept alive; for, while there is life, there is hope that we may yet praise God, as he did here; At the end of the days, (says he,) I lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, (v. 34.) looked no longer down toward the earth as a beast, but began to look up as a man; Our hominum subline dedit—Heaven gave to man an erect countenance. But there was more in it than this; he looked up as a devout man, as a penitent, for a humble petitioner for mercy, being perhaps never till now made sensible of his own misery. And now, I. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him, that with it he glorifies God, and humbles himself under his mighty hand. He was told that he should continue in that forlorn case, till he should know that he should have dominion. He has brought to the knowledge of that: Mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the Most High. Note. Those may justly be reckoned void of understanding, that do not bless and praise God; nor do men ever rightly use their reason till they begin to be religious, nor live as men till they live to the glory of God. As reason is the substratum or subject of religion, (so that creatures which have no reason are not capable of religion,) so religion is the crown and glory of reason, and we have our reason in vain, and shall one day wish we had never had it, if we do not glorify God with it. This was the first act of Nebuchadnezzar's returning reason; and when this became the employment of it, he was then, and not till then, qualified for all the other enjoyments of it. And till he was for a great while disabled to exercise it in other things, he never was brought to apply it to this, which is the greatest end for which our reason is given us. His folly was the means whereby he became wise; he was not recovered by his dream of this judgment, (that was soon forgotten like a dream,) but he is made to feel it, and then his ear is opened to discipline. To bring him to himself, he must first be beside himself. And by his own means, and not by the wisdom of God, who was not then in his mind, and all good work does, that was forethought there, were not of himself, (for he was not his own man,) but it was the gift of God.

Let us see what Nebuchadnezzar is now at length effectually brought to the acknowledgment of; and we may learn from it what to believe concerning God.

1. That the most high God lives for ever, and his being knows neither change nor period, for he has it of himself. His flatterers often complimented him with, O king, live for ever! But he is now convinced that no king lives for ever, but the God of Israel only, who is still the same.

2. That his kingdom is like himself, everlasting, and his dominion from generation to generation; there is no succession, no revolution, in his kingdom. All the kings are but for a season, for ever, and of his government there is no end.

3. That all nations before him are as nothing; he has no need of them, he makes no account of them. The greatest of men, in comparison with him, are less than nothing. Those that think highly of God, think meanly of themselves.

4. That his kingdom is universal, and both the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth are his subjects, and under his check and control. Both angels and men are employed by him, and accountable to him; the highest angel is not above his command, nor the meanest of the children of men beneath his cognizance. The angels of heaven are his armies, the inhabitants of the earth his tenants.

5. That his power is irresistible, and his sovereignty uncontrollable, for he does according to his will, according to his design and purpose, according to his dispositions and decrees; whatever he pleases that he does; whatever he appoints it, that is established; and none can resist his will, change his counsel, or stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? Can none arrange his proceedings, inquire into the meaning of them, or demand a reason for them. Wo to him that strives with his Maker; that says to him, What dost thou, or, Why dost thou so?

5. That every thing which God does, is well done; his works are truth, for they all agree with his word. His ways are judgment, both wise and righteous, exactly consonant to the rules both of prudence and equity, and no fault to be found with them.

7. That he has power to humble the haughtiness of his enemies that act in contradiction to him, or competition with him; Those that walk in pride he is able to abase; (v. 37.) he is able to deal with those that are not justly confident of their own sufficiency to contend with him.

II. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him, as with it to re-enjoy himself, and the pleasures of his re-established prosperity; (v. 36.) At the same time my reason returned to me; he had said before, (v. 34.) that his understanding returned to him, and here he mentions it again, for the use of our reason is a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. Now his lords sought to him; he did not need to seek to them, and they soon perceived, not only that he had recovered his reason, and was fit to rule, but that he had recovered it with advantage, and was more fit to rule than ever. It is probable that the dream and the interpretation of it were well known, and much talked of, at court; and the former part of the prediction being fulfilled, that he should go distracted, they doubted not but that, according to the prediction, he should come to himself again at seven years' end, and, in confidence of that, when the time was expired, were ready to receive him; and then his honour and brightness returned to him, the same that he had before his madness seized him. He is now established in his kingdom as firmly as if there had been no interruption given him for his reason; and now, he is not only wiser, wiser than ever; and he that but the other day was in the depth of disgrace and ignominy, has now excellent majesty added to him, beyond what he had when he went from kingdom to kingdom conquering and to conquer. Note. 1. When men are brought to honour God, particularly by a penitent confession of sin and a believing acknowledgment of his sovereignty, then, and not to a thing, they may expect that God will put honour upon them; will not restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but add excellent majesty to them from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam.

2. Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have done the work for which they were sent. When this prince is brought to own God's dominion over him, and the same, then, and not to a thing, they may expect that God will put honour upon them; will not restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but add excellent majesty to them from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam.

All the accounts we take and give of God's dealing with us ought to conclude with praises to him. When Nebuchadnezzar is restored to his kingdom, he praises and extols and honours the King of heaven, (v. 37.) before he applies himself to his secular business. Therefore we have our reason, that we may be in a capacity of praising him, and therefore our prosperity, that we may have cause to praise him.
It was not long after this that Nebuchadnezzar ended his life and reign. Abydenus, quoted by Eusebius, (Præf. Evang. I. 9) reports from the tradition of the Chaldeans, that upon his death-bed he foretold the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Whether he continued in the same good mind that here seems to be, or whether he did anything appear to the contrary but that he did: and if so great a blasphemer and persecutor did find mercy, he was not the last. And if our charity may reach so far as to hope he did, we must admire free grace, by which he lost his vote for awhile, that he might save his soul for ever.

CHAP. V.

The destruction of the kingdom of Babylon had been long and often foretold when it was at a distance; in this chapter we have it accomplished, and a prediction of it the very same night that it was accomplished. Belshazzar now reigned in Babylon; some compute he had reigned seventeen years, others but three; we have here the story of his exit, and the period of his kingdom. We must know, that about two years before this, Cyrus, king of Persia, a growing monarch, came against Babylon with a great army: Belshazzar met him, fought him, and was routed by him in a pitched battle. He and his scattered forces retired into the city, where Cyrus besieged them; they were very secure, because the river Euphrates was their moat, and they had twenty years before been in it, but in the second year of the siege, he took it, as is here related. We have in this chapter, I. The riotous, idolatrous, sacrilegious feast which Belshazzar made, in which he filled up the measure of his iniquity, v. 1-14. II. The alarm given him in the midst of his jollity by a hand-writing on the wall, which none of his wise men could read or tell him the meaning of, v. 5-9. III. The interpretation of the mystical characters by Daniel, who, was at length brought in to him, and dealt plainly with him, and showed him his doom written, v. 10-25. IV. The immediate accomplishment of the interpretation in the slaying of the king and seizing of the kingdom, v. 30, 31.

1. BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. 3. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines, drank in them. 4. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 5. In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. 7. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon. Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 3. Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

We have here Belshazzar the king very gay, but all of a sudden very gloomy, and in straits in the face of Cyrus, who was a well-disposed monarch, and had confidence in God, and God affrights him; and wait what will be the issue of this contest, and whether he that hardened his heart against God prospered. I. See how the king affronted God, and put contempt upon him. He made a great feast, or banquet of wine; probably, it was some anniversary solemnity, in honour of his birth-day, or coronation-day, or some of their idolatry; historians say that Cyrus, who was now with his army besieging Babylon, knew of this feast, and, presuming that they then would be off their guard, solemnly buried it in sleep and wine, took that opportunity to attack the city, and so with the more ease made himself master of it. Belshazzar upon this occasion invited a thousand of his lords to come and drink with him. Perhaps he thought as such a preparation lay in it. Hence they glorified themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers; or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he drank wine before them, for it was the pride of those eastern kings to be seldom seen. He drank wine before them, that he might thus as had glorified himself and outdone himself in the king of Nineveh, yet forty days, or fewer, and Babylon shall be destroyed. He should therefore, like the king of Nineveh, have proclaimed a fast; but, as one resolved to walk contrary to God, he proclaims a feast, and beholds, joy and gladness, slaying oxen, killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine, as if he dared the Almighty to do his worst, Isa. xxvii. 12, 13. To show how little fear he had of being forced to surrender, for want of provisions, he spent thus extravagantly. Note, Security and sensuality are sad presages of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by the judgments of God, may expect to be wounded by them.

2. He put an affright upon the temple of God, and bade defiance to his sanctuary; (v. 2) while he tasted the wine, he commanded to bring the vessels of the temple, that they might drink in them. When he tasted how rich and fine the wine was, "O," said he, "it is pity but we should have holy vessels to drink such delicate wine as this in," which was looked upon as a piece of wit, and to carry on the humour, the vessels of the temple were immediately sent for. Nay, there seems to have been something more in it than a frolic, and that it was done in a malicious despite to the God of Israel; the heart of his people was very much upon those sacred vessels, as appears from Jer. xxxvii. 16, 18. Their principal care was, at their return, was about
Now, we may suppose, they had an expectation of their deliverance approaching, reckoning the seventy years of their captivity near a part of the time that they might perhaps name given out some words to that purport, that shortly they should have the vessels of the sanctuary restored to them, in defiance of which, Belshazzar here proclaims them to be his own, will keep them in store no longer, but make use of them among his own plate. Note, That Mirth is sinful indeed, and fills the measure of men's iniquity apiece, which provoked God to raise the wood and stone, for no worse cause than to ripened Babylon for ruin—that no songs would serve them but the songs of Zion, (Ps. cxvii. 3.) no vessels but the vessels of the sanctuary. Let those who thus sacrilegiously alienate what is dedicated to God and his honour, know that he will not be mocked.

3. He put an affront upon God himself, and made defiance to his deity; for they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, v. 4. They gave that glory to images, the work of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, which is due to the true and living God only. They praised him either with sacrifices offered to them, or with songs sung in honour of them. When their heads were guilty, and their hearts merry with wine, they were in the fittest frame to praise the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone; for no worse think that men in their senses, who had the command of a clear and sober thought, could not be guilty of so gross an absurdity; they must be intoxicated ere they could be so infatuated. Drunken worshippers, who are not men, but beasts, are the most proper for the service of dandhill deities, that are not gods, but devils. They have erred through wine, Isa. xxviii. 7. They drank wine, and praised their idol-gods, as if they had been the founders of their feasts and the givers of all good things to them. Or, When they were drinking wine, they praised their gods by drinking healths to them, and the king drank wine before them, (v. 1.) he began the health, first to this god, and then to the other, till they went through the bead-roll or farrago of them, those of wood and stone not excepted. Note, Immorality and impiety, vice and profaneness, strengthen the hands, and advance the interests, one of another. Drunken frolics were an introduction to idolatry, and then idolatrous healths were a shoeing-horn to further drunkenness.

II. See how God affrighted the king, and struck a terror upon him. Belshazzar and his lords are in their cups, and in their revels, and in their apiece, and all upon the merry pin, drinking confusion, it may be, to Cyrus and his army, and roaring out huzzas, in confidence of the speedy raising of the siege; but the hour was come when that must be fulfilled, which had been long ago said of the king of Babylon, when his city should be besieged by the Persians and Medes; (Isa. xxxii. 3.) The night of the fiftieth of the king's feast, and the third ruler in the kingdom next to the king, that knew no better. Nay, he should be primus pars regni—chief minister of state, the third ruler in the kingdom, next to the king, and his heir apparent.

4. The king is disappointed in his expectations from them; they could none of them read the writing, much less interpret it, (v. 8.) which increases the king's confusion; (v. 9.) he likes the writing not at all, but reads it over, and turns it toward him. His lords also, that had been parter's with him in his jollity, are now sharers with him in his terrors; they also were astonished, and at their wits' end; and neither their numbers nor their refreshment by wine would serve to keep up their spirits. The reason why the wise men could not read the writing was, not because it was written in any language or characters unknown to them, but
God either cast a mist before their eyes, or put such confusion upon their spirits, that they could not read it; that the honour of expounding this mystical writing might be reserved for Daniel. Note, The terror of an awakened, convinced conscience may justly be increased by the utter insufficiency of all creatures to give it ease or satisfaction.

10. Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house; and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and, in the days of thy father, light, and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; 12. Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

13. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14. I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light, and understanding, and excellent wisdom, is found in thee. 15. And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing: 16. And I have heard of thee that thou canst make interpretations and dissolve doubts: now, if thou canst read this writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. 17. Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18. O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. 19. And, for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.

20. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21. And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22. And thou art he, O Belshazzar, last not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this; 23. But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. 24. Then was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written. 25. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 29. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Here is,
1. The information given to the king, by the queen-mother, concerning Daniel, how fit he was to be consulted in this difficult case. It is supposed that this queen was the widow of Evil-merodach, and was that famous Nitocris whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence. She was not present at the feast, as the king's wives and concubines were; (v. 2) It was not agreeable to her age and gravity to keep a merry night. But tidings of the fright which the king and his lords were put into being brought to her apartment, she came herself to the banqueting-house, to recommend to the king a physician for his melancholy. She entreats him not to be discouraged by the insufficiency of his wise men to solve this riddle, for that there was a man in his kingdom, that could more than once helped his grandfather at such a dead lift, and, no doubt, could help him, v. 11, 12. She could not undertake to read the writing herself, but directs him to one that could; let Daniel be called now, who should have been called first. Now observe,
2. The high character she gives of Daniel; He is a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, who has something in him more than human, not only the spirit of a man, which, in all, is the candle of the
Lord, but a divine spirit. According to the language of his country and religion, she could not give a higher encomium of any man, than speaking of him as having a very admirable head; Light and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him. Such an insight had he into things secret, and such a foresight of things to come, that it was evident he was divinely inspired; he had knowledge and understanding beyond all the other wise men for interpreting of dreams, explaining enigmas, or hard sense and riddles; and reason there was of this wisdom, he had a wonderful sagacity of this kind: but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate divine direction; Behold a greater than Solomon himself is here. Yet what was the wisdom of them both, compared with the treasures of the wisdom hid in Christ? (2.) He had an admirable good heart; An excellent spirit was found in him, which was a great ornament to his wisdom and knowledge, and qualified him to receive that gift; for God gives to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy. He was of an humble, holy, heavenly spirit, had a devout and gracious spirit, a spirit of zeal for the glory of God and the good of men. This was indeed an excellent spirit.

The account she gives of the respect that Nebuchadnezzar had for him: he was much in his favour, and was preferred by him; the king this father, (that is, thy grandfather, but even to many generations Nebuchadnezzar might well be called the father of that royal family, for he it was that raised him so high to such a pitch of grandeur,) the king, I say, thy father, made him master of the magicians. Perhaps Belshazzar had sometimes, in his pride, spoken slightly of Nebuchadnezzar, and his politics, and the methods of his government, and the ministers he employed, and thought himself wiser than he; and therefore his motherharps upon that. The king, I say, thy father, to whose good management all thou hast is owing, he pronounced him chief of, and gave him dominion over all, the wise men of Babylon, and named him Belteshazzar, according to the name of his god, thinking thereby to put honour upon him; but Daniel, by constantly making use of his Jewish name himself, (which he resolved to keep, in token of his faithful adherence to his religion,) had worn out that name; only the queen-dowager remembered it, otherwise he was generally called Daniel. Note, It is a very good office to revive the remembrance of the good services of worthy men, who are themselves modest, and willing that they should be forgotten.

3. The motion she makes concerning him; Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation. By this it appears that Daniel was now forgotten at court; Belshazzar was a stranger to him, knew not that he had such a jewel in his kingdom; with the new king there came in a new ministry, and the old one was laid aside. Note, There are a great many good men, whose services, though they have been of very great value, are made use of no more, or made very useful, that lie long buried in obscurity; and some that have done eminent services, that live to be overlooked, and taken no notice of; but whatever men are, God is not unrighteous to forget the services done to his kingdom. Daniel being turned out of his place, lived privately, and sought not any opportunity to come into notice again; yet he lived near the court, as within call, though Babylon was now besieged, that he might be ready, if there were occasion, to do any good office, by what interest he had among the great ones, for the children of his people. But Providence so ordered it, that now, just at the fall of that monarchy, he should by the queen's means be brought to court again, that he might lie there ready for preferment in the ensuing government. Thus do the righteous shine forth out of obscurity, and before honour is humility.

II. The king having given him scope to speak, and his request to read and expound the writing. Daniel was brought in before the king, v. 13. He was now near 90 years of age, so that his years, and honours, and former preferments, might have entitled him to a free admission into the king's presence; yet he was willing to be conducted in, as a stranger, by the master of the ceremonies. Note, 1. The king asks, with an air of laughter, Art thou that Daniel? the great interpreter of dreams, and the best of this kind? Being a Jew, and a captive, he was loath to be behelden to him, if he could have helped it. He tells him what an encomium he had heard of him, (v. 14.) that the spirit of the gods was in him; and he had sent for him to try whether he deserved so high a character or no. 3. He acknowledges that all his wise men of Babylon were baffled; they could not render this writing; nor show the interpretation, v. 15. But, 4. He promises him the same rewards that he had promised them, if he would do it, v. 16. It was strange that the magicians, when now, and in Nebuchadnezzar's time, once and again, they were nonplussed, did not offer at something, to save their credit; if they had with a good assurance said, This is the meaning of such a dream, such a fraud as this! His majesty would have disdained it; but God ordered it, that they had nothing at all to say, as, when Christ was born, the heathen oracles were struck dumb.

III. The interpretation which Daniel gave of these mystic characters, which was so far from easing the king of his fears, that we may suppose it increased them rather. Daniel was now in years, and Belshazzar was young; and therefore he seems to take a greater liberty of dealing plainly and roundly with him than he had done upon the like occasions with Nebuchadnezzar. In reproving any man, especially great men, there is need of wisdom to consider all circumstances: for they are the reproofs of instruction, that are the way of life. In Daniel's discourse here,

1. He undertakes to read the writing which gave them this alarm, and to show them the interpretation of it, v. 17. He shrugs the offer he made him of rewards, is not pleased that it was mentioned, for he is none of those that divine for money; what gratitudes Belshazzar gave him afterward, he thankfully accepted, but he scorned to induct for them, or to read the writing to the king, for and in consideration of such and such honours promised him. Note, We must not seek gifts to be to ourselves; they will be long time, and give thy fee to another, to any of the wise men which thou wou'dst have most wished to earn it; I value it not." Daniel sees his kingdom now at its last gasp, and therefore looks with contempt upon his gifts and rewards. And thus should we despise all the gifts and rewards this world can give, did we see, as we may by faith, its final period hastening on. Let it be its perishing not to have the credit of being the means of a work done for two of our eyes and hearts upon; but let us do our duty in the world, do it all the real service we can, read God's writing to it in a profession of religion, and by an agreeable conversation, make known the interpretation of it, and then trust God for his gifts, his rewards, in comparison with which all the world can give is mere trash and nothing. He describes to the king God's dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar, which were intended for instruction and warning to him, v. 18.—21. This is not intended for a flourish or an amusement, but is a necessary preliminary to the interpretation of the writing. Note, That we may understand aright what God is doing with us, it is of use to us to review what he has done with others.
(1.) He describes the great dignity and power to which the Divine Providence had advanced Nebuchadnezzar; (v. 18, 19.) He had a kingdom, and majesty, and honour, far above what any heathen prince ever had before him; he thought that he got it by his own extraordinary conduct and courage, and ascribed his successes to a projecting, active genius of his own; but Daniel tells him, who now enjoyed what he had laboured for, that it was the most high God, the God of gods, and Lord of kings, as Nebuchadnezzar himself had call'd God, and gave power to him, that dominion, that vast dominion, that majesty wherewith he presided in the affairs of it, and that glory and honour which by his prosperous management he had acquired. Note, Whatever degree of outward prosperity any arrive to, they must own that it is of God's giving, not their own getting. Let it never be said, My might, and the power of my hand, hath gotten me this wealth, this preferment; but let it always be remembered that it is God that gives men power to get wealth, and gives success to their endeavours. Now the power which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar is here described to be very great in respect both of ability and of authority. [1.] His ability was so strong, that it was irresistible; such was the might of his power, that God gave power to him, walk he had at commandment, and such an admirable des- terity he had at commanding them, that, which way soever his sword turned, it prospered; he could cap tivate and subdue nations by threatening them, without striking a stroke, for all people trembled and feared before him, and would compound with him for their lives upon any terms. See what force is, and what the fear of it does. It is that by which the brutal part of the world, even of the world of mankind, both governs, and is governed. [2.] His authority was so absolute, that it was uncontrollable. The power which was allowed him, which descend ed upon him, or which, at least, he assumed, was without contradiction, was absolute and despotic, none shared with him either in the legislative or in the executive part of it; but in dispensing punishments, he condemned or acquitted at pleasure; Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive; though both were equally innocent, or equally guilty. The Jesuit cuenta The power of life and death, was entirely in his hand. In dispensing rewards he granted or denied preferments at pleasure; Whom he would he set up, and whom he would he cast down; so that no man could evade him without giving a reason so much as to himself; but it is all ex mea ment—of his own good pleasure, and at his own benevolence. His will stands for a reason. Such was the constitution of the eastern monarchies, such the manner of their kings. (2.) He sets before him the sins which Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of, whereby he had prov ed himself God's enemy, and had provoked God to bring, not a slight, but a severe punishment upon him. He did him no good, he was neither a beneficent nor a prudent, no, but an abomi nably oppressive to God. He had preferred ungodly men to the great detriment of the public; for this he is accountable to the most high God that gave him his power. Note, It is a very hard and rare thing for men to have an absolute, arbitrary power, and not to make an ill use of it. Camden has a distich of Giraldus, wherein he speaks of it as a rare instance, common among the ancients, that Henry the Second of England, that never any man had so much power, and did so little hurt with it.
signed contempt of him, hast praised the gods of silver and gold, which see not, nor hear, nor know any thing, as if they were to be preferred before the God that sees, and hears, and knows every thing. So were they ashamed to the words of this man, and were well enough pleased with gods that neither see, nor hear, nor know, for then they may sin securely; but they will find, to their confusion, that though those are the gods they choose, those are not the gods they must be judged by, but one to whom all things are naked and open.

(3.) That he had not answered the end of his creation and existence; The God in whose hands thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. This is a general charge, which stands good against us all; let us consider how we shall answer it. Observe, [1.] Our dependence upon God as our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Owner, and Ruler; not only from his hand our breath was at first, but in his hand our breath is still; it is he that holds our souls in life, and if he take away our breath we die. Our times being in his hand, so is our breath, by which our times are measured. In him we live, and move, and have our being; we live by him, live upon him, and cannot live without him. The way of man is not in himself, not at his own command, at his own disposal, but his are all our ways; for our hearts are in his hand, and so are the hearts of all men, of all sorts, of all nations. [2.] Our duty to God, in consideration of this dependence, we ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his service, to make it our care to please him, and our business to praise him. [3.] Our default in this duty, notwithstanding that dependence; we have not done it; for we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God. This is the foundation of all, he that is without sin among you is first cast out. [2.] Our duty to God, in consideration of this dependence, we ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his service, to make it our care to please him, and our business to praise him. [3.] Our default in this duty, notwithstanding that dependence; we have not done it; for we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God. This is the foundation of all, he that is without sin among you is first cast out.

4. He now proceeds to read the sentence, as he found it written upon the wall: "Then" (says Daniel) "when thou wast come to such a height of impiety as thus to transgress upon the most sacred things, in that thou wast in the midst of thy sacrilegious, idolatrous feast, then was the part of the hand, the writing fingers, sent from him, from that God whom thou didst so daringly affront, and whom thou hadst so long with thee, but would bear no longer; he sent them, and this writing; thou now seest, was written, v. 24. It is he that now writes bitter things against thee, and makes thee to pjomove thy iniquities," Job xxxiii. 26. Note, As the sins of sinners are written in the book of God's omniscience, so the doom of sinners is written in the book of God's law; and the day is coming when these books shall be opened, and they shall be judged by them.

Now the writing was, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Uphaaar- su, v. 25. It is well that we have an authentic instance of what is called in Scripture the writing of things to come, and the future; so that we may have some insight into what the future will be. [1.] Mene; that is repeated, for the thing is certain. [2.] Mene; that is, to be numbered, as in Hebrew and Chaldee, He has numbered and finished; which Daniel explains thus, (v. 26.) "God has numbered thy kingdom, the years and days of the continuance of it; these were numbered in the counsel of God, and now they are finished; the term is expired for and during which thou wast to hold it, and now it must be surrendered. Here is an end of thy kingdom.

(2.) Tekel; that signifies, in Chaldee, Thou art weighed, and in Hebrew, Thou art too light. So Dr. Lightfoot. For this king and his actions are weighed in the just and unerring balances of divine equity. God does as perfectly know his true character as the goldsmith knows the weight of that which he has weighed in the nicest scales. God does not give judgment against him till he has first pondered his actions, and considered the merits of his case. But thou art found wanting unworthily to have such a trust lodged in thee, a vain, light, empty man; a man of no weight or consideration.

(3.) Upharsin; which should be rendered, and Pheres, or Persia. Persia, in Hebrew, signifies the Persians; Persin, in Chaldee, signifies divining; Daniel puts both together; (v. 28.) Thy kingdom is divided, is rent from thee, and given to the Medes and Persians, as a prey to be divided among them.

Now this may, without any force, be applied to the doom of sinners. Mene, Tekel, Persia, may easily be made to signify, death, judgment, and hell. At death, the sinner's days are numbered and finished; after death, the judgment, when he will be weighed in the balance, and found wanting; and after judgment, the sinner will be cut asunder, and given to the devil and his angels. Daniel does not here give Belshazzar such advice and encouragement to repent as he had given Nebuchadnezzar, because he saw the decree was gone forth, and he would not be allowed any space to repent.

One would have thought that Belshazzar would have been exasperated against Daniel, and seeing his own doom decreed against him, and against him. But he was so far convicted by his own conscience of the reasonableness of all he said, that he objected nothing against it; but, on the contrary, gave Daniel the reward he promised him, put on him the scarlet gown, and the gold chain, and proclaimed him the third ruler in the kingdom; (v. 28.) because he would be as good as his word, and because it was not Daniel's fault if the exposition of the hand-writing was not such as he desired. Note, Many show great respect to God's prophets, who yet have no regard to his word. Daniel did not value these titles and ensigns of honour, yet would not refuse them, because they were tokens of his prince's good will; but we have reason to think that he received them with a smile, foreseeing how soon they would all wither with him that had bestowed them. They were like Joshua's gourd, which came up in a night, and perished in a night, and therefore it was folly for him to be exceeding glad of them.

30. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Here is, 1. The death of the king. Reason enough he had to tremble, for he was just falling into the hands of the king of terrors. v. 30. In that night, when his heart was merry with wine, the besiegers broke into the city, aimed at the palace, where they found the king, and gave him his death's wound; he could not find any place so secret as to conceal him, or so strong as to protect him. Heathen writers speak of Cyrus's taking Babylon by surprise, with the assistance of two deserters that showed him the best way into the city. And it was foretold what a consternation it would be to the court, Jer.
Daniel does not give a continued history of the reigns in which he lived, nor of the state-affairs of the kingdoms of Chaldea and Persia, though he was himself a great man in those affairs; for what are those to us? But he selects such particular passages of story as serve for the concern of God, and the encouragement of our obedience to him; for the things written aforetime were written for our learning. It is a very observable, instructive story that we have in this chapter, how Daniel by faith stopped the mouths of lions, and gave a good report, Heb. xi. 33. The three children were cast into the fiery furnace for not committing a known sin, Daniel was cast into the lion's den for not omitting a known duty; and God's miraculously delivering of both them and him is left upon record for the encouragement of his servants in all ages to be resolute and constant, both in their abhorrence of that which is evil, and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them. In this chapter we have, I. Daniel's preferment in the court of Darius, v. 1. 3. II. The envy and malice of his enemies against him, v. 4. 5. III. The decree they obtained against praying for thirty days, v. 6. &c. IV. Daniel's continuance and constancy in prayer, notwithstanding that decree, v. 10. V. Information given against him for it, and the casting of him into the den of the lions, v. 11. 15. VI. His miraculous preservation in the lions' den, and deliverance out of it, v. 18. 20. VII. The casting of his accusers into the den, and their destruction there, v. 24. VIII. The decree which Darius made upon this his honour of Daniel's Medecine, and the prosperity of Daniel afterward, v. 25. 26. And this God is our God for ever and ever.

1. It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2. And over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was first; that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. 4. Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; so much as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

We are here told concerning Daniel, 1. What a great man he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new-modelled the government, he made Daniel prime minister of state, set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasuries, and of the great princes, and other officers of state; and the kingdom was very large; all he got by his conquests and conquests was, that he had so many more countries to take care of; no more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He set over the kingdom 120 princes, (v. 1.) and appointed them their districts, in which they were to administer justice, and to observe the ordinances of God, and to preserve the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good as well as the sovereign; and therefore we must submit ourselves to both the king as supreme, and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, 1 Pet. ii. 13. 14. Over these princes there was a triaunvrite, or three presidents, who were to take and state the public accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of mal-administration, that the king should have no damage, (v. 2.) that he should not sustain loss in his revenue, and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject, for by that the king (whether he thinks so or no) receives real damage, both as it alienates the affections of his people from him, and provokes the designs of his God against him. Of these three Daniel was the chief, because he was found to go beyond them all in all manner of princely qualifications. He was preferred above the presidents and princes; (v. 3.) and so wonderfully well pleased the king was with his management, that he thought to set him over the whole realm, and let him place and dispose at his pleasure.

Now, (1.) We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius, that he would prefer a man thus purely for his personal merit, and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served, must go by that rule. Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason, one would think, should have been looked upon as an enemy, and as such imprisoned or banished; he was a man of great endowments, and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive; but Darius, it seems, was very quick-sighted in judging of men's capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore, though no doubt, he had creatures of his own, yet a few, that expected preferment in this newly-modelled kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the public welfare, that finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being divinely inspired, he made him his right hand. (2.) We must take notice of it, to the glory of God, that though Daniel was now very old, (it is above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon,) yet he was as able as ever for business both in body and mind; and that he who had continued faithful to his religion, through all the temptations of the foregoing reigns, in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a shallow; by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliability to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God, he will honour them.

2. What a good man he was; An excellent spirit was in him, v. 3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject
and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was no error, or fault, to be found in him, v. 4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery or dishonesty, but not even with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead misunderstanding or want of fitness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of public trust, to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free, not only from fault, but from error; not only from crime, but from mistake.

3. What all this was borne him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him, because he excelled them, and, probably, hated him, because he had a watchful eye upon them, and took care they should not wrong the government, to enrich themselves. See here, (1.) The cause of envy; and that is everything that is good. Solomon complains of it as vexation, that for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour; (Eccl. iv. 4.) that the better a man is, the worse he is thought of by his rivals. Daniel is envied because he has a more excellent spirit than his neighbours. (2.) The effect of envy; and that is everything that is bad. Those that envied Daniel, sought not less than his ruin; his disgrace would not serve them, it was his death that they desired. Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who can stand before envy? Prov. xxx. did not all the presidents and princes unite against Daniel, who was placed over his in the management of his place; they sought to find occasion against him, something on which to ground an accusation concerning the kingdom; some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person borne hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked. And if they could but have found the mote, the muck-hill, of a mistake that had been made, they would have brought the beam, to the mountain, of an unpardonable misdemeanor. But they could find no occasion against him; they owned that they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, because of his observers, Ps. xxvii. 11. Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly, because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. These especially have need to carry their caji even, that it have it full. They concluded, at length, that they should not find any occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God, v. 5. It seems then that Daniel kept up the profession of his religion, and held it fast without wavering or shrinking; and yet that was no bar to his preferment: there was no law that required him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitated him to bear office in the state, unless he were. It was all one to the king what God he prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well; he was at the king's service sine qua non—so far as the altar; but there he left him. In this matter therefore his enemies hoped to insure him. Quæverunt et crimen, (Jer. xxx. 36.; 2 Chron. xxiv. 3; 27; 32.) the charge brought against him could not be charged upon him, he was accused of impiety, Grotius. Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion conduct themselves so inoffensively in their whole conversation, that their most watchful, spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which their work according to their conscience or courage. It is observable that when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left, that they did not soburn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was innocent of, and to swear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews, and are called Christians.

6. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live forever. 7. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. 10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him from any law now in being; they therefore contrived a new law, by which they hope to insinuate him, and in a matter in which they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God, that they gained their point. Here is, 1. Darius's impious law. I call it Darius's because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it would not have been enacted. King Darius was not only以後 it had been contrived it not, and was perfectly wheeled to consent to it. The presidents and princes framed the edict, brought in the bill, and by their management it was agreed to by the convention of the states, who perhaps were met at this time upon some public occasion; it is pretended that this bill which they would have to pass into a law, was the result of mature deliberation, that all these presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counselors, and captains, had consulted together about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but advised it, for divers good causes and considerations, that they had done what they could to establish it for a firm decree, may, they intimate to the king, that it was carried nemine contradicente—unanimously; All the presidents are of this mind; and yet we are sorely to blame, if we think because Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it; and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it, as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation, which is far from being so; and that which few apprehend, is sometimes confirmed by many, and raised into an establishment. This code, out of the iniquity of kings, who, being under a necessity of seeing and hearing with other people's eyes and ears, are many times wretchedly imposed upon! These designing men, under colour of being bidden to the king, but really intending the ruin of his favourite, press him to pass this into a law, and make it a royal statute, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, should be put to death after the most barbarous manner, should be cast into the den of lions, v. 7. This is the bill they have been hatchling, and they lay it before the king to be signed, and passed into a law. Now, 1. There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great, and
very kind to his subjects, which, they suggest, will be of good service to him now that he is newly come to his throne, and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need apply themselves either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And besides the petitions, Daniel gives occasion to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings, to be benefactors to their subjects, and to have their ears open to their complaints and requests; but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them, which is due to God only, it is manifest that they aim at nothing short of the Person of God. There is a great deal in it that is apparently evil; it is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of any man, must not a beggar ask an alms, or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? If the child want bread, must he not ask of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? Nay, they that have business with the king, may they not pretend those about him to introduce them? But it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition of any god. It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God, and so keep up our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days, is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man, and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature teaches us that the providence of God has the ordering and disposing of all our affairs, does not the law of nature oblige us by prayer to acknowledge God, and seek to him? Does not every man's heart direct him, when he is in want or distress, to call upon God, and must this be made high treason? We could not live a day without God; and can men live thirty days without prayer? Will the king himself be tied up so long as he is praying to God; or if he be allowed to, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? Did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities malice will drive men to. Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews from praying to their God, Daniel and his friends were so free to express that they knew the king would not pass such a law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a little god, was fond of the feather in his cap, (for so it was, and not a flower in his crown,) and signed the writing and the decree, (v. 9,) which, being once done according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, was irrevocable, and any pretence whatsoever to be altered or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

II. Daniel's pious disobedience to this law, v. 10. He did not retire into the country, or abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelling against him; but because he knew it was so, therefore he stood his ground, knowing that he had now a firm hold of the king, and a pleasing impression upon him, and showing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he might have gone to the king, and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misrepresentation that all the presidents had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them, and who was next in the order of the ministry, and first sent to his house, and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe,

1. Daniel's constant practice, which we were not informed of before this occasion, but which we have reason to think was the general practice of the pious Jews. (1.) He prayed in his house, sometimes himself alone, and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that prayed in his house, Acts x. 50. Note, Every house not only may be, but ought to be, a house of prayer. There are all who have an altar, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices. (2.) In every prayer he gave thanks, when we pray to God for the mercies we want, we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. (3.) In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as his God, his in covenant; and set himself as in his presence, and did this with a regard to God. (4.) When he prayed and gave thanks, he kneeled upon his knees, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility, and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, when it concerns to be important. (5.) He opened the windows of his chamber, that the sight of the visible heavens might aid him in his prayer, and be a remembrance of that God who dwells above the heavens: but that was not all; he opened them toward Jerusalem, the holy city, though now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very stones and dust, (Ps. cxi. 14,) and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. This, though he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his nation, and a dependence upon that God who was in their behalf and preferring it before his chief joy, Ps. cxxvii. 5, 6. Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was, that if his people should in the land of their enemies pray unto him with their eye toward the land which he gave them, and the city he had chosen, and the house which was built to his name, then he would hear and maintain their cause, (1 Kings vii. 48, 49,) to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions. (6.) He did this three times a day, three times every day, according to the example of David, (Ps. lv. 17,) Morning, evening, and at noon I will pray. It is good to have our hours of prayer, not to bind, but to mind, conscience; we think it would not be amiss to have refreshments of them by food thrice a day, that we may thus be enabled to observe our souls? This is surely as little as may be to answer the command of praying always. (7.) He did this so openly and avowedly, that all who knew him, knew it to be his practice; and he thus showed it, not because he was proud of it, (in the place where he was, there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation, but reproach, that attended it,) but because he was not ashamed of it. Though Daniel was a great man, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker, and to be his own chaplain; though he was an old man, he did not think himself past it, nor, though it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well-doing. Though he was a man of business, vast business, for the service and the public good, he had time to take a leaf out of God's book, and to set apart an hour in the day from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable then are they who have but little time to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer, and for success in it; (Ezek. xiv. 14,) and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of prayer, and making a business of it daily; and in this practice he shewed the success of it.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. When he knew that the writing was signed, he continued to do so he did aforetime, and altered not one
circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life; he might have prayed so much the oftener when those days were expired, and the danger was over, or he might have performed the duty at another time, and another place, so secretly, that it should not be possible for his enemies to discover it; and so he might both satisfy his conscience, and keep up his commi-
nion with God, and yet avoid the law, and continue in his usefulness: but if he had done so, it would have been thought, both by his friends and by his enemies, that he had thrown up the duty for this time, through cowardice and base fear, which would have tended very much to the dishonour of God and the discour-
gagement of his friends. Others who moved in a lower sphere, might well enough act with, caution; but Daniel, who has so many eyes upon him, must act with courage; and the rather because he knows that the law, when it was made, was particularly levelled against him. Note, We must not omit duty for fear of suffering, no, nor so much as seem to come short of it. In trying times, great stress is laid upon our confessing Christ before men; (Matt. x. 32) and we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we be found guilty of cowardice in the cause of God. If we do not think that this example of Daniel obliges us to do likewise, yet I am sure it does set us an example of courage, for he exposed himself in it. By his constancy to his duty it now appears that he had never been used to admit any excuse for the omission of it; for if ever any excuse would have served to put it by, this would have served now. (1.) That it was forbidden by the king his master, and in honour of the king too; but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, We are to obey God rather than men. (2.) That it would be the loss of his life: but it is an undoubted maxim, in answer to that, They who throw away their souls, (as those certainly do, that live without prayer,) to save their lives, make but a bad bargain for themselves; and though herein they make them-

selfs, like the king of Tyre, wiser than Daniel, at their end they will be fools.

11. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. 12. They came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 13. Then answered they, and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the captivity of the children of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a-day. 14. Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him. 15. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no de-

cree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. 16. Then the king com-
manded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. 17. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Here is, 1. Proof made of Daniel's praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary; (v. 11.) These men assembled; they came tumultu-
ously together, the whole number that were used, v. 6. borrowed from Ps. ii. 1. Why do the heathen rage? They came together, to visit Daniel, perhaps under pretence of business, at that time which they knew to be his usual hour of devotion; and if they had not found him so engaged, they would have upbraided him with his faint-heartedness, and distrust of his God; but (which they rather feared to suspect) they found him praying and making supplication before his God. For his love they are his adversaries; but like his father Da-

vid, he gives himself unto prayer, Ps. cix. 4.

2. Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning the law of his God, they lost no time, but applied them-
selves to the king, (v. 12.) and having appealed to him, who was the law, he was the public state, which can call nothing his own but what he has by the king's favour, and yet he regards not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed. Note, It is no new thing for that which is done faithfully, in con-
science toward God, to be misrepresented as done obstinately and in contempt of the civil powers, that is, for the best saints to be reproached as the worst men. Daniel regarded God, and therefore prayed, and then he had cause to complain to the king and his government, yet this is construed as not regard-
ing the king. That excellent spirit which Daniel was endued with, and that established reputation which he had gained, could not protect him from these poisonous darts. They do not say, He makes his petition to his God, lest Darius should take notice of that to his praise, but only He makes his petition, which is the thing the law forbids. The great concern the king was in hereupon.

He now perceived that, whatever they pretended, it was not to honour him, but in spite to Daniel, that they had proposed that law, and now he is sore displeased with himself, for gratifying them in it, v. 14. Note, When men indulge a proud vainglorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not, but their persecutors for them are the greatest consiles; their flatterers may prove their tormentors, and are but spreading a net for their feet. Now the king sets his heart to deliver Daniel; both by argument and by authority he la-
bours till the going down of the sun to deliver him, to persuade his accusers not to insist upon his prose-
cution. Note, We often do that, through inconsideration, which after a while we repent of, and do again; which is a good reason why we should ponder the faith of our feet, for then all our ways will be established.

4. The violence with which the prosecutors de-
manded judgment, v. 15. We are not told what Daniel said; the king himself is his advocate, he needs not plead his own case, but silently commits himself and it to him that judges righteously; but the prosecutors insist upon it, that the law must have its course; it is a fundamental maxim in the constitution of the government of the Medes and Persians, which is now become a universal statute, that there could be no occasion to alter it, or dispense with it, as if any human foresight could, in framing a law, guard against all inconveniences. But, if this maxim be duly applied to Daniel's case, (as I am apt to think it is, but perverted,) it honours the king's legislative power, it hampers his executive power, and incapacitates him to show that mercy which upholds the throne, and to pass laws for indemnities, which are the glories of a reign. Those who allow not the sovereign's power to dispense with a disabling statute, yet never question his power to pardon an offence against a penal statute. But Darius is denied this power. See what need we have to pray for princes, that God would give them wisdom, for they are often embroiled in great difficulties, even the wisest and best are.

5. The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself, with the utmost reluctance, and against his conscience, signs the warrant for his execution; and Daniel, that venerable, grave man, who carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in his person, who was so often looked upon the universal monarch, and his majesty great upon the bench, and at the council-board, and greater upon his knees, who had power with God and man, and had prevailed, is brought, purely for worshipping his God, as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and thrown into the den of lions, to be devoured by them, v. 16. One cannot think of it without the utmost compassion to the guilty parties, and the utmost contempt on the executors, and justly, too, the four ungodly prosecutors. To make sure work, the stone laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed, and the king (an over-easy man) is persuaded to do it with his own signet, (v. 17.) that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel fails by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signets too. Thus when Christ was buried, his adversaries sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

6. The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God; Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee, v. 16. Here, (1.) He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do that which was good and right. (2.) He leaves it to God to deliver him from punishment, should he not prevail to do it; He will deliver thee. He is sure that his God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an almighty God, and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel's companions in a like case from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who approve themselves faithful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

18. Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting; neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him. 19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; and the king spake and said unto Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel out up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. 24. And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Here is, 1. The melancholy night which the king had, upon Daniel's account, v. 18. He had said indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger; and justify that God deprived him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He went to his palace, vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself unwise and unjust for not adhering to the law of God and nature, with a non obstante—a negative, to the law of the Medes and Persians. He ate no supper, but passed the night fasting: his heart was already full of grief and fear. He forgot not, for a moment, the things that he had sung to a heavy heart. He went to his palace, and could not get no sleep; was full of toasting and fretting till the dawning of the day. Note, The best way to have a good night is, to keep a good conscience; then we may lay ourselves down in peace.

2. The solicitous inquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, v. 19, 20. He was up early, very early; for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him? And he was no sooner up than he went in haste to the den of lions, for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant, (that would not sufficiently testify his affection to Daniel,) nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes that God had graciously undone what he had wickedly done, he cries with a lamentable voice, as one full of concern and trouble, O Daniel, art thou alive? He longer to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey; O Daniel, servant of the living God, has thy God whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? If he might not understand himself when he called him the living God, he could not doubt of his ability to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself, quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit in this case to exer-
his power? What he doubted of, we are sure of,
that the servants of the living God have a Master
who is well able to protect them, and bear them out
in his service.
3. The joyful news he meets with—that Daniel
is alive, is safe and well, and unhurt in the lions' den,
v. 21, 22. Daniel knew the king's voice, though
it was now a lamentable voice, and spake to
him with all the deference and respect that were
due to a precious jewel in his kingdom. He does not re-
prove him for his unkindness to him, and his cai-
ness in yielding to the malice of his prosecutors;
but, to show that he has heartily forgiven him, he
meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should
not upbraid those with the coldness they have done us,
who, we know, did them with reluctance, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them.
The king decreed that Daniel should have the
king's office, and that the crier should be sent to
him: Before Daniel gives the king the very
plausible answer, it is triumphant.
(1.) God has preserved his life by a miracle.
Darius had called him Daniel's God; (thy God
whom thou servest;) to which Daniel does as it were
say back, Yes, he is my God, whom I own, and
who owns me, for he has sent his angel; the same
bright and glorious Being that was seen in the form
of the son of God with the three children in the
heated furnace, live for ever, and ever. Daniel,
who has a visible appearance enlightened the dark den,
and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut
the lions' mouths, that they had not in the least
hurt him. The angel's presence made even the
lions' den his strong hold, his palace, his paradise;
he never had had a better night in his life. See
the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and
believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that goes
about, inhumanly seeking to devour, from bursting
those that are his. See the care God takes of his
faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them
out to suffer for him. If he keep their souls from
sin, comfort their souls with his peace, and receive
their souls to himself, he does in effect shut the
lions' mouths, that they cannot hurt them. See
how ready the angels are to minister for the good
of God's people, for they own themselves their fel-
novomates.
(2.) God has therein pleased his cause. He was
represented to the king as disaffectioned to him and his
government; we do not find that he said any thing
in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear up
his integrity as the light; and he did it effectually
by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel,
in what he had done, had not offended either God
or the king; whom I prayed to, innocency was found in me.
He pretends not to a meri-
torious excellence; but the testimony of his con-
science concerning his sincerity is his comfort; As
also that before thee, O king, I have done no hurt,
nor designed thee any affront.
4. The discharge of Daniel from his confinement.
His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satis-
, fied, though they are not, or, he is absolved, it is
by far more superior to that of the Medes and Per-
sians; and therefore no cause can be shown why
Daniel should not be fetched out of the den; (v. 23.)
The king was exceeding glad to find him alive, and
gave orders immediately that they should take him
out of the den, as Jeremiah out of the dungeon; and
which they searched, no manner of hurt was found
among him, he was not wounded nor bruised, nor
was kept perfectly well, because he believed in his
God. Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust
in God to protect them in the way of their duty,
shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in
him, but shall always find him a present Help.
5. The committing of his prosecutors to the same
prison, or place of execution rather, v. 24. Daniel
is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and
now begins to take courage, and act like himself.
Those that would not suffer him to show mercy to
Daniel, shall, now that God has done it for him, be
made to feel his resentments; and he will do justice
for God who had showed mercy for him. Daniel's
accusers, now that his innocence is cleared, and
Heaven itself is become his Compurgator, have the
same punishment inflicted upon them which they
designed against him, according to the law of retali-
ation. Such were they that should have been crushed:
they should have been made to feel the sharpness of
the sword, in the downfall of the accuser. Such were
they to be reckoned now that Daniel was proved
innocent; for though the fact was true, yet
it was not a fault. They were cast into the den of
lions, which perhaps was a punishment newly in-
vented by themselves; however, it was what they
maliciously designed for Daniel. Nee lex est justi-
tior nulla, quam neces artifices arte perire sole:—No
law can be more just than that which adjudg'd the
divers of barbarity to perish by it, Ps. xvi. 13, 16.
—ix. 15, 16. And now Solomon's observation is
verified, (Prov. xi.) The righteous is delivered out
of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead.
In this execution we may observe, (1.) The king's
severity in ordering their wives and children to be
thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are
God's statutes above those of the nations! For God
must appear to be just against false accusers. Deut.
xxiv. 16. Yet it was done in extraordinary cases, as that of Achan, and Saul, and
Haman. (2.) The lions' fierceness. They had the
mastery of them immediately, and tore them to
pieces before they came to the bottom of the den.
This verified and magnified the miracle of their
sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was
not because they had not appetite, but because they
had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled,
are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off;
so were these lions. And the Lord is known by
these judgments which he executes.
25. Then king Darius wrote unto all people,
nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth;
Peace be multiplied unto you. 26. I make a decree, That in every
domion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is
the living God, and steadfast for ever, and
his kingdom that which shall not be destroy-
ed, and his dominion shall be even unto the
end. 27. He delivereth and rescueth, and
he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and
in earth, who hath delivered Daniel
from the power of the lions. 28. So this
Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius,
and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.
Darius here studieth to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel,
in casting Daniel into the lion's den, by doing ho-
our to both.
1. He gives honour to God by a decree published
to all nations, by which they are required to fear
before him. And this is a decree which is indeed
fit to be made inalterable, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians; for God, in the
gospel, preached to them that dwell on the earth,
Rev. xiv. 7. Fear God, and give glory to him.
Observe, (1.) To whom he sends this decree: to all
people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all
the earth, v. 25. These are great words, and it is
ture that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged
to that which is here decreed; but here they mean
no more than every dominion of his kingdom,
which, though it contained many nations, contained
not all nations; but so it is, those that have much,
are ready to think they have all. (2.) What the
matter of the decrees? That men tremble and fear
before the God of Daniel. This goes farther than
Nebuchadnezzar’s decree upon the like occasion,
for that only restrained people from speaking amiss
of this God; but this requires them to fear before
him, to keep up and express awful, reverent
thoughts of him. And well might this decree be
prefaced, I think, with this Peace be made with
you: for the only foundation of true and abundant
peace is laid in the fear of God; for that is true
wisdom. If we live in the fear of God, and walk
according to that rule, peace shall be upon us.
Peace shall be multiplied to us. But though this
decree goes far, it does not go far enough; had he
done right, and come up to his present convictions,
he should have commanded all men not only to
tremble and fear before this God, but to love him
and trust in him, to forsake the service of their
idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him as
Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so
deeply rooted, that it was not to be extirpated by
the edicts of princes, not by any power less than
that, which went along with the glorious gospel of
Christ. (3.) And this came under the convictions
moving him to make this decree. They are
sufficient to have justified a decree for the total sup-
pression of idolatry, much more will they serve to
support this. There is good reason why all men
should fear before this God: for, [1.] His being is
transcendent. He is the living God; lives as a
God, whereas the gods we worship are dead things,
have not so much as an animal life. [2.] His go-

government is incontestable; he has a kingdom, and
a dominion; he not only lives, but reigns as an abso-
lute Sovereign. [3.] Both his being and his go-

government are unchangeable. He is himself stead-
fast for ever, and with him is no shadow of turning.
And his kingdom too is that which shall not be de-
stroyed by any external force, nor has his dominion
any thing in itself that threatens a decar or tends
towards it, and therefore it shall be even to the end.
[4.] He has an ability sufficient to support such an
authority, v. 27. He delivers his faithful servants
from trouble, and rescues them out of trouble; he
works signs and wonders, quite above the utmost
power of nature to effect, both in heaven and on
dearth, by which it appears that he is sovereign
both in heaven and earth. He has given a dream of
all this, in delivering his servant Daniel, from the
power of the lions. This miracle, and that of the
delivering of the three children, were wrought in
the eye of the world, were seen, published, and at-
tested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever
were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first
principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow
scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the
counsels of Hercules, and proper preparations for
pure catholic Christianity.

2. He puts honour upon Daniel; (v. 28.) So this
Daniel prospered. See how God brought to him
good out of evil. This bold stroke which his en-
emies made at his life, was a happy occasion of tak-
ing them off, and their children too, who other-
wise would still have stood in the way of his prefer-
ment, and have been upon all occasions vexations to
him; and now he prospered more than ever, was
more in favour with his prince and in reputation
with the people; which gave him a great oppor-
tunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus out of
the eater (and that was a lion too) came forth meat,
and out of the strong sweetness.

CHAP. VII.

The six former chapters of this book were historical; we
now enter with fear and trembling upon the six latter,
which are prophetical, wherein are many things dark,
and hard to be understood, which we dare not positively
determine the sense of, and yet many things plain and
profitable, which I trust God will enable us to make a
good use of. In this chapter, we have, 1. Daniel’s vision
of the four beasts, v. 1–13. II. His vision of God’s
throne of government and judgment, v. 9. 14. III. The
interpretation of these visions, given him by an angel
that stood by, v. 15. 28. Neither of them look as far into
the end of time, or whether they were to have a speedy accomplishment, is hard to say, nor
are the most judicious interpreters agreed concerning it.

1. In the first year of Belshazzar king of
Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and
visions of his head upon his bed: then he
wrote the dream, and told the sum of the
matters. 2. Daniel spake and said, I saw
in my vision by night, and, behold, the four
winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.
3. And four great beasts came up from the
sea, diverse one from another. 4. The first
was like a lion, and had eagles’ wings: I
beheld till the wings thereof were plucked,
and it was lifted up from the earth, and
made stand upon the feet as a man, and a
man’s heart was given to it. 5. And, be-
hold, another beast, a second, like to a bear,
and it raised itself upon one side, and it
had three ribs in the mouth of it between the
teeth of it: and they said thus unto it,
Arise, devour much flesh. 6. After this I
beheld, and lo, another, like a leopard,
which had upon the back of it four wings of
a fowl: the beast had also four heads; and
dominion was given to it. 7. After this I
saw in the night visions, and, behold, a
fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and
strong exceedingly; and it had great iron
teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and
stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it
was diverse from all the beasts that were
before it; and it had ten horns. 8. I con-
sidered the horns, and, behold, there came
up among them another little horn, before
whom there were three of the first horns
plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in
this horn were eyes like the eyes of man,
and a mouth speaking great things.

The date of this chapter places it before ch. v.
which was in the last year of Belshazzar, and ch. 6.
which was in the first of Darius; for Daniel had
those visions in the first year of Belshazzar, when
the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was drawing
ear a period. Belshazzar’s name here is, in the
original, spelled differently from what is used to be;
before it was Bel-she-azar—Bel is he that treasures
up riches. But this is Bel-eshe-azar—Bel is on fire
by the enemy. Bel was the god of the Chaldeans;
he had prospered, but is now to be consumed.
We have, in these verses, Daniel’s vision of the
four monarchies that were oppressive to the Jews.
Observe,

The circumstances of this vision. Daniel had
interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and now he
is himself honoured with like divine discoveries; (v.
1.) He had visions of his head upon his bed, when
he was asleep: so God sometimes revealed himself
and his mind to the children of men, when deep sleep fell upon them, Job xxxiii. 15. For when we are most retired from the world, and taken off from the things of sense, we are most fit for communion with God. But when he was awake, he wrote the dream for his own use, lest he should forget it as a dream which passes away; and he told the sum of the matters to his brethren the Jews for their use, and gave it in writing; that it might be communicated to those at a distance, and preserved for their children after them, who should see these things accomplished. The Jews, misunderstanding some of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, flattered themselves with hopes, that, after their return to their own land, they should enjoy a complete and uninterrupted tranquillity; but that they might not so deceive themselves, and their calamities be made doubly grievous by the disappointment, God by this prophet lets them know that they shall have tribulation; these promises of their prosperity were to be accomplished in the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of grace; as Christ has told his disciples they must expect persecution, and the promises they depend upon will be accomplished in the eternal blessings of the kingdom of glory. Daniel both wrote these things, and spake them, to intimate that the church should be taught both by the scriptures, and by ministers' preaching, both by the written word, and by word of mouth; and ministers in their preaching are to tell the sum of the matters thus set forth.

II. The vision itself, which foretells the revolutions of government in those nations, which the church of the Jews, for the following ages, was to be under the influence of.

1. He observed the four winds to strive upon the great sea, v. 2. They strive which should blow strongest, and at length blow alone. This represents the contests among princes for empire, and the shakings of the nations by these contests, to which those mighty monarchies, which he was now to have a prospect of, owed their rise. One wind from any point of the compass, if it blow hard, will cause a great commotion in the sea; but what a tumult must needs be: raised when the four winds strive for mastery? Is it which the kings of the earth that are in the sea, and the beasts which are in the sea, are a noisy and violent as the battle of the winds; but how is the poor sea tossed and torn, how terribly are its concussions, how violent its convulsions, while the winds are at strife which shall have the sole power of troubling it? Note, This world is like a stormy, tempestuous sea; thanks to the proud, ambitious winds that vex it.

2. He saw four great beasts come up from the sea, from the troubled waters, in which aspiring minds love to fish. The monarchs and monarchies are represented by beasts, because too often it is by brutish rage and tyranny that they are raised and supported. These beasts were diverse one from another, (v. 3.) of different shape, to denote the different genius and complexness of the nations in whose hands they were lodged.

(1.) The first beast was like a lion, v. 4. This was the Chaldean monarchy, that was fierce and strong, and made the kings absolute. This lion had eagles' wings, with which to fly upon the prey. It denotes the wonderful speed that Nebuchadnezzar made in his conquest of kingdoms. But he soon saw the wings plucked, a full stop put to the career of this strongest conqueror; but the winds had been tributaries to them, revolted from them, and make head against them; so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. It Las lost the heart of a lion, which it had been famous for, (one of our English kings was called Cæsar de Lion—Lion-heart,) has lost its courage, and is become feeble and faint, dreading every thing, and daring nothing; they are put in fear, and made to bow themselves to be but men. Sometimes the value of a nation strangely sunk, and which cowards and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nations, in an age or two becomes the tail.

(2.) The second beast was like a bear, v. 5. This was the Persian monarchy, less strong and generous than the former, but no less ravenous. This bear raised up itself on one side against the lion, and soon mastered it. It raised up one devouring motion; so something of the Persia and Media, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image were the two arms in one beast, now set up a joint government. This bear had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth, the remains of those nations it had devoured, which were the marks of its voraciousness; and yet an indication that though it had devoured much, it could not devour all; some ribs still stuck in the tooth of it, which it could not conquer. Whereupon it was said to it, Arise, devour much flesh; let alone the bones, the ribs, that cannot be conquered, and set upon that which will be an easier prey. The princes will stir up both the kings and the people to push on their conquests, and let nothing stand before them. Note, Conquests, unjustly made, are but like those of the beasts of prey, and in this much they resemble the lions; but they do not as they do, have their own kind, as wicked and unreasonable men do.

(3.) The third beast was like a leopard; v. 6. This was the Grecian monarchy founded by Alexander the Great, active, crafty, and cruel, like a leopard; he had four wings of a fowl; the lion seems to have had but two wings; but the leopard has four, for though Nebuchadnezzar made great despatch in his conquests, Alexander made much greater. In six years' time he gained the whole empire of Persia, a great part besides of Asia, made himself master of Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations; this beast had four heads; upon Alexander's death, his conquests were divided among his four chief captains; Seleucus Nicarnor had Asia the Great; Perdiccas, and after him Antigonus, had Asia the Less; Cassander had Macedonia, and had Syria, Cappadocia, and Phœnicia; Demetrius had Egypt. Daniel was given this beast; it was given of God, from whom alone projection comes.

(4.) The fourth beast was more fierce, and formidable, and mischievous, than any of them, unlike any of the other, nor is there any among the beasts of prey to which it might be compared, v. 7. The learned are not agreed concerning this anonymous beast; some make it to be the Roman empire, which, when it was in its glory, comprehended ten kingdoms, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Panonía, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; and then the little horn which rose by the fall of three of the other horns, (v. 8.) they make to be the Turkish empire, which rose in the room of Asia, Greece, and Egypt. Others make this fourth beast to be the kingdom of the Jews; the Seldemide, which was very cruel and oppressive to the people of the Jews, as we find in Josephus and the history of the Maccabees. And herein that empire was diverse from those which went before, that none of the preceding powers compelled the Jews to renounce their religion, but the kings of Syria did, and used them barbarously. Their armies and commanders were like the great iron teeth. The winds were their tributaries to revolte, from them, and made head against them; so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart is given to it. It has lost the heart of a lion, which it had been famous for, (one of our English kings was called Cæsar de Lion—Lion-heart,) has lost its courage, and is become feeble and faint, dreading every thing, and daring nothing; they are put in fear, and made to bow themselves to be but men. Sometimes the value of a nation strangely sunk, and which cowards and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nations, in an age or two becomes the tail.

The ten horns are then supposed to be ten kings that reigned successively in Syria; and then the little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes, the last of the ten, who by one means or other undermined three of the
kings and got the government. He was a man of great sagacity, and therefore is said to have eyes like the eyes of a man; and was very bold and daring, had a mouth speaking great things. We shall meet with him again in these prophecies.

9. I beheld till the thrones were cast down; and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow; and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 11. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. 13. I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Whether we understand the fourth beast to signify the Syrian empire, or the Roman, or the former as the figure of the latter, it is plain that these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God, in reference to the persecutions they were to suffer under God's enemies, both from the one and from the other, and from all their proud enemies, in every age; for it is written for their learning on whom the ends of the world are come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope.

Three things are here discovered, that are very encouraging.

1. That there is a judgment to come, and God is the Judge. Now men have their day, and every pretender thinks he should have his day, and struggles for it. But he that sits in heaven, laughs at them, for he sees that his day is coming, Ps. xxxvii. 13. I beheld, (v. 9.) till the thrones were cast down, not only the thrones of these beasts, but all rule, authority, and power, that are set up in opposition to the kingdom of God among men; (1 Cor. xv. 24.) such are the thrones of the kingdoms of the world, in comparison with God's kingdom; they that see them set up, need but wait awhile, and they will see them cast down. I beheld till thrones were set up, (so it may as well be read.) Christ's throne, and the throne of his Father. One of the rabbins confesses that these thrones are set up, one for God, another for the Son of David. It is the judgment that is here set, v. 10. Now this is intended, 1. To speak God's wise and righteous government of the world by his providence; and an unspeakable satisfaction it gives to all good men, in the midst of the convulsions and revolutions of states and kingdoms, that the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all; (Ps. ciii. 19.) that very God that judges the earth, Ps. lxxvii. 11.

2. Perhaps it points at the destruction brought by the providence of God upon the empire of Syria, or that of Rome, for their tyrannizing over the people of God. But, 3. It seems principally designed to describe the last judgment, for though it comes not immediately upon the fourth beast, nor till he is slain, but, though it be yet to come, perhaps many ages to come, yet it was intended that in every age the people of God should encourage themselves, under their troubles, with the belief and prospect of it. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of it, Jude 14. Does the mouth of the enemy speak about this judgment? 8. He is the Judge, and he shall judge the world, and the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Many of the New Testament predictions of the judgment to come have a plain allusion to this vision here; especially St. John's vision of it, Rev. xxi. 12. (1.) The Judge is the Ancient of days himself, God the Father, the glory of whose presence is here described. He is called the Ancient of days, because he is God, from everlasting to everlasting. Among men, we reckon that with the ancient is wisdom, and days shall speak; shall not all flesh then be silent before him who is the Ancient of days? The glory of the Judge is here set forth by his garment, which was white as snow, denoting his splendour and purity in all the administrations of his justice; and the brightness of his head white, as a pure and luminous light, and he appears venerable. (2.) The throne is very formidable. It is like the fiery flame, dreadful to the wicked that shall be summoned before it. And the throne being movable upon wheels, or, at least, the chariot in which he rode his circuit, the wheels thereof are as burning fire, to devour the adversaries; for our God is a consuming fire, and with him are everlasting burnings, Isa. xxxiv. 14. This is enlarged upon, v. 10. As to all his faithful friends there proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb a pure river of water of life, (Rev. xvi. 1.) so to all his imposable enemies there issues and comes forth from his throne a fiery stream, a stream of brimstone, (Isa. xxxv. 5.) a fire that shall devour before him. This is a just Witness, and his word a word upon the wheels. (3.) The attendants are numerous and very splendid. The Shechinah is always attended with angels, it is so here; v. 10. Thousand thousands minister to him; and ten thousand thousand stand before him. It is his glory that he has such attendants, but much more his glory that he neither needs them nor can be benefited by them. See how numerous the heavenly hosts are; there are thousands of angels; and how obsequious they were, they stand before God, ready to go on his errands, and to take the first intimation of his will and pleasure. They will particularly be employed as ministers of his justice in the last judgment; when the day of man shall come, and all the holy angels with him. Enoch prophesied that the Lord should come with his holy myriads. (4.) The process is fair and unexceptionable; The judgment is set, publicly, and openly, that all may have recourse to it; and the books are opened; as in courts of judgment among men, the proceedings are in writing and upon record, which is laid down when the cause comes to a hearing; the examination of witnesses is produced, and affidavits are read, to clear the matter of fact, the statute and common law books consulted to find out what is the law, so, in the judgment of the great day, the equity of the sentence will be as incontestably evident as if there were books opened to justify it.
II. That the proud and cruel enemies of the church of God will certainly be reckoned with, and brought down in due time, v. 11, 12. This is here represented to us,

1. In the destroying of the fourth beast, God's quarrel with this is the cause of the silence of the great Nebuchadnezzar, in which the harp spoke, bidding defiance to Heaven, and triumphing over all that is sacred; this provokes God more than anything, for the enemy to behave himself proudly, Deut. xxxvii. 27. Therefore Pharaoh must be humbled, because he has said, Who is the Lord? and has said, I will pursue, I will overtake. Enoch foretold that therefore the Lord would come to judge the world, that he may show provinces all that are ungodly, of their hard speeches, Jude 15.

Note. Great words are but idle words, for which men must give account in the great day. And see what comes of this beast that talks so big; he is slain and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. The Syrian empire, after Antiochus, was destroyed; he himself died of a miserable disease, his family was rooted out, the kings of Persia, the Parthians, and the Romans, and at length made a province of the Roman empire by Pompey. And the Roman empire itself, (if we take that for the fourth beast,) after it began to persecute Christianity, declined and wasted away, and the body of it was destroyed. So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, and be slain before thee.

2. In the diminishing and weakening of the other three beasts, v. 12.) They had their dominion taken away from them, while their wickednesses they had done to the church and people of God; but a prolonging in life was given them, for a time and a season, a set time, the bounds of which they could not pass. The power of the foregoing kingdoms was quite broken, but the people of them still remained in a mean, weak, and low condition; we may allude to this, in describing the remaining sin in the hearts of good people; they have corruptions in them, the lives of which are prolonged, so that they are not perfectly free from sin, but the dominion of them is taken away, so that sin does not reign in their mortal bodies. And thus God deals with his church's enemies; sometimes he breaks the teeth of them, (Ps. iii. 7,) when he does not break the neck of them; crushes the persecutors of the people, but they may have space to repent. And it is fit that God, in doing his own work, should take his own time and way.

III. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, and kept up, in the world, in despite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let the heathen rage and fret as long as they please, God will set his King upon his holy hill of Zion. Daniel saw him standing, and conversed and left friends with the prospect of it. This is the same with Nebuchadnezzar's foresight of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which brake in pieces the image, but in this vision there is much more of pure gospel than in that.

1. The Messiah is here called the Son of man; one like unto the Son of man; for he was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, was formed in fashion as a man. I saw one like unto the Son of man, one exactly agreeing with the idea formed in the divine counsels of him that in the fulness of time was to be the Mediator between God and man. He is like unto the Son of man, but is indeed the Son of God. Our Saviour seems plainly to refer to this vision, when he says, (John v. 27,) that the Father has therefore given him his power, execute every thought of his heart, he is the Son of man, and because he is the person whom Daniel saw in vision, to whom a kingdom and dominion were to be given. 2. He is said to come with the clouds of heaven. Some refer this to his incarnation; he descended in the clouds of heaven, came into the world unseen, as the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple in a cloud. The empires of the world were beasts that rose out of the sea; but Christ's kingdom is from above, he is the Lord from heaven. He comes with the cloud, as he came to his ascension; when he returned to the Father, the eye of his disciples followed him, till a cloud received him out of their sight, Acts i. 9. He made that cloud his chariot, wherein he rode triumphantly to the upper world. He comes swiftly, irresistibly, and comes in state, for he comes with the clouds of heaven.

3. He is here represented as having a mighty interest in Heaven. When the cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, it is worth while to inquire (as the sons of the prophets concerning Elijah in a like case) whither it carried him, whether it lodged him; and here we are told, abundantly to our satisfaction, that he came to the Ancient of days; for he ascended to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God; (John xx. 17.) from him he came forth, and came back to him, and he received him with him, and to sit down at his right hand. It was with a great deal of pleasure that he said, Now I go to him that sent me. But was he welcome? Yes, no doubt he was, for they brought him near before him; he was introduced into his Father's presence, with the attendance and adorations of all the angels of God, Heb. i. 6. God caused him to draw near and approach to him, as an Advocate and Counselor for us, (Jer. xxx. 21.) that we through him might be made nigh. By this solemn near approach, which he made to the Ancient of days, it appears that the Father accepted the sacrifice he offered, and the satisfaction he made, and was entirely well pleased with all he had done. He was brought near, as our High Priest, who for us enters within the veil, and as our Forerunner.

4. He is here represented as having a mighty influence upon this earth, v. 14. When he went to be glorified with his Father, he had a power given him over all flesh; (John xxii. 2, 3,) with the prospect of this, Daniel and his friends are here comforted, that not only the dominion of the church's enemies shall be taken away, (v. 12.) but the church's Head and best Friend shall have the dominion of his enemies given him to him every tongue shall confess, every tongue confess, Phil. ii. 9, 10. To him are given glory and a kingdom, and they are given by him who has an unquestionable right to give them, which, some think, with an eye to these words, our Saviour teaches us to acknowledge in the close of the Lord's prayer, For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. It is here foretold that the kingdom of the exalted Redeemer shall be, (1.) A universal kingdom, the only universal monarchy, whatever others have pretended to, or aimed at; All people, nations, and languages shall fear him, and be under his jurisdiction, either as his willing subjects, or as his conquered captives; to be either ruled, or overruled by him. One way or other, the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdoms. (2.) An everlasting kingdom; His dominion shall not pass away to any returns, to be glorified to any invader, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. Even the gates of hell, or the infernal powers and policies, shall not prevail against it. The church shall continue militant, to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.

15. I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him...
the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18. But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. 19. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22. Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings, 25. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time. 26. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Here is

1. The deep impressions which these visions made upon the prophet. God in them put honour upon him, and gave him satisfaction, yet not without a great delay of pain and perplexity: (v. 15.) I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body. The word here used for the body properly signifies a sheath or scabbard, for the body is no more to the soul that is the weapon, it is that which we principally to take care of. The visions of my head troubled me, and again, (v. 28.) my cogitations much troubled me. The manner in which these things were discovered to him, quite overwhemled him, and though he spake in the visions, the spirits failed him, and the trance he was in tired him, and made him faint. The things themselves that were discovered, amazed and astonished him, and put him into a confusion, till by degrees he recollected and conquered himself, and set the comforts of the vision over against the terrors of it. 11. His earnest desire to understand the meaning of them; and the care he took to find out and explain them, stood by, to one of the angels that appeared attending the Son of man in his glory, and asked him the truth, the true intent and meaning of all this. Note, It is a very desirable thing to take the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know, must ask by faithful and fervent prayer, and by accomplishing a diligent search. 11. The key that was given him; that is, into the understanding of this vision. The angel told him, and told him so plainly, that he made him know the interpretation of the things; and so made him somewhat more easy.

1. The great beasts are great kings and their kingdoms, great monarchies and their monarchies, which shall arise out of the earth, as those beasts did out of the water, v. 17. That is, But these four kings are four kings, and shall be exchanged by the kingdom of the saints; they shall subdue the earth, and their foundation is in the dust; they are of the earth, earthly, and they are written in the dust, and to the dust they shall return. 2. Daniel pretty well understands the three first beasts, but concerning the fourth he desires to be better informed, because it differed so much from the rest, and was exceeding dreadful, and not only so, but very mischievous, for it devoured and broke in pieces, v. 19. Perhaps this was it that Daniel into such a fright, and this part of the visions of his head troubled him more than any of the rest. But especially he desired to know what the little horn was, that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, and whose countenance was more fearless and formidable than that of any of his fellows, v. 21. While no more is intimated than that the children of men make war with one another, and prevail against one another, the prophet does not show himself so much concerned: (Let the shepherd strive with the shepherd of the earth, and be dashed in pieces one against another) but when they make war with the saints, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are broken as earthen pitchers, it is time to ask, "What is the meaning of this? Will the Lord cast off his people? Will he suffer their enemies to trample upon them, and triumph over them? What is this same horn that shall prevail so far against the saints?" 22. To this Daniel interpreter answers, (v. 23—25.) That this fourth beast is a fourth kingdom, that shall devour the whole earth, or, as it may be read, the whole land. That the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king that shall subdue three kings, and shall be very ab sive to God and his people, shall act, (1.) Very importunity toward God; he shall speak great words against the Most High, and against his holy ones, and shall cause divers to fall; (2.) Very inimically toward the people of God; he shall wear out the saints of the Most High; he will not cut them off at once, but wear them out by long oppressions, and a constant course of hardships put upon them; ruining their estates, and weakening their families. The design of Satan has been to wear out the saints of the Most High, that they may be no more, in remembrance; but the attempt is vain, for while the world stands God will.
have a church in it. He shall think to change times and laws, to abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring every body to say and do just as he would have them. He shall trample upon laws and customs, human and divine; Divort, and mutat, quadraturavit—He builds, he changes square into round, as if he meant to alter even the ordinances of heaven themselves. And in these daring attempts he shall for a time prosper, and have success; they shall be given into his hand until time, times, and half a time, for three years and a half, that famous prophetic measure of time which we meet with in the Revelation of John (ch. xii. 7) and elsewhere; and thus he builds, he brings in his kingdom, sometimes 1260 days, which come all to one. But at the end of that time the judgment shall sit, and take away his dominion; (v. 26.) which he expands, (v. 11.) of the beast being slain, and his body destroyed. And, as Mr. Mede reads, (v. 12.) As to the rest of the beast, the ten horns, especially the little ruffling horn, (as he calls it,) they had their dominion taken away.

Now the question: Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin are here foretold? Interpreters are not agreed; some will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Scythes, and the little horn to be Antiochus, and show the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees; so Junius, Piscator, Polium, Broughton, and many others; but others will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Antichrist, and the little horn, the successor of the Emperors, as Calvin says: the anticleric, the papal kingdom, says Mr. Joseph Mede, that wicked one, which, as this little horn, is to be consumed by the brightness of Christ's second coming. The pope assumes a power to change times and laws, hotrearmat—{i.e. an absolute and despotic power, as he calls it; others make the little horn to be the Twelve empires: so Luther, Vatablus, and others. Now I cannot prove either side to be in the wrong; and therefore since prophecies sometimes have many fulfillments, and we ought to give scripture its full latitude, (in this as in many other controversies,) I am willing to allow that they are both in the right; and that this prophecy has primary reference to the Syrian empire, and was intended for the encouragement of the Jews who suffered under Antiochus and his successors. It is often foretold, but might foresee a glorious issue of them at last, and the final overthrow of their proud oppressors; and, which is best of all, might foresee, not long after, the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, with the hopes of which it was usual with the former prophets to comfort the people of God in their distresses. But yet it has a further reference, and foretells the like persecuting power and rage in Rome, heaven and hell, and no less in Rome papal, against the Christian religion, that was in Antiochus against the pious Jews and their religion. And St. John, in his visions and prophecies which point primarily at Rome, has plain reference, in many particulars, to these visions here.

3. He has a joyful prospect given him of the preservation of God's kingdom among men, and its victory over all opposition at last. And it is very observable that in the midst of the predictions of the force and fury of the enemies, this is brought in abruptly, (v. 18.) and again, (v. 22.) before it comes, in the course of the vision, to be interpreted, v. 26. 27. And this also refers, (1.) To the prosperous days of the Jewish church after it had weathered the storm of Antichrist, and the power which the Maccabees obtained over their enemies. (2.) To the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world by the preaching of his gospel. For judgment Christ comes into this world, to rule by his Spirit, and to make all his saints kings and priests to their God. (3.) To the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints shall judge the world, shall sit down with him on his throne, and triumph in the complete downfall of the devil's kingdom. Let us see what is here foretold. [1.] The Ancient of days will come, v. 26. He will bring in his kingdom over the whole world by his Son, to whom he has committed all judgment; and, as an earnest of that, he comes for the deliverance of his oppressed people, comes for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. [2.] The judgment shall sit, v. 26. God will make it to appear that he judges in the earth, and will, both in wisdom and in equity, plead his people's righteous cause. He shall set a standard for the nations, and cause righteousness by that Man whom he has ordained. [3.] The dominion of the enemy shall be taken away, v. 26. All Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool, and shall be consumed and destroyed to the end: these words the apostle uses concerning the man of sin; (2 Thess. ii. 8.) He shall be consumed with the spirit of Christ's mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming. [4.] Judgment is given to the saints of the Most High. The apostles are intrusted with the preaching of a gospel by which the world shall be judged: all the saints by their faith and obedience condemn an unbelieving, disobedient world; in Christ's Head they shall judge the world, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, Matt. xix. 28. See what reason we have to honour them that are the Lord; how great and how holy is the sight of the saints in the eye of the world, and how much contempt soever is poured upon them, they are the saints of the Most High; they are near and dear to God, and he owns them for his, and judgment is given to them. [5.] That which is most insisted upon, is that the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever; v. 18. And again, (v. 22.) The same speaks that the saints shall take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. And again, (v. 27.) The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Far be it from us to infer hence, that dominion is founded on grace, or that this will warrant any, under pretence of saints'ship, to usurp kingdome; no, Christ's kingdom is for ever, and for ever and for ever; but this speaks that the saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom, and reign with Christ for ever. This is what is here foretold, and the like was prophesied of Daniel, and is mighty to comfort men in these dark days.
843

Daniel, in the close, when he ends that matter, tells us what impressions this vision made upon him: it overwhelmed his spirits to that degree, that his counsels were changed, and it made him look pale; but he kept the matter in his heart. Note, The heart must be the treasury and storehouse of divinest things. God's word is the life of his church. as the Virgin Mary kept the sayings of Christ, Luke ii. 31. Daniel kept the matter in his heart; with a design, not to keep it from the church, but to keep it for the church, that what he had received from the Lord, he might fully and faithfully deliver to the people. Note, It concerns God's prophets and ministers to treasure up the things of God in their minds, and to digest them well. If we would have God's word ready in our mouths when we have occasion for it, we must keep it in our hearts at all times.

CHAP. VIII.

The visions and prophecies of this chapter look only and entirely at the events that were then shortly to come to pass in the monarchicals of Persia and Greece, and seem not to have any farther reference at all, either to the things which were then affecting the soul of the Chaldaean monarchy, for that was now just at its period; and therefore this chapter is written not in Chaldee, as the six foregoing chapters were, for the benefit of the Chaldaens, but in Hebrew, as the rest of the chapters to the end of the book, for the service of the Jews, that they might know what troubles were before them, and what the issue of them would be, and might provide accordingly. In this chapter, we have, 1. The vision itself of the ram and the he-goat, and the little horn that should fight and prevail against the people of God, for a certain limited time, v. 1. 14. 11. The interpretation of this vision by an angel, who is made known, Daniel xii. 5. 6. The design of the vision was, to deliver the he-goat, which is the Persian empire, under the Grecian, and the little horn a king of the Grecian monarchy, that should set himself against the Jews and religion, which was Antiochus Epiphanes, v. 15. 22. The Jewish church, from its beginning, had been all along, more or less, blessed with prophets, men divinely inspired to explain God's mind to them in his providences, and give them some prospect of what was coming upon them: but, soon after Ezra's time, divine inspiration ceased, and there was no more any prophet till the gos- pel-day dawned. And therefore the events of that time were here foretold by Daniel, and left upon record, that even in God's neglection, he leave himself without witness, or them without a guide.

1. In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. 3. Then I lifted up mine eyes and saw, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. 5. And as I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west, on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground; and the goat, had a notable horn between his eyes. 6. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns; and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. 8. Therefore the he-goat waxed very great; and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones, toward the four winds of heaven. 9. And out of one of them came forth a little horn which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12. And a host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. 13. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14. And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision, v. 1. It was in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, which proved to be his last year, as many reckon; so that this chapter also should be, in order of time, before the fifth. That Daniel might not be surprised at the destruction of Babylon, now at hand, God gives him foresight of the destruction of other kingdoms hereafter, which in their day had been as potent as that of Babylon. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone, we should the less admire, and be less affected with the changes in our own day; for that which is done, is that which shall be done, Exod. i. 9. Then it was, that a vision appeared unto me, a sure vision, to Daniel. Here he solemnly attests the truth of it; it was to him, even to him, that the vision was shown; he was the eye-witness of it. And this vision puts him in mind of a former vision, which appeared to him at the first, in the first year of this reign, which he makes mention of, because this vision was an explanation and confirmation of that, and points at many of the same events. That seems to have been a dream, a vision in his sleep; this seems to have been when he was awake. 2. The scene of this vision; the place where
that was laid, was in Shushan the palace, one of the royal seats of the kings of Persia, situated on the banks of the river Ulai, which surrounded the city; it was in the province of Elam, and that part of Persia which lay next to Babylon. Daniel was then in Persia, for he was now in Babylon, a captive, in some employment under Belshazzar, and might not go to such a distant country, especially being now an enemy's country; but he was there in vision; as Ezekiel, when a captive in Babylon, was often brought, in the spirit, to the land of Israel. Note, The soul may be at liberty when the body is in captivity; for when we are bound, the Spirit of the Lord maybind us elsewhere. There were no such bounds in that country, and therefore there he was made to fancy himself to be as strongly as if he had really been there.

III. The vision itself, and the process of it.

1. He saw a ram with two horns, v. 3. This was the second monarchy, of which the kingdom of Media and Persia were the two horns. The horns were very high; but that which came up last was the higher, and got the start of the former. So the last shall be first, and the first last. The kingdom of Persia, which rose last, in Cyrus, became more eminent than that of the Medes.

2. He saw this ram pushing all about him with his horns, (v. 4.) westward, toward Babylon, Syria, Greece, and the lesser Asia; northward, toward the Medes, Elamites, and Assyrians, and thence to the Caspian sea; and eastward, toward Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt; for all these nations did the Persian empire, one time or other, make attempts upon for the enlarging of their dominion. And at last it became so powerful, that no beasts might stand before him. The ram, which is a species of animals often preyed upon, becomes formidable even to the beasts of prey themselves, so that there was no standing before him, no escaping him, none that could deliver out of his hand, but all must yield to him. The kings of Persia did according to their will, prospered in all their ways abroad, had an uncontrollable power at home, and became great; he thought himself great, because he did what he would: but to do good is that which makes men truly great.

3. He saw this ram overcome by a he-goat. He was considering this ram, (questioning that so weak an animal should come to be so prevalent,) and thinking what would be the issue; and behold, a he-goat came, v. 5. This was Alexander the Great, the son of Philip king of Macedon; he came from the west, from Greece, which lay west from Persia; he fetched a great compass with his army, he came upon the face of the whole earth; he did in effect conquer the world, and then sat down and went to drink, because there was not another world to be conquered. Unus Pelleae juvenis non sufficit orbis—One world was too little for the youth of Pelle. This he-goat (a creature famed for comeliness in going, Prov. xxx. 31.) went on with incredible swiftness, so that he touched not the ground, so lightly did he move; he rather seemed to fly above the ground than to go upon the ground; or, none touched him in the earth, he met with little or no opposition. This he-goat, or buck, had a notable horn between his eyes, like a unicorn. He had strength, and knew his own strength; he saw himself a match for all his neighbours. Alexander pushed his conquests so fast, and with so much fury, that none of the kingdoms he attacked had courage to make a stand, or give check to the progress of his victorious armies; he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. Well might he be called a notable horn, for his name still lives in history, as the name of one of the most celebrated commanders in war that ever the world knew. Alexander's victories and achievements are still the entertainment of the ingenious. This he-goat came to the ram that had two horns, v. 6. Alexander with his victorious army attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than 30,000 men and 5,000 horse. He ran unto him, to surprise him ere he could get intelligence of his motions, in the fury of his power; he came close to the ram. Alexander with his army came up with Darius Codomatus, then emperor of Persia, being moved with choler against him, v. 7. It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who, though he brought vast numbers into the field, yet, for want of conduct, was no match for him, so that Alexander was too hard for him whenever he engaged him; smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; which three expressions, some think, refer to the three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, by which he was at length totally routed, having in the last battle, had 600,000 men killed, so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire; brake his two horns, the kingdoms of Media and Persia; the ram that had destroyed all before him, (v. 4.) now is himself destroyed; Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, nor has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand. Note, Those kingdoms, which, when they had power, abused it, and, because none could cope with them, made an end of others, by doing any wrong, may expect to have their power, at length, taken from them, and to be served in their own kind, Isa. xxxiii. 1.

4. He saw that he-goat made hereby very considerable; but the great horn that had done all this execution, was broken, v. 8. Alexander was about twenty years old when he began his wars; when he was about twenty-six he conquered Darius, became master of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, when he was strong, in his full strength, he was broken; he was not killed in war, in the bed of honour, but died of a drunken surfeit, or, as some suspect, by poison, and left no child living behind him, to enjoy that which he had emulously laboured for, but left a lasting monument of the vanity of worldly power, and the insufficiency to make a man happy.

5. He saw this kingdom divided into four parts, and that instead of that one great horn there came up four notable ones, Alexander's four captains to whom he bequeathed his conquests; and he had so much, that, when it was divided among four, they had each of them enough for any one man. These four notable horns were toward the four winds of heaven, the same with the four heads of the leopard; (ch. vii. 6.) the kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, Asia and Greece—Syria lying to the east, Greece to the west, Asia Minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. Note, Those that heap up riches, know not who shall gather them, nor whose all those things shall be, which they have provided.

6. He saw a little horn arise, which made great persecution of the church and people of God; and this was the principal thing that was intended to be showed him in this vision, as afterward, ch. xi. 36, 38. All agree that this was Antiochus Epiphanes; so he called himself, the Illustrious, but others called him Antiochus Epiphanes—Antiochus the Favours. He is called here (as before ch. vii. 8.) a little horn, because he was not like the former horn; there were others between him and the kingdom, and he was of a base, servile disposition, had nothing in him of princely qualities, and had been for some time a hostage and prisoner at Rome, whence he made his escape, and, though the youngest brother, and his elder living, got the kingdom.
He waxed exceeding great toward the south, for he seized upon Egypt, and toward the east, for he invaded Persia and Armenia. But that which is here especially taken notice of, is, the mischief that he did to the people of the Jews. They are not expressly named, for prophecies must not be too plain; but they are here so described that it would be easy for those who understood scripture-language, to know to whom this threat was made. The events of this before, might be awakened to prepare themselves and their children beforehand, for these suffering, trying times.

(1.) He set himself against the pleasant land, the land of Israel, so called, because it was the glory of all lands, for fruitfulness and all the delights of human life, but especially for the tokens of God's presence in it, and its being blessed with divine relations and institutions; it was mount Zion that was beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, Ps. xlvii. 2. The pleasantness of that land was, that there the Messiah was to be born, who would be both the Consolation and the Glory of his people Israel. Note, We have reason to reckon that a pleasant place, which is a holy place, in which the tabernacle dwells, and where we may have opportunity of communing with him. Surely, It is good to be here.

(2.) He fought against the host of heaven, the people of God, the church, which is the kingdom of heaven, the church-militant here on earth. The saints, being born from above, and citizens of heaven, and doing the will of God, by his grace, in some measure if they are called the host of heaven; so, the priests and Levites, who were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and there exercised a good warfare, were this host of heaven. These Antichus set himself against, he waxed great to the host of heaven, in opposition to them, and in defiance of them.

(3.) He cast down some of the host, that is, of the stars (for they are called the host of heaven) to the ground, and stamped upon them. Some of those that were most eminent both in church and state, that were burning and shining lights in their generation, he either forced to comply with his idolatries, or put them to death; he got them into his hands, and then trampled upon them, and triumphed over them; as good old Eleazar, and the seven brethren his brothers, and the two thousand three hundred eighty and five that followed him, because they would not eat swine's flesh, 2 Mac. vi. 7. He gloried in it, that herein he insulted Heaven itself, and exalted his throne above the stars of God, Isa. xiv. 13.

(4.) He magnified himself even to the prince of the host. He set himself against the High Priest, Onias, whom he deprived of his dignity; or, rather, against God himself, who was Israel's King of old, who reigns for ever as Zion's King, who himself heads his own hosts that fight his battles. Against him Antichus magnified himself; as Pharaoh, when he said, Who is the Lord? Note, Those who persecute the people of God, persecute God himself.

(5.) He took away the daily sacrifice; the morning and evening lamb, which God appointed to be offered on Mount Zion. He cast this aside. Antichus forbade and restrained the offering of it. No doubt, he took away all other sacrifices, but the daily sacrifice only is mentioned, because that was the greatest loss of all other; for in that they kept up their constant communion with God, which they preferred before that which is only occasional. God's people reckon their daily sacrifices, their morning and evening exercises of duties most needful of their daily business, and the most delightful of their daily comforts, and would not for all the world part with them.

(6.) He cast down the place of his sanctuary. He did not burn and demolish the temple, but he cast it down, when he profaned it, made it the temple of Jupiter Olympus, and set up his image in it. He also cast down the truth to the ground, trampled upon the book of the law, that word of truth, tore it, and burnt it, and did what he could to have destroyed it quite, that it might have been lost and forgotten for ever. These were the projects of that wicked prince, that threatened to turn all truth to the ground, and would you think it in these he prospered. He carried the matter very far, seemed to have gained his point, and went near to have extinguished that holy religion which God's right hand had planted.

But lest he or any other should triumph, as if herein he had prevailed against God himself, and been too hard for him, the matter is here explained, and set in a true light. [1.] He could not have done this, if God had not permitted him to do it; could have had no power against Israel, unless it had been given him from above. God put this power into his hand, and gave him a host against the daily sacrifice. God's providence put that sword into his hand, by which he was enabled thus to bear down all before him. Note, We ought to eye and own the hand of God in all the events of God's success, and the successes of the church's enemies against the church. They are but the rod in God's hand. [2.] God would not have permitted it, if his people had not provoked him to do so. It is by reason of transgression, the transgression of Israel, to correct them for that, that Antichus is employed to give them all this trouble. Note, When the pleasant land and the holy people was thrown down, and all the crosses and sacrifices of the church's enemies against the church. Lastly, He heard the time of this calamity limited and determined; not the time when it should come, that is not here fixed, because God would have his people always prepared for it, but how long it should last; that, when they had no more any prophets to tell them how long, (Ps. lxxiv. 9. which no man seems to have been calculated for the Hebram and the heathens, and the dark and doleful day,) they might have this prophecy to give them a prospect of deliverance in due time. Now concerning this, we have here,

(1.) The question asked concerning it, v. 13. Observe, [1.] By whom the question was put; I heard one saint speaking to this purport, and then another saint seconded him; O that we knew how long it should last! (2.) Accordingly this is a seconded question; an inquiry concerning it by a seconded inquiry; what a thing must be of not to second the question of those who have already expressed themselves concerning it. Thus John in the fifth chapter, and Christ's disciples, and all the apostles, and the Christian church, and all the saints of God, were decked by Peter, to ask Christ a question, John xiii. 23, 24. [2.] To whom the question was put. He said unto Polymni, that seake, Some make this certain saint to be a superior angel who order
stood more than the rest, to whom therefore they came with their inquiries. Others make it to be the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is the unknown One. Palmeni seems to be compounded of Peloni Ammoni, which is used, Ruth iv. 1, for Ho, such a one, and 2 Kings vi. 8, for such a place. Christ was yet the nameless One. Wherefore ask ed Daniel his master, 'And what is his name?' (ver. 18.) He is the numberer of secrets, as some translate it; for from him there is nothing hid; the wonderful numberer, so others. His name is called Wonderful. Note, If we would know the mind of God, we must apply ourselves to Jesus Christ, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not hid from himself, but from us. One question was asked, 'How long shall the vision concerning the daily sacrifice? How long shall the prohibition of it continue? How long shall the pleasant land be made unpleasant by that severe interdict? How long shall the transgression of desolation, the image of Jupiter, that great transgression which makes all our sacred things desolate, how long shall that stand in the temple? How long shall the sanctuary and the holy place be trodden under foot by the oppressor?' Note, Angels are concerned for the prosperity of the church on earth, and desire to see an end of its desolations. The angels asked, for the satisfaction of Daniel, not doubting but he was desirous to know, how long those calamities should last? The question taken in general, is, that they should not last always: the rest of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, though it may come upon their lot. Christ comforted himself in his sufferings with this, The things concerning me have an end; (Luke xxi. 37.) and so may the church in hers. But it is desirable to know how long they shall last, that we may provide accordingly.

(23.) The answer given to this question, v. 14. Christ gives instruction to the holy angels, for they are our fellow-servants; but here the answer was given to Daniel, because for his sake the question was asked: He said unto me, God sometimes gives in great favours to his people, in answer to the inquiries and requests of their friends for them. Now Christ assures him, [1.] That the trouble shall end; it shall be in 2300 days, and no longer: so many evenings and mornings, (so the word is,) so many Jy's, so many natural days, reckoned, as in the beginning of Genesis, by the evenings and mornings; because it was the evening and morning sacrifice that they most lamented the loss of, and thought the time passed very slowly while they wanted them. Some make the morning and the evening, in this number, to stand for two; and then 2300 evenings and as many mornings will make but 1150 days; and about so many days it was that the daily sacrifice was interrupted, and this comes nearer to the computation (ch. vii. 25.) of a time, times, and the dividing of a time. But it is less forced to understand them of so many natural days; 2300 days make six years and three months, and eleven days, and just so long they passed from the defection of the people, procured by Medo-Persia, the High Priest in the 142d year of the kingdom of the Schizoid, the sixth month of that year, and the sixth day of the month, (so Josephus dates it,) to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the re-establishment of religion among them, which was in the 488th year, the ninth month, and the twenty-fifth day of the month. [1 Mac. iv. 32.] God reckons the time of his people's affliction by days, for in all their afflictions he is afflicted; (Rev. ii. 10.) Then shall have tribulation ten days. [2.] He assures him, that they should see better days after; Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. Note, The cleansing of the sanctuary is a happy token for good to all people; when they begin to be reformed, they will soon be relieved. Though the righteous God may, for the correction of his people, suffer his sanctuary to be profaned for awhile, yet the jealous God will, for his own glory, see to the cleansing of it in due time. Christ died to cleanse his church, and he will so cleanse it as at length to present it blameless to himself.

15. And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. 17. So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision. 18. Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face to the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. 20. The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. 23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. 26. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision: for it shall be for many days. 27. And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Here we have,

1. Daniel's earnest desire to have this vision explained to him; (v. 15.) I sought the meaning. Note, Those that rightly know the things of God cannot but desire to know more and more of them.
and to be led further into the mystery of them; and those that would find the meaning of what they have seen or heard from God, must seek it, and seek it diligently; Seek and ye shall find. Daniel considered the thing, compared it with the former discoveries, to try if he could understand it; but especially he sought by prayer, as he had done (ch. ii. 13.) and he did not seek in vain.

11. Orders given to the angel Gabriel to inform him concerning this vision; one in the appearance of a man, who, some think, was Christ himself, for who besides could command angels? He orders Gabriel to make Daniel understand this vision. Sometimes God is pleased to make use of the administration of an angel, to protect his children, but to instruct them; to serve the kind intentions, not only of his providence, but of his grace.

III. The consternation that Daniel was in, upon the approach of his instructor; (v. 17.) When he came near, I was afraid. Though Daniel was a man of great prudence and courage, and had been conversant with the visions of the Almighty, yet the approach of an extraordinary messenger from heaven put him into this fright. He fell upon his face, not to worship the angel, but because he could no longer bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Nay, being prostrate upon the ground, he fell into a deep sleep, (v. 18.) which came not from any neglect of the vision, or indifference towards it, but was an effect of his faintness, and the oppression of spirit he was under. He was God's appointed agent to repeat the visions to Daniel; The disciples in the garden slept for sorrow; and as there, so here, the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Daniel would have kept awake, and could not.

IV. The relief which the angel gave to Daniel, with great encouragement to him to expect a satisfactory discovery of the meaning of this vision. He came to him, and said, Daniel, my servant; I have thought upon thee, and thou shalt hear this vision. Thus when Jehoiachin, in a like case, was in a like consternation, Christ laid his right hand upon him, Rev. i. 17. It was a gentle touch that the angel here gave to Daniel, to show that he came not to hurt him, but to plead against him with his great power, or with a hand heavy upon him, but to help him, to put strength into him, (Job xxiii. 6.) which God took upon him, and set him upon his throne. He did not think of it, in theng and grousing on this earth, we are very unfit to hear from God, and to converse with him. But if God design instruction for us, he will by his grace awaken us out of our slumber, raise us from things below, and set us upright. 2. He promised to inform him; "Understand, O son of man, v. 17. Thou shalt understand, if thou wilt but apply thy mind to understand." He calls him son of man, to intimate that he would consider his frame, and would deal tenderly with him, accommodating himself to his capacity as a man. Or, thus he preaches humility to him; though he be admitted to converse with angels, he must not be puffed up with it, but must remember that he is a son of man. Or, perhaps, this title puts an honour upon him; the Messiah was lately called the Son of man, (ch. v. 23.) and Daniel is akin to him, and a figure of him, as a prophet, and one greatly beloved. He assures him that he shall be made to know what shall be in the last end of the indignation, v. 19. Let it be laid up for a comfort to those who shall live to see these calamitous times, that there shall be an end of them, the indignation shall cease, (Isa. x. 28.) it shall be overpast, Isa. xxxi. 29. It may intermit and return again, but the last end shall be glorious; good will follow it, and good will be brought out of it. He tells him, (v. 17.) "At the time of the end shall be the vision; when the last end of the indignation comes, when the course of this providence is completed, then the vision shall be made plain and intelligible by the event, as the event shall be made plain and intelligible by the vision." Or, "At the time of the end of the Jewish church, in the latter days of it, shall this vision be accomplished, three or four hundred years hence; and understand it therefore, that thou mayest leave it on record for the generations to come." But it asks more particularly, "When is the time of the end? And how long will it be before it arrive?" Let this answer suffice, (v. 19.) At the time appointed the end shall be; it is fixed in the divine counsel, which cannot be altered, and which must not be tried into.

V. The exposition which he gave him of the vision.

1. Concerning the two monarchies of Persia and Greece, v. 20-22. The ram signifies the succession of the kings of Media and Persia; the rough goat signifies the kings of Greece; the great horn was Alexander; the four horns that rose in his room were the four kingdoms into which his conquests were cantonned, of which before, v. 8. They are said to stand up out of the nations, but not in his power; none of them ever made the figure that Alexander did. Josephus relates, that when Alexander had taken Tyre, and subdued Palestine, and was upon his march to Jerusalem, Jaddus, who was then High Priest, (Nehemiah mentions one of this name, ch. xii. 11.) fearing his rage, had recourse to God by prayer and sacrifice for the common safety, and was by him warned in a dream, that upon Alexander's death, one of his generals should rise in the city, and that he and the rest of the priests should go forth to meet him in their habits, and all the people in white. Alexander, seeing this company at a distance, went himself alone to the High Priest, and having prostrated himself before that God whose name was engraven in the golden plate of his mitre, he first saluted him; and, being asked by one of his officers what this signified, (they were by this time relations,) he told them that while he was yet in Macedon, rousing on the conquest of Asia, there appeared to him a man like unto this, and thus attired, who invited him into Asia, and assured him of success in the conquest of it. The priests led him to the temple, where he offered sacrifice to the God of Israel as they had directed him; and there they showed him this book of Daniel, informing him that a Grecian should come, and destroy the Persians, which animated him very much in the expedition he was now meditating against Daricus. Hereupon, he took the Jews and their religion under his protection, promised to be kind to those of their religion in Babylon and Media, whither he was now marching; and, in honour of him, all the priests that had sons born that year, called them Alexander. Joseph, ii. 11.

2. Concerning Antiochus, and his oppression of the Jews. This is said to be in the latter time of the kingdom of the Greeks, when the transgressors are come to the fall; (v. 23.) when the degenerate Jews have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are ripe for this destruction, says this sacred historian. In the meantime, the Jews are under great calamities; and shall stand up this king, to be a flagellum Del-they will be scourged by the chastising of the Jews. Now observe here,

(1.) His character; He shall be a king of fierce countenance, insolent and furious, neither fearing God nor regarding man: understanding dark sentences, or, the deep parts of wickedness, or, the deep parts of dishonesty; he was master of all the arts of dissimulation and deceit, and knew the depths of Satan as well as any man. He was wise to do evil.

(2.) His success; he shall make dreadful havoc of the nations about him: His power shall be mighty, he shall slay all before him, but not by his own power, (v. 24.) but partly by the assistance of his allies.
Eumenes and Attalus, partly by the baseness and treachery of many of the Jews, even of the priests that came into his interests, and especially by the divine permission; it was not by his own power, but by a power given him from above, that he destroyed wonderfully, and thought he made himself a great man by being a great destroyer. He destroys wonder-fully, and he destroys holy people, and they cannot resist him by their power. The princes of Egypt cannot stand before him with all their forces, but he practises against them and prospers. Note, The mighty ones of the earth commonly meet with those at length that are too hard for them, that are more mighty than they. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, but let him glory in the Lord, for he can do as he wills. [2.] He exercised over the holy people, or the people of the holy ones; and their sacred character does neither deter him from destroying them, nor defend them from being destroyed. All things come alike to all, and there is one event to the mighty and to the holy in this world. (3.) The methods by which he will gain this success, not by true courage, wisdom, or justice, but by false policy and craft, and serpentine subtlety; He shall cause craft to prosper; so cunningly shall he carry on his projects, that he shall gain his point by the art of wheeling. By peace he shall destroy many, as others do by war; under the pretence of treaties, leagues, and alliances with them, he shall encroach on their rights, and trick them into a subjection to him. Thus sometimes what a nation truly brave has gained by a righteous war, a nation truly base has regained in a treacherous peace, and craft has been caused to prosper.

(4.) The mischief that he shall do to religion; He shall magnify himself in his heart, and think himself fit to prescribe and give law to every body, so that he shall stand up against the Prince of princes, against God himself; he will profane his temple and altar, prohibit his worship, and persecute his worshippers. See what a height of impassion some men's impiety brings them to; they openly bid defiance to God himself, though he is the King of kings.

(3.) The ruin that he shall bring him to at last; He shall be broken without hand, without the hand of man; he shall not be slain in war, nor shall he be assassinated, as tyrants commonly are, but shall fall by the hand of the living God, and die by an immediate stroke of his vengeance. He, hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympius out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews, that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a common burying-place, and determined to march thither immediately: but no sooner had he spoken these proud words, than he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels, worms bred so fast in his body, that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him, his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease so strong that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long; at first, he persisted in his menaces against the Jews, but at length, despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together, and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for three crimes he had done to the Jews and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem; then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered, he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But, finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, It is meet to submit to God, and for man which is mortal not to resist himself in competition with God: and thus miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Panata near Babylon: so Usher's Annals, A. M. 3840, about 160 years before the birth of Christ.

3. As to the time fixed for the continuance of the cessation of the daily sacrifice, it is not explained here, but only confirmed; (v. 26.) That vision of the evening and morning is true, in the proper sense of the words, and needs no explanation. How unlikely it was that God should suffer his own sanctuary to be thus profaned, yet it is true, it is too true, so it shall be.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of this vision and here.

1. The charge given to Daniel to keep it private for the present; Shut thou up the vision; let it not be publicly known among the Chaldeans, lest the Persians, who were now shortly to possess the kingdom, should be incensed against the Jews because the downfall of their kingdom was foretold by it, which would be unsavourable now that the edict for their release was expected from the King of Persia. Shut it up, for it shall be for many days; it was about 300 years from the time of this vision to the time of the accomplishment of it, therefore he must shut it up for the present, even from the people, and not let the Chaldeans, nor the Persians know it, but let it be kept safe for the generations to come, that should live about the time of the accomplishment of it, for to them it would be both most intelligible and most serviceable. Note, What we know of the things of God should be carefully laid up, that hereafter, when there is occasion, it may be faithfully laid out; and what we have not now any use for, yet we may have another time; divine things shall be sealed up among our treasures, that we may find them again after many days. 2. The care he took to keep it private, having received such a charge; (v. 27.) He fainted, and was sick, with the multitude of his thoughts within him occasioned by this vision, which oppressed and overwhelmed him the more, because he was forbidden to publish what he had seen, so that his body was as one which has no rest, he was ready to burst like new bottles, Job xxxii. 19. However, he kept it to himself, stifled and smothered the concern he was in; so that these he conversed with could not perceive it, but he did the king's business according to the duty of his place, whatever it was. Note, As long as we live in this world we must have some thing to do in it; and even those whom God has most dignified with his favours must not think themselves free from the charge of duty.

Note, Must the pleasure of communion with God take us off from the duties of our particular callings, but still we must in them abide with God. Those especially that are intrusted with public business, must see to it that they conscientiously discharge their trust.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews who were in captivity; in which, he confesses sin, and acknowledges the justice of God in their calamities; 2. He reads God's will in the vision, as he had yet in store for them, v. 1. - 15. 1. An immediate answer sent him by an angel to his prayer; in which, 1. He is assured of the discharge of the Jews out of their captivity, v. 20. - 22. And, 2. He is informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of which that was a type, what should be the nature of it, and when it should be accomplished, v. 24. - 27. And it is the clearest, brightest prophecy of the Messiah, in all the Old Testament.

11 In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2. In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord
came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.

We left Daniel, in the close of the foregoing chapter, employed in the king's business; but here we have him employed in better business than any the king had for him, speaking to God, and hearing from him, not for himself only, but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the oracles of God were committed to him, relating to the days of the Mede. (Obad. 1.) When it was that Daniel had this communion with God; (v. 1.) in the first year of Darius the Mede, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grandson, Cyrus. In this year, the seventy years of the Jews' captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out; so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been made in the vanity of his heart, to seek the welfare of his nation, and the lions' den. And one powerful inducement, perhaps, it was to him then to keep so close to the duty of prayer, though it cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefit and comfort of it.

2. What occasioned his address to God by prayer; (v. 2.) He understood by books, that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Jerusalem. The book by which he understood this was, the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he found it expressly foretold, (Jer. xxix. 10.) After seventy years be accomplished in Babylon, (and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the third year of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself; ch. i. 1.) I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you. It was likewise said, (Jer. xxv. 11.) This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation, (Chorobath,) the same word that Daniel here uses for the desolations of Jerusalem, which shows that he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician, and prime minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves above their Bibles.

3. How serious and solemn his address to God was, when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring; (for it appears, by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies, that they exactly computed the years of their captivity;) then he set his face to seek God by prayer. Note, God's promises are intended, not to supersede, but to excite and encourage, our prayers; and when we see the day of the performance of them approaching, we should the more earnestly plead them with God, and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and, no doubt, in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business set time apart for an extraordinary application to Jerusalem's behalf. God had said to Ezekiel, that through Daniel, and among others, stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment; (Ezek. xiv. 14.) yet he hopes, now that the warfare is accomplished, (Isa. xl. 2.) his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns, it is time for God's praying people to bestir themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and required from them, beside their daily sacrifice. Now Daniel sought by prayer and supplications, for fear lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended; or rather, that the people might be prepared by the grace of God for the deliverance, now that the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe, (1.) The intensity of his mind in this prayer; I set my face unto the Lord God to seek him; which denotes the fixness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervency of his devout affections, in the duty. We must, in prayer, set God before us, and ourselves in his presence; to him we must direct our prayer, and must look up. Probabli, in token of his setting his face toward God, he did, as usual, set his face toward Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it. (2.) The mortification of his body in this prayer; in token of his deep humiliation before God for his own sins, and the sins of the people; which, with the consciousness of his unworthiness, when he prayed he fasted, put on sackcloth, and lay in ashes, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

4. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; 5. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments: 6. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him: 10. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.
And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. 14. Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15. And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16. O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. 17. Now, therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications; and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake. 18. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold thy desolations: and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies. 19. O Lord, hear: O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken, and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

We have here Daniel’s prayer to God as his God, and the confession which he joined with that prayer; I prayed, and made my confession. Note, In every prayer we must make confession, not only of the sins we have been guilty of, (which we commonly call confession,) but of our faith in God, and dependence upon him, our sorrow for sin, and our resolutions against it. It must be our confession, the language of our own convictions, and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think that he offered up much larger than is here recorded; and that these are only the best.

1. Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God; in which he gives glory to God, 1. As a God to be feared, and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of; “O Lord, the great and dreadful God, that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church’s enemies.” 2. As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon, and put a confidence in; keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and, as a proof of their love to him, keep his commandments. If we do our part of the bargain, he will not fail to do his. He will be to his people as good as his word, for he keeps covenant with them, and not one iota of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be better than his word, for he keeps mercy to them, something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God’s mercy, now that he was to lay before him the miseries of his people; and upon God’s covenant now, he was to try the performance of his promises. Note, We should, in prayer, seek both at God’s greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

II. Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been growing under, v. 5, 6. When we seek to God for national mercies, we ought to humble ourselves before him for national sins; these are the sins Daniel here laments; and we may here observe the variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations; (for it becomes penitents to lay load upon themselves;) We have sinned in many particular instances, nay, we have committed iniquity, we have driven a trade of sin, we have done wickedly with a hard heart and a stiff neck, and herein we have rebelled against thee. We have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins:

1. That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses; “We have departed from thy precepts and from thy judgments, and have not conformed to them.” And (v. 10,) we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. That which speaks of nature, that it is the transgression of the law, does sufficiently speak the malignity of it; if sin be made to appear sin, it cannot be made to appear worse; its sinfulness is its greatest hatefulness, Rom. vii. 13. God has set his laws before us plainly and fully, as the copy we should write after, yet we have not walked in them, but turned aside, or turned back.

2. That they had slighted the fair warnings God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, rising up betimes, and sending them; (v. 6,) “We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who have put us in mind of thy laws, and of the sanctions of them; though they speak in thy name, we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, who have delivered it to the ears of men, from degrees of men, to our kings and princes, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to our fathers, and to all the people of the land, whom they had the condensation and compassion to speak to, yet we have not hearkened to them, not heard them, or not heeded them, or not complied with them.” Mocking God’s messengers, and despising his words, was Jerusalem’s measure-filling sin. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on; penitents should again and again accuse and repudiate themselves till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. All Israel have transgressed thy law, v. 11. It is Israel, God’s professing people, who have known better, and from whom better is expected; Israel, God’s peculiar people; whom he loved, whose name is written in the book of life, whom he has favoured; not here and there one, but it is all Israel, the generality of them, the body of the people, that has transgressed by departing and getting out of the way, that they might not hear, and so might not obey, thy voice. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon themselves; (v. 14.) We obeyed not his voice, and (v. 15,) we have sinned, we have done wickedly. Those that would find mercy, must thus confess their sins.

III. Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them: and it is evermore the
1. He acknowledges that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is dispersed through all the countries about, and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed. God’s hand has driven them hither and thither, some near, where they are known, others afar off, where they are not known, and therefore the more abandoned, and it is because of their treachery that they have trespassed. (v. 7.) They mingled themselves with the nations, that they might be defiled by them, and now God mingleth them with the nations, that they might be struck by them.

2. He owns the righteousness of God in it; that he had done them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved. (v. 7.) “O Lord, righteousness belongs to thee, we have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments; for, (v. 14.) the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth, even in the sore calamities we are now under.” If we obey not the words of his mouth, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand. This seems to be borrowed from Lam. i. 18.

3. He takes notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what was brought upon them; In very faithfulness he afflicted them; for it was according to the word which he had spoken. The curse is poured upon us, and the oath, the curse that was ratified by an oath. Therefore has he confirmed his words which he spake against us, because we broke his laws, and against our judges that judged us, because they did not according to the duty of their place punish the breach of God’s laws; he told them many a time, that if they did not execute justice, as tyrants to evil-workers, he must and would take the work into his own hands; and now he has confirmed what he has confirmed us as a great enemy, over which the princes and judges themselves deeply shared. Note, It contributes very much to our prosperity by the judgments of God’s hand, to observe how exactly they agree with the judgments of his mouth.

4. He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by despising it; “It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special marks of divine displeasure; for under the whole heaven has not been done, as has been done upon Jerusalem,” v. 12. It is Jeremiah’s lamentation, in the name of the church, Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow? This must stop the other like question, Was ever sin like unto my sin? He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest; and if they will say Amen to his prayer, as it was fit they should if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust; (v. 7.) we lie under the shame of the punishment at this day, and we ought to accommodate ourselves to it, and to accept of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due.” If Israel had retained their character, and had continued a holy people, they had been high above all nations in praise, and name, and honour: (Dan. xxxvi. 19.) but now that they have sinned and done wickedly, confusion and disgrace belong to them, to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the inhabitants both of the country and of the city, for they have been all alike guilty before God; it belongs to all Israel, both to the two tribes, that are near, by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes, that are afar off, in the land of Judah, and others make no mention of the Gentiles, but God belongs not only to the common people of our land but to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, (v. 8.) who should have set a better example, and have used their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice and profligacy.

5. He imputes the continuance of the judgment to the unrighteousness under it; (v. 13, 14.) “All this evil is from before thy people Israel, which have not returned to him that smote us; (We have not entreated the face of the Lord our God, nor the counsel of our fathers.” (v. 4.) We have taken no care to make our peace with God, and reconcile ourselves to him: Daniel gives us an example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example; in their affliction, it was expected, they would seek God early, but they sought him not, that they might turn from their iniquities, and understand his truth. The errand upon which afflictions are sent, is, to bring men to turn from their iniquities, and to understand God’s truth; Ez. xv. 19. Daniel xxxvi. 10. God by them opens men’s ears to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity. And if men were brought rightly to understand God’s truth, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step toward this is, to make our prayer before the Lord our God, that the affliction may be sanctified and removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God, to make it answer the end. Those who in their affliction make not their prayer to God, who cry not when he binds them, are not likely to turn from iniquity, or to understand his truth; (v. 3.) Therefore because we have not improved our affliction, the Lord has watched upon the evil, as the judge takes care that the evil shall be according to the sentence; because we have not been melted, he has kept us still in the furnace, and watched over it, to make the heat yet more intense;” for when God judges he will overcome, and will be justified in all his proceedings.

IV. Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of favour to Israel, and the concern of his own glory.

1. It is some comfort to them, and not a little, that God has been always ready to pardon sin; (v. 9.) To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses; this refers to that proclamation of his name, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) The Lord God, gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity. Note, It is very encouraging to poor sufferers, to recollect that mercies belong to God, as it is as glorious and humbling to them, to recollect that righteousness belongs to him; and they who give him the glory of his righteousness, may take to themselves the comfort of his medicines, Ps. lxix. 12. There are abundant medicines in God, and not only forgiveness but forgivenesses; he is a God of pardons; (Neh. ix. 17. Mark.) he multiplied them, as God, Is. lv. 7. Though we have rebelled against him, and have been angry with him, there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellions.

2. It is likewise a support to them, to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt; so far he looks back for the en
enlargement of his faith: (v. 15). “Thou hast formerly brought thy people out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon? Were they then formed into a people; and shall they not now be reformed and new-formed? Are they now sinful and unworthy; and were they not so then? Are their oppressors now mighty and haughty; and were they not so before? I have said that their deliverance out of Babylon shall outshine that of Egypt.” Jer. xvi. 14, 15. The force of this plea lies in that, “Thou hast gotten the renown, hast made ther a name,” (so the word is,) “as at this day, even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt; and wilt thou lose the credit of that by letting us perish in Babylon? Didst thou get a renown but that desire be which we have so often commentator; wilt thou not now be reknown by this which we have so often prayed for, and so long waited for?”

V. Here is a pathetic complaint of the reproach that God’s people lay under, and the ruins that God’s sanctuary lay in, both which redounded very much to the dishonour of God, and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by his wonderful deliverance of his people.

1. God’s holy people were despised; by their sins and the iniquities of their fathers they had profaned their crown, and made themselves despicable, and then though they are, in name and profession, God’s people, and, upon that account, truly great and honourable, yet they are become a reproach to all that are round about them. Their neighbours lay them open to insult, and triumph in their degradation.

Note, Sin is a reproach to any people, but especially to God’s people, that have more eyes upon them, and have more honour to lose, than other people.

2. God’s holy place was desolate. Jerusalem, the holy city, was a reproach; (v. 16.) when it lay in ruins, it was an astonishment and a hissing to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house, was desolate; (v. 17.) the altars demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes. Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

VI. Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive Jews to their former enjoyments again. His petition is very pressing; for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with him; “O Lord, I beseech thee, v. 16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart’s desire and prayer, now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication, (v. 17.) and grant an answer of peace to it.” Now what are his petitions? What are his requests?

1. That God would turn away his wrath from them; that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing; O let thine anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem, thy holy mountain, v. 16. He does not pray for the turning again of their captivity, (let the Lord do with them as seems good in his eyes;) but they pray first for the turning away of God’s wrath. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

2. That God would lift up the light of his countenance upon them; (v. 17.) Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, return in mercy to us, and show that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well. Note, The shining of God’s face upon the desolations of the sanctuary, is all in all towards the repair of it; and upon that foundation, all else is built. If therefore its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles; Cause thy face to shine, and then we shall be saved, Ps. lxxx. 3.

3. That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverence; (v. 12.) O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. That the mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it, be removed; “O Lord, hearken and do. Not hearken and speak only, but hearken and do; that for which we ask, and which else can, and that an appointed day approaching, he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them, and not defer. David often prays, Make haste, O God, to help me.

VII. Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions. God gives us leave not only to pray, but to plead with him; which is now more necessary, (he is himself what he will do,) than to move ourselves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith.

1. They disclaim a dependence upon any righteousness of their own; they pretend not to merit any thing at God’s hand but wrath and the curse; (v. 18.) “We do not present our supplications before thee, with hope to speed for our righteousnesses, as if we were more worthy of the pardon, or of the favours, we ask, than others, or of the favours, we ask, or of the favours, we ask.” Note, Here and there may be a very good reason to ask for mercy, and to expect mercy, yet not on account of any righteousness of our own. God’s righteousness is sufficient for us.

2. They take their encouragement in prayer from God only; as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, and therefore from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy, and so give honour to him when we are singing for grace and mercy from him.

(1.) “Do it for thine own sake, (v. 19.) for the accomplishment of thine own counsel, the performance of thine own promise, and the manifestation of thine own glory.” Note, God will do his own work, not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake, and so we must take it.

(2.) “Do it for the Lord’s sake, for the Lord Christ’s sake; for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord; so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it. For the sake of Adonai, so David called the Messiah, (Ps. cx. 1.) and mercy is prayed for, for the church, for the sake of the Son of man, (Ps. lxxx. 17.) and for thy Word’s sake, 2 Sam. vii. 21. Note, Christ is the Lord, he is Lord of all. It is for his sake that God causes his face to shine upon sinners, when they repent, and turn to him; because of the satisfaction he has made. In all our prayers, that therefore must be our plea, we must make mention of his righteousness, even of his own, Ps. lxxx. 16. Look upon the face of the Avointed. He has himself directed us ask in earnest in the name of the Lord.”

(3.) “Do it according to all thy righteousness;” (v. 16.) plead for us against our persecutors and oppressors, according to thy righteousness. Though we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of. Or, rather, it is the righteousness of God, (he is himself what he will do,) that is meant in his faithfulness to his promises. God had, according to his righteousness, executed the threatening; (v. 11.) “Now, Lord, wilt thou
not do according to all thy righteousness? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promise as thou hast been to thy threatenings, and accomplish them also?" (4.) "Do it for thy great mercies, (v. 18.) to make it to appear that thou art a merciful God." The good things we ask of God we call mercies, because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion; "Often thin eyes, and behold our desolations, especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O look with pity upon a pitiable case." Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God with solemnity and supplication. (5.) "Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to thee. The sanctuary that is desolate, is thy sanctuary, (v. 17.) dedicated to thine honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence; Jerusalem is thy city and thy holy mountain, (v. 16.) it is the city which is called by thy name," v. 18. (It was the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.) "The people that are become a reproach, are thy people, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them; (v. 16.) they are called by thy name, v. 19. Lord, thou hast a property in them, and therefore art interested in their interests; wilt thou not provide for thine own, for those of thine own house? They are thine, save them," Ps. cxxix. 94.

20. And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21. Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. 25. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah he cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sanctuary and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one, as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel-grace, that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning star, this was the day-break to the Sun of righteousness; the day-spring from on high.

Here is,

1. The time when this answer was given.

1. It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed, and laid a strong emphasis upon; While I was speaking, (v. 20.) yea, while I was speaking in prayer, (v. 21.) before he rose from his knees, and while his prayer was yet in his mouth, he was to say. He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet further to enlarge upon. (1.) He was confessing sin, and lamenting that; both my sin and the sin of my people Israel. Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God, and is ready to confess it. For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not; nor that sins, and repenteth not; St. John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves, if they say that they have no sin, and who therefore confess their sins, 1 John i. 8. Good men find it an ease to their consciences, to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves; and that is confessing sin. He also confessed the sin of his people, and bewailed that. Those who are heartfeltly concerned for the glory of God, the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for the sins of others as well as for their own. (2.) He was making supplication before the Lord his God, and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for the holy mountain of my God, my Messiah, my Messiah, the desolation of the sanctuary lay nearer his heart than those of the city and the land; and the repair of that, and the setting up of the public worship of the God of Israel again, were what he had in view, in the deliverance he was preparing for, more than the reestablishment of their civil interests. Now while Daniel was thus employed, [1.] He had a grant made of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer, and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken, (Isa. lxv. 24.) While they are yet speaking, I will hear. Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, v. 18, 19. And while he was speaking with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is most pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by anges', but if we pray with fervency for that which God has promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer; for he is faithful that has promised. [2.] He had a discovery made him of a far greater and more glorious redemption, which God would work out for his church in the latter day. Note. Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace, must be much in prayer.

2. It was about the time of the evening oblation, v. 21. The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but, it should seem, the
Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour were ready to weep at the remembrance of it, and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the little that they could, to make their prayers, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight as the evening sacrifice, Ps. exli. 2. The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice, that Daniel's prayer was accepted, when he prayed for the Lord's sake, and for the sake of that, this glorious discovery of revelation to man; and the Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of his own blood.

11. The messenger by whom this answer was sent. It was not given him in a dream, or by a voice from heaven, but, for the greater certainty and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in a human shape, to give this answer to Daniel. Observe,

1. Who this angel, or messenger, was; it was the man Gabriel. If Michael the archangel be, as many suppose, no other than Jesus Christ, this Gabriel is the only created angel that is named in scripture. Gabriel signifies, the mighty one of God; for the angels are great in power and might, 2 Pct. ii. 11. It was he whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning. Daniel heard him called by his name, and thence learned it; (Dan. vii. 16,) and then the Lord told the prophet, see how he observed him so carefully, that now he knew him again, knew him to be the same that he had seen at the beginning, and, being somewhat better acquainted with him, was now not so terrified at the sight of him as he had been at first. When this angel said to Zacharias, I am Gabriel, (Luke i. 19,) he intended thereby to put him in mind of this notice which he had given to Daniel of the Messiah's coming, when it was at a distance, for the confirming of his faith in the notice he was then about to give of it as at the door.

2. The instructions which this messenger received from the Father of lights to whom Daniel prayed; (v. 23.) At the beginning of thy supplications, the word, the commandment, came forth from God. Note, the word of God is the Father's messenger, the counsel of God, which they were desirous to look into; and orders given to Gabriel to go immediately, and bring the notice of it to Daniel. By this it appears that it was not anything which Daniel said that moved God, for the answer was given as he began to pray; but God was well pleased with his serious, solemn address to the duty, and, in token of that, sent him this gracious message. Or, perhaps it was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications, that Cyrus's word, or commandment, went forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, that going forth spoken of, v. 25. The thing is done this very day; the proclamation of liberty to the Jews is signed this morning, just then when thou wast praying for it; and now, at the close of this fast-day, Daniel has notice of it; as, at the charge of the commandment, the public-trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty.

3. The haste he made to deliver his message; He was caused to fly swiftly, v. 21. Angels are winged messengers, quick in their motions, and delays not to execute the orders they receive; they run and return like a flash of lightning, Ezek. l. 14. But, it should seem, sometimes they are more expeditious than this; for God was, and make a quicker despatch; as here, the angel was caused to fly swiftly, he was ordered, and he was enabled, to fly swiftly; angels do their work in obedience to divine command, and in dependence upon divine strength. Though they excel in wisdom, they fly swifter or slower as God directs; and though they excel in power, they fly but as God causes them to fly. Angels themselves are to us what he makes them to be; they are his ministers, and do his pleasure. Ps. cxi. 21.

4. The prefaces, or introductions, to his message. (1. He touched him, (v. 21.) as before, (ch. xii. 18,) not in his usual form, though it is now in the 14th, but to give him a hint to break off his prayer, and to attend to that which he has to say in answer to it. Note, In order to the keeping up of our communion with God, we must not only be forward to speak to God, but as forward to hear what he has to say to us; when we have prayed, we must look up, must look after our prayers, must set ourselves upon our watch-towers, and keep our eyes open, and our ears awake.

(2.) He talked familiarly with him, as one friend talks with another, that his terror might not make him afraid. He informed him on what errand he came, that he was sent from heaven on purpose with a kind message to him; I am come to show thee, (v. 23,) to tell thee that which thou didst not know before. He had showed him the troubles of the church under Antichrist, and the period of those troubles, (ch. viii. 19,) but now he has greater things to show him; for he that is faithful in a little, shall be intrusted with more; Nay, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding, (v. 22,) not only to show thee these things, but to make thee understand them.

(3.) He assures him that he was a favourite of God, that he had a high character, and that he had this intelligence sent him, and he must take it for a favour; I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved. Thou art a man of great desires; acceptable to God, and whom he has a favour for. Note, Though God loves all his children, yet there are some that are more than the rest greatly beloved. Christ had one disciple that lay in his bosom; and that beloved disciple was he that was intrusted with the prophecies of the New Testament, as Daniel was with those of the Old. For what greater token can there be of God's favour to any man than for the secrets of the Lord to be with him? Abraham is the friend of God; and therefore, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? Gen. xxviii. 17. Note, Those that reckon themselves greatly beloved of God, to whom, and in whom, he reveals his Son. The more blessed the observer of these great secrets, the more blessed the observer of the Virgin Mary, was much the same with this which he here gives to Daniel, as if he designed to put her in mind of it; Thou art highly favoured, as Daniel, greatly beloved.

(4.) He demands his serious attention to the dis covery he was now about to make him: Therefor understand the matter, and consider the vision, v. 23. It intimates that it was a thing well worthy of his regard, above any of the visions he had been before favoured with. Note, Those who would understand the things of God, must consider them, must apply their minds to them, ponder upon them, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. The reason why we are so much in the dark concerning the revealed will of God, and mistake concerning it, is want of consideration. This vision both requires and deserves consideration.

III. The message itself; it was delivered with great solemnity, received, no doubt, with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark, and hard to be understood. Daniel, who understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now enabled by this prophecy to shew the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of, at the end of another seventy, or years, but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for his people, and the holy city, that they
might be released, that it might be rebuilt; but God answers him above what he was able to ask or think. God not only grants, but ouudes, the desires of them that fear him, Ps. xxi. 4.

1. The times here determined are somewhat hard to understand. In general, it is seventy weeks, seventy times seven years, which makes just 490 years; the great affairs that are yet to come concern the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, will lie within the compass of these years. These years are thus described by weeks, (1.) In conformity to the prophetic style, which is, for the most part, obscure, and out of the common road of speaking, that the thing foretold might not be too obvious. (2.) To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which is made purely by the sabbath-day, and to signify that that should be perpetual. (5.) With reference to the seventy years of the captivity; as they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so being now restored to it, they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of it. So much more does God delight in showing mercy than in punishing. The land had enjoyed its sabbaths, in a melancholy sense, seventy years, Lev. xxvii. 34. But now the people of the Lord shall, in a comfortable sense, enjoy their sabbaths seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which make ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the decree, because it was the wisdom of him who has determined the times before appointed.

The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks, are,

[1.] Concerning the time when they commence, and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here determined by God himself, viz. by the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, v. 25. I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus, mentioned, Ezra i. 1. for by it the people were restored; and though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus; (Isa. xlv. 28.) He shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built. That was, both in prophecy and in history, the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem; nay, it should seem, this going forth of the commandment, (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it as of Cyrus's,) is the same with that going forth of the commandment mentioned, v. 23. which was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications. Now it looks very graceful, that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this, but that by this reckoning the Persian monarchy, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted about 130 years; whereas by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it is certain that they were divided into two periods, and by others, Xenophon, and others reckon. Those who fix it to that first edict, set aside these computations of the heathen historians as uncertain and not to be relied upon. But others, willing to reconcile them, begin the 490 years, not at the edict of Cyrus, (Ezra i. 1.) but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nabor above 30 years after the first, mentioned, Ezra vi. Others fix it on the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mencen, who sent Ezza with a commission, Ezra vii. 8. - 12. The learned Mr. Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, pro and con, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves.

[2.] Concerning the period of them; and here likewise interpreters are not agreed. Some make them to end at the death of Christ, and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude that from this very hour when Gabriel spake to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, it was exactly 490 years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think, because it is said that in the midst of the week, the last of the seventy weeks, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, they end three years and a half after the death of Christ, when, the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But they who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ, read it thus: He shall make strong the testament to the many; the last seven, or the last week, yea, half that seven, or half that week, (namely, the latter half, the three years and a half, which Christ spent in his public ministry,) shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation. Others make these 490 years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty-seven years after the death of Christ; because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews, and the holy city; and much is said concerning the destruction of the city, and the sanctuary.

[3.] Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks, and one week; and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else. In the visible state of affairs, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week, Christ preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

But, whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough of certainty to show us the ends of determining them. First, It did serve then to raise and support the expectations of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs; the preceding prophets had often spoken of him, as one that should come, but never was the time fixed for his coming until now. And though there might be so much doubt concerning the date, and yet we are not reckoning that they could not ascertain the time just to a year, yet by the light of this prophecy they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find, accordingly, that when Christ came, he was generally looked for, as the Consonation of Israel, and redemption in Jerusalem by him, Luke ii. 25, 38. It was commonly held, there would not be a kingdom of God should immediately appear; (Luke xix. 11.) and some think this was it that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, Acts ii. 5. Secondly, It does serve still to refute and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who should come, but still look for another; this prediction silenced them, and answered them in the time. For the seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain that they are expired above 1500 years ago; so that the Jews are for ever without excuse, who will not own that the Messiah is come, when they are gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messiah's being come, and the time is now. For this came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2. The events here foretold are more plain, and easy to be understood, at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold, (1.) Concerning the return of the Jews now speedily to their own land, and their settlement again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for; and yet it is but
brieilly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a commandment shall go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, and that she shall not be in vain; for though the times will be very troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on, and brought to perfection at last; the street shall be built again, as spacious and splendid as ever it was; and the walls even in troublous times. Note, As long as we are here in this world, we must expect both enemies from without, and their own hearts from within likewise. And even in such days, when we have joyful times, we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a gleam, it is but a fluid interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will return after the rain; when the Jews are restored in triumph to their own land, yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it, even in troublous times: may the troublousness of these times may by the grace of God contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted, the more it multiplies.

(2.) Concerning the Messiah and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them temporal power and wealth; whereas they were told, that the Messiah should come, to be another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome.

[1.] Christ came to take away sin, and to abolish that. Sin had made a quarrel between God and man, had alienated man from God, and provoked God against man; that was it that put dissonance up in God, and by might misery upon mankind, that was the great mischief-maker. That he would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of that. Christ undertakes to be so, and for this purpose he is manifested to destroy the works of the devil. He does not say, to finish your transgressions and your sins, but transgression and sin in general, for he is the Propitiation not only for our sins, that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole world. He came, First, To finish transgression; to restrain it; (so some;) to break the power of it, to bruise the head of that serpent that had done so much mischief; to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men, upon the ruins of Satan’s kingdom there; that, where sin and death had reigned, righteousness and life through grace now reigned; And, Second, To make the sin, which, in one sense, the Messiah has now had its death’s wound given it; like Simon’s, Let me die with the Philosophers, Antinomian in vulture fonte—He infects the wound, and dies. Secondly, To make an end of sin, to abolish it, that it may not rise up in judgment against us, to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin; to seal up sin, (so the margin reads it,) that they may not appear or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us; and, Thirdly, To make a bottomless pit for it, into which, that he set a seal upon him, Rev. xx. 3. When sin is pardoned, it is sought for, and not found, as that which is sealed up. Thirdly, To make reconciliation for iniquity, as by a sacrifice to justify the justice of God, and so to make peace, and bring God and man together; not only as an undertaking by the Son of God, who only brings the conflicting parties to go on, but that is a duty, as well as a comfort, but as a Surety, or Undertaker, for us. He is not only the Peace-Maker, but the Peace. He is the Atonement.

[2.] He came to bring in an everlasting righteousness. God might justly have made an end of the sin by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it, by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we have not a righteousness to plead, and Christ has provided us a pleon; the merit of his sacrifice is our righteousness; with this we answer all the demands of the law; Christ has died, yea, rather, is risen again. Thus Christ is the Lord our Righteousness, for he is made of God to be Righteousness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. But we shall apply this to ourselves, and plead it with God, and our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, Rom. iv. 3, 5.

This is an everlasting righteousness for Christ, who is our Righteousness, and the Prince of our peace is the everlasting Father. It was from everlasting in the counsels of it, and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and will be to the end, for he is able to save to the uttermost. It is of everlasting virtue, (Heb. x. 12.) it is the rock that follows us to Canaan.

[3.] He came to seal up the vision and prophecy, all the prophetic visions of the Old Testament, which had reference to the Messiah, he sealed them up, he accomplished them, proved it true, answered to them to a tittle; all things that were written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms, concerning the Messiah, were fulfilled in him; thus he confirmed the truth of them as well as his own mission. He sealed them up, he put an end to that method of God’s discovering his mind and will, and took another course by completing the scripture-canons in the New Testament, which is the more complete and prophecy than that by vision, 2 Pet. i. 19. Heb. i. 1.

[4.] He came to anoint the Most Holy, himself the Holy One who was anointed, that is, appointed to his work, and qualified for it by the Holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received without measure above his fellows; or, to anoint the church, his spiritual temple, or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate it to himself; (Eph. v. 26.) or, to consecrate for us a new and living way into the holiest, by his own blood, (Heb. x. 26.) as the sanctuary was anointed, Exod. xxx. 25, &c. He is called Messiah, (v. 25, 26.) which signifies Christ; Anointed, (John i. 41.) because he received the uction, both for himself and for all that are his.

[5.] In order to all this, the Messiah must be cut off, must die a violent death, and so be cut off from the land of the living, as was foretold, Isa. lii. 8. Hence, when Paul preaches the death of Christ, he says that he preached nothing but what the prophets said should come, Acts xxvi. 22, 23. And thus it behoved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for himself; not for any of his own only, but as Caiphas prophesied, he must die for the people and for the sins of the whole nation; for my advantage of his own; the glory he purchased for himself was no more than the glory he had before, John xvii. 4, 5. No, it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.

[6.] He must confirm the covenant with many. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace; since the Decalogue was confirmed by a covenant of innocence. This covenant he shall confirm by his doctrine and miracles, by his death and resurrection, by the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which are the seals of the New Testament, assuring us that God is willing to accept of us upon gospel-terms. His death made his testament of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed
by it. He confirmed it to the many, the common people; the poor were evangelized, as the rulers and rich were confounded. Or, he confirmed it with many, with the Gentile world. The New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations; Christ gave his life a ransom for many.

[7.] He must cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; by offering himself a Sacrifice once for all. He ceases all the peace-offerings to cease, when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his gospel to the world, with which the apostles were intrusted, he took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease.

The apostle to the Hebrews shows what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession.

(3.) Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation; and this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah, and of those who were intrusted with his salvation. If God design to destroy all the children of God among the Jews, he will destroy even the Jews themselves; and thou hast observed the event. The Jews would not be persuaded to quit it, still they kept it up with more zeal than ever, they would hear no talk of parting with it; they stoned Stephen (the first Christian martyr) for saying that Jesus should change the customs which Moses delivered them; (Acts vi. 14,) so that there was no way to abolish the Mosaic economy but by destroying the temple, and the holy city, and the Levitical priest, and that whole nation which so incorruptibly dotted on them; this was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could never be repaired to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity might not be overmuch lifted up with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because in process of time they would be brought into captivity again, and for seventeen years only, but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should never be destroyed. Now, [1.] It is here foretold that the people of the prince that shall come, shall be the instruments of this destruction, that is, the Roman armies, belonging to a monarchy yet to come. Christ is the prince that shall come, and they are employed by him in this service; they are his armies; (Matt. xxii. 7,) or, the Gentiles, who, though now strangers, shall become the people of the Messiah, shall destroy the Jews. [2.] That the destruction shall be by war, and the end of that war should be this desolation determined. The wars of the Jews with the Romans were by their own obstinacy made very bloody and destructive; and they issued in utter extermination of that people. [3.] That the city and sanctuary should in a particular manner be destroyed, and fall quite waste. Thus, the Roman general would fain have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews, that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that the prophecy might be fulfilled. [4.] That all the resistance that was made to this desolation should be in vain; The end of it shall be with a flood. It shall be a deluge of destruction, like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against. [5.] That here the sacrifice and oblation should be made to cease. And it must needs cease, when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it were so confounded, that (they say) there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron. [6.] That there should be an overspreading of abominations, a general corruption of the Jewish nation; and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it should be made desolate, 1 Thess. v. 16. Or, it is rather to be understood of the armies of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews, they could not endure them; which overspread the nation, and by which it was made desolate. For these are the words which Christ refers to, Matth. xxiv. 15. When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee, which is by beasts. xxvi. When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then flee. [7.] That the desolation should be total and final; He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation; he shall make it completely desolate. It is a desolation determined, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it was made desolate, it should seem, there is something in the power of God to destroy more upon the earth than the desolation; (v. 27,) and what should that be but the spirit of slumber, (Rom. xi. 8, 25,) that blindness which is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in? And then all Israel shall be saved.

CHAP. X.

This chapter and the two next (which conclude this book) make up one entire vision and prophecy, which was communicated to Daniel for the use of the church. If we confine the predictions, which are many, to the times of their delivery, and confound our prophecy with signs and figures, as before, (ch. vii. and viii.) but by express words; and this was about two years after the vision in the vision in the following chapter. Daniel prayed daily, but had not a vision only now; and then in this chapter we have some things introductory to the prophecy in the eleventh chapter, the particular predictions, and ch. xii. the conclusion of it. This chapter shows us, 1. Daniel's solemn fasting and humiliation, before he had this vision, v. 1. 3. 11. A glorious appearance of the Son of God to him, and the deep impression it made upon him, v. 4. 9. 11. The encouragement that was given him to expect such a discovery as this, that he would find it satisfactory and useful both to others and to himself; and that he should be enabled both to understand the meaning of this discovery, though difficult, and to hear up under the lustre of it, though dazzling and dreadful, v. 10. 21.

1. In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. 2. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel: 5. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girted with fine gold of Uphaz: 6. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps
of fire, and his arms and his feet like in
colour to polished brass, and the voice of his
words like the voice of a multitude. 7. And I
Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men
that were with me saw not the vision; but a
great quaking fell upon them, so that they
fled to hide themselves. 3. Therefore I
was left alone, and saw this great vision,
and there remained no strength in me: for
my comeliness was turned in me into cor-
rupption, and I retained no strength. 9. Yet
heard I the voice of his words: and when I
heard the voice of his words, then was I in
a deep sleep on my face, and my face to-
ward the ground.

This vision is dated in the third year of Cyrus,
thatis,of his reign, after the conquest of Babylon,
his third year since Daniel became acquainted
with him, and is a subject to him.

Here is, 1. A general idea of this prophecy; (v. 1.)
The thing was true; every word of God is so; it was
true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such
and such things were said, this he solemnly at-
tests upon the word of a prophet; Eter but sus-
ratus est verifiable—He was prepared to verify it;
and if it was a word spoken from heaven, no
doUBt it is steadfast, and may be depended upon.

But the time appointed was long; as long as to the
end of the reign of Antiochus, which was 300 years,
a long time indeed, when it is looked upon as to
come. Nay, and because it is usual with the pro-
yets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there
is that in this prophecy, which looks in type as far
forward as to the end of the world, and the resur-
rection of the dead; and then he might well say,
The time appointed was long; it was, however,
made as plain to him as if it had been a history ra-
ther than a prophecy; he understood the thing; so
distinctly was it delivered to him, and received by
him, that he could say he had understanding of the
vision; it did not so much operate upon his fancy as
upon his understanding.

2. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself
before he had this vision; not in expectation of it,
no, when he prayed that solemn prayer, ch. ix.
does it appear that he had any expectation of the
vision in answer to it; but purely from a principle of
devotion, and pure sympathy with the afflicted
people of God. He was mortaining full three weeks,
(v. 2.) for his own sins, and the sins of his people,
and their sorrows. Some think that the particular
occasion of his mortification was, the slothfulness and
indifference of many of the Jews, who, though they
had liberty to return to their own land, continued
still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how
to use the privileges and liberties they had; and
it troubled him the more, because they that did so
justified themselves by the example of Daniel,
though they had not that reason to stay behind
which he had. Others think that it was because he
heard of the obstruction given to the building of the
temple by the enemies of the Jews, who hired coun-
selors against them, to frustrate their purpose,
(Eze. iv. 4, 5.) all the days of Cyrus, and hindered
their point from his son Cambyses, or Artaxerxes,
who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scy-
thian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to
see how slowly the work of God goes on in the
world, and what opposition it meets with; how weak
its friends are, and how active its enemies. During
the days of Daniel's mortifying, he ate no pleasant
bread; he could not live without meat, but he ate
little, and very sparingly, and mortified himself in
the quality, as well as the quantity, of what he ate,
which may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token
of humiliation and sorrow. He did not eat the flesh
bread, nor drink the wine, nor appointment himself,
for these three weeks' time, v. 3. Though he was now
a very old man, and might plead that the decay of his
nervous bodily frame, and what was more, that when he
was a very great man, and might plead that, being
used to dainty meats, he could not be without them,
it would prejudice his health if he were, yet, when
it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he
could thus deny himself; be it noted, to the shame
of many young ordinary people who cannot
forsake themselves thus to deny themselves.

3. A description of that glorious Person whom
Daniel saw in vision; which, it is generally agreed,
could be no other than Christ himself, the eternal
Word; He was by the side of the river Hiddekel,
(v. 4.) probably walking there, not for diversion,
but devotion and contemplation, as Isaac walked
in the field, to meditate; and, being a person of dis-
tinction, he had his servants attending him at some
distance in the field; and, he being alone, he was
one alone, a certain Man, even the Man Christ Je-
sus; it must be he, for he appears in the same re-
semblance wherein he appeared to St. John in the
isle of Patmos, Rev. i. 13.—15. His dress was
priestly, for he is the High Priest of our profession,
clothed in linen, as the High Priest himself was on
the day of atonement, that great day; his loins were
tied with a girdle, and girded about his loins with
a golden girdle, of the finest gold, that of
Uphaz, for every thing about Christ is the best in
its kind. The girding of the loins denotes his ready
and diligent application to his work, as his Father's
Servant in the business of our redemption. His
shape was amiable, his body like the beryl, a pre-
cious stone of a sky-colour; his countenance was
beautiful, and enough to strike a terror on the behold-
ers, for his face was as the appearance of lightning,
which dazzles the eyes, both frightens and threat-
ens; his eyes were bright and sparkling, as lamps
fire; his arms and feet shone like polished brass,
v. 6. His voice was loud, and strong, and very
piercing, like the voice of a multitude. The Vox
Dei—Voice of God, can overpower the Vox populi
Voice of the people. They that hear him will
appear, and it should engage us, (1.) To think
highly and honourably of him. Now consider how
great this man is, and in all things let him have the
pre-eminence. (2.) To admire his condescension
for us and our salvation. Over all this splendour he
drew a veil, when he took upon him the form of a
servant, and emptied himself.

3. That he was determined and persuaded that this appearance
had upon Daniel and his attendants, and the terror
that it struck upon him and them.

(1.) His attendants saw not the vision, it was not
fit that they should be honoured with the sight of it;
there is a divine revelation vouchsafed to all, from
converse with which none are excluded, who do
not exclude themselves; but such a vision must be
showered down on one peculiarly chosen for his
companions were aware of the light, but saw no
man, Acts i. 7.—xxii. 9. Note, It is the honour
of those who are beloved of God, that what is hid
from others is known to them. Christ manifests
himself to them, but not to the world, John xiv. 22.
But though they saw not the vision, they were seized
with an unaccountable trembling, either from the
voice they heard, or from some strange conclusion
of
or vibration, of the air they felt, so it was, that a
great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled
to hide themselves, probably among the willows
that grew by the river's side. Note, Many have a spirit
of bondage to fear, who never receive a spirit of
adoption, to whom Christ has been, and will be
never otherwise than, a Terror. Now the fright
that Daniel's attendants were in, is a confirmation
of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel's
fancy, or the product of a heated imagination of his
own, for it had a real, powerful, and strange effect
upon those about him.

(2.) He himself saw it, and saw it alone, but he
was not able to bear the sight of it. It not only
dazzled his eyes, but also alarmed him, and for the
first time he knew the deep and tender strength in
him, v. 8. He said, as Moses himself, I exceedingly fear and quake.
His spirits were all so employed, either in an in-
tense speculation of the glory of this vision, or in the
fortifying of his heart against the terror of it, that
his body was left to a manner lifeless and spiritless;
he had no vigour in him, and was but one remove
from a dead carcass; he looked as pale as death,
his colour was gone, and his comeliness in him was
turned into corruption, and he retained no strength.
Note, The greatest and best of men cannot bear the
immediate discoveries of the divine glory; no man
can see it and live, it is next to death to see a
glance of it, as Daniel here; but glorified saints,
see Christ as he is, and can bear it. Though Daniel
was thus dispirited with the vision of Christ, yet he heard the voice of his words, and knew what he said. Note, We must take heed lest
our reverence of God's glory by which we should be
awakened to hear his voice, both in his word and in his providence, should degenerate into such a
dread of him as will disable or indispose us to hear
what he says, so that when the vision of Christ terrified Daniel, the voice of his words soon pacified and composed him, silenced his fear, and
laid him to sleep in a holy security and serenity of
mind; When I heard the voice of his words, I fell
into a slumber, a sweet slumber, on my face, and
my face toward the ground. When he saw the
vision, he threw himself prostrate into a posture of
prayer, and as he now lay prostrate, he was not as careless of what he heard and saw, but charmed with it. Note, How dreadful soever Christ may appear to those who are under convic-
tions of sin, and in terror by reason of it, there is
enough in his word to quiet their spirits, and make
them easy, if they will but attend to it, and apply it.

10. And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the
palms of my hands: 11. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, un-
derstand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now
sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12. Then said
he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to un-
derstand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come
to thy words. 13. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and
twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I re-
mained there with the kings of Persia. 14. Now I am come to make thee understand
what shall befall thy people in the latter
days: for yet the vision is for many days.
15. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground,
and I became dumb. 16. And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men
touched my lips: then I opened my mouth and spake, and said unto him that stood be-
fore me, O my lord, by the vision my sor-
rows are turned upon me, and I have re-
tained no strength. 17. For how can the
servant of this my lord talk with this my
lord? for as for me, straightway there re-
mained no strength in me, neither is there
breath left in me. 18. Then there came
came again and touched me one like the ap-
pearance of a man, and he strengthened
me, 19. And said, O man greatly beloved,
fear not; peace be unto thee: be strong, yea,
be strong. And when he had spoken unto
me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my
lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.
20. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore
I come unto thee? and now will I return to
fight with the prince of Persia: and when
I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia
shall come. 21. But I will shew thee that
which is noted in the scripture of truth: and
there is none that holdeth with me in these
things, but Michael your prince.

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to
bear what Christ has to say to him; still we have
him in a fright, hardly and very slowly recovering
himself; but is still answered and supported
with good words and comforting words. Let us see
how Daniel is by degrees brought to himself and
gather up the several passages that are to the same
purpose.

1. Daniel is in a great consternation, and finds it
very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that
touched him, set him at first upon his knees, and
the palms of his hands, v. 10. Note, Strength and
comfort commonly come by degrees to those that
have been and do suffer; that the enemy may, first
helped up a little, and then more. After two
days he will revive us, and then the third day he
will raise us up. And we must not despise the
day of small things, but be thankful for the beginnings
of mercy. Afterward he is helped up, but he stands
trembling, (v. 11.) for fear lest he fall again. Note
Before God gives strength and power unto his peo-
ple, he makes them sensible of their own weakness.
I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day
of trouble, Hab. iii. 16.

But when, afterward, Daniel recovered so much
strength in his limbs, that he could stand steady,
yet he tells us, (v. 13.) that he set his face toward
the ground, and became dumb; he was as a man
stunned, he knew not what to say, struck with
admiration and fear, and is too bold to enter into
discourse with one so far above him; he kept silence,
yea, even from good, till he had recollected him-
self a little. Well, at length he recovered, not only
the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue; and
when he opened his mouth, (v. 16.) that which he
had ready was, to excuse his having been so long
silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not
speak; "O my lord," (so, in great humility, this
prophet calls the angel, though the angels, in great
Nothing is more likely, nothing more effectual, to revive the drooping spirits of the saints than to be assured of God's love to them. These are greatly beloved indeed, whom God loves; and it is comfort enough to know that the angels are devoted by him to their service.

3. He silenced his fears, and encouraged his hopes with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, Fear not, Daniel, v. 12. And again, (v. 19.) O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here spake to Daniel. Those that are beloved of God, have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them; God himself speaks peace to them; and they ought, upon the warrant of that, to speak peace to themselves; and that peace, that joy of the Lord, will be their strength. Will God plead against us with his great power, will he take the advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? No, but he will put strength into us, Jer xxiii. 6. So be he did into Daniel here, when, by reason of the lustre of the vision, no strength of his own remained in him; and he acknowledges it, (v. 19.) When he had spoken to me, I was strengthened.

Note, Note, by God's word puts life, and strength, and spirit into his people; for if he says, Be strong, power goes along with the word. And now that Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's word, he is no more afraid for any thing; "Now, let my lord speak, and I can hear it, and I can bear it, and I am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me." Note, To these that (like Daniel here) have no might, God increases strength, Isa. xl. 29.

And we cannot keep up our communion with God but by strength derived from him; but when he is pleased to put strength into us, we do make a good use of it; as Daniel did in speaking to God, for the advantage of others. Let God enable us to comply with his will, and then, whatever it is, we will stand complete in it. Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis—Give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt. 4. He assures him that his fasting and prayers were come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius, (Acts x. 4.) Fear not, Daniel, v. 12. It is natural to think that an angel would be afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel needs not fear, for he has by his three weeks' humiliation and supplication sent extraordinary messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive-branch of peace; "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand the words of God, that is to be the rule of thy prayers, and to come to thyself before thy God, that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, thy words were heard," as before, at the beginning of thy supplication, ch. ix. 23. Note, As the entrance of God's word is enlightening to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to him, Ps. cxix. 130. From the first day that we begin to look toward God in all our business, we may be sure that we are in a way of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer. I said, I will confess, and thou forgavest. 5. He tells him that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church, as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church; Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? If thou knowest not what excellently thou hast spoken, thou hast been a great deal mistaken in thy interpretation by it. Note, If we rightly understand the meaning of God's dealings with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we should be better reconciled to them. I am come for thy words, (v. 12.) to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers; thus, when God's praying people call to him, he says, Here I am; (Isa. lvi. 9.) what would you have?
have with me? See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has, in its time, fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries! On what errand did this angel come to the king? And what answer did he come to make the king understand what shall befall the people in the latter days. Daniel was a curious, inquisitive man, that had all his days been searching into secret things, and it would be a great gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church, its interests lay much upon his heart, and yet he would find satisfaction to himself if he knew what its state should be, and he would know the better what to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but that he might not be offended in those, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them; and if they be informed, do they only run with the foolish men, how will they contend with wolves? Note, it would abate our resentment of present troubles, to consider that we know not but much greater are before us, which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befall his people in the latter days of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew near for the church to be in much difficulty; therefore many days; the principal things that this vision was intended to give the church the foresight of, would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, near 300 years after this. Now, that which the angel is intrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, or rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has received from the Lord. It was the revelation of Jesus Christ, that the angel gave to St. John, to be delivered to the churches, Rev. i. 1. So here, (v. 21.) I will show thee what is written in the scriptures of truth, what is fixed in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. The decree of God is a thing written; it is a scripture which remains, and cannot be altered; what I have written, I have written. As there are scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters patent which are published to the world, so there are scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls which are sealed among his treasures; the book of his decrees, both are scriptures of truth, nothing shall be added to, or taken from, either of them. The secret things belong not to us, and to our children; and we are concerned to study what is written in these scriptures of truth, for they are things which belong to our everlasting peace.

6. He gives him a general account of the adversities of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected that troubles would arise; and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last. (1.) The kings of the earth are, and will be, its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord and his Anointed, Ps. ii. 2. The angel tells Daniel that he was to come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers, but that the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed him one and twenty days; just as the seer notes that Daniel had been fasting and praying. Cambyses king of Persia had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do the mischief he could; and the angel had been all this time employed to counter-work him; so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now, for angels can be but in one place at a time. Or, as Dr. Lightfoot says, This new king of Persia, by hindering the temple, had hindered those good things which the Jews were to have brought forth. The kings and kingdoms of this world were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. "When I am gone forth from the kings of Persia, when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindness to the Jews, then the prince of Persia shall come," v. 20. The Grecian monarchs, though they should have been a greater and a better protection to the church, it yet come to be disadvantageous to them; such is the state of the church militant, when it is got clear of one enemy, it has another to encounter; and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent; when one storm is blown over, it is not long before another rise.

(2.) The God of heaven is, and will be, its Protector, and, under him, the angels of heaven its patrons and guardsians. [1.] Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church; making his part good in defense of it twenty-one days, against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia, as counsel, or liege-ambassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court, and to do them service, v. 13. A threatening which was done for the church by the kings of Persia, (God permitting it,) it is probable that much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined, (witness Haman's plot,) if God had not prevented its by the ministration of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has dispatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return to fight with the prince of Persia, will continue to oppose him, and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy, (v. 20.) though he knows that another as mischievous, even that of Greece, will rise instead of it.

[2.] Here is Michael our Prince, the great Protector of the church, and the Patron of its just but injured cause. The first of the chief princes, v. 13. Some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel of the highest order, 1 Thess. iv. 16. Jude 9. Others think that Michael the archangel is no other than Christ himself, the Angel of the covenant, and the Lord of the angels, whom Daniel saw in a vision, v. 5. He came to help me; (v. 13.) and there is none but he that holds with me in these things, v. 21. Christ is the church's Prince; angels are not, Heb. ii. 5. He presides in the affairs of the church, and effectively provides for its great good. He is said to hold with the angels, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the heirs of salvation; and if he were not on the church's side, its case were bad. But, says David, and so says the church, The Lord takes my part with them that help me, Ps. cxviii. 7. The Lord is with them that uphold my soul, Ps. liv. 4.

CHAP. XI.

The angel Gabriel, in this chapter, performs his promise made to Daniel in the foregoing chapter, that he would show him what should befall his people in the latter days, according to that which was written in the scriptures of faith; very particularly does he inform Daniel of the destruction of the kings of Persia and Greece, and the affairs of their kingdoms, especially the mischief which Antiochus Epiphanes did in his time to the church, which was foretold before, ch. vii. 12. 13. 14. He is, I. A brief prediction of the setting up of the Gentile monarchies, and the ruins of the Persian monarchy, which was now newly begun, v. 1-4. II. A prediction of the affairs of the two kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, with reference to each other, and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, and his actions and successes, v. 21... 29. IV. Of the great mischief that he should do to the Jewish nation and religion, and his contempt of all religion, v. 30... 38. V. Of his fall and ruin at last, when he is in the heat of his pursuit, v. 40... 45.
1. Also I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those.

Here, 1. The angel Gabriel lets Daniel know the good service he had done to the Jewish nation; (v. 1.) "In the first year of Darius the Mede, who destroyed Babylon, and released the Jews out of that house of bondage, I stood a strength and fortress to him, I was instrumental to protect him, and give him success in his wars, and, after he had conquered Babylon, to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews, which, with the help of God, was likely, which was the main proposition. Thus by the angel, and at the request of the watcher, the golden head was broken, and the axe laid to the root of the tree. Note, We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those that are friends to the church for the service they are to do it, and confirming them in their good resolutions; herein he uses the ministry of angels more than he here tells of. 2. To the more instances we have known of God's care of his church formerly, encourage us to depend upon him in future straits and difficulties.

2. He foretells the reign of four Persian kings; (v. 2.) Now I will tell thee the truth, the true meaning of the visions of the great image, and of the four beasts, and expound in plain terms what was before represented by dark types. 1. There shall stand up three kings in Persia, beside Darius, in whose reign this prophecy is dated, ch. ix. 1. Mr. Broughton makes these three to be Cyrus, Artaxerxes, or Artaxerxes, called by the Greeks Cambyses, and Ahasuerus that married Esther, called Darius, son of Hystaspes. To these three the Persians gave these attributes—Cyrus was a father, Cambyses a master, and Darius a borderer up. So Herodotus. 2. There shall be a fourth, far richer than they all, Xerxes, of whose wealth the Greek authors take notice. By his strength, his vast army, consisting of 800,000 men at least, and his riches, with which he maintained and paid that vast army, he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes' expedition against Greece is famous in history, and his shameful defeat that he met with. Who, when he went to war against Greece, in his return was the scorn of Greece. Daniel needed not he told what disappointment he would meet with, for he was a hinderer of the building of the temple; but, soon after, about thirty years after the first return from captivity, Darius, a young king, revived the building of the temple, owning the hand of God against his predecessors for hindering it, Ezra vi. 7.

3. He foretells Alexander's conquests, and the partition of his kingdom, v. 3. He is that mighty king that shall stand up against the kings of Persia, and he shall rule with great dominion over many kingdoms, and with a despotic power, for he shall do according to his will, and undo, likewise, which by the law of the Medes and Persians, their kings could not. When Alexander, after he had conquered Asia, would be worshipped as a god, then this was fulfilled, that he shall do according to his will. That is God's permission, but not his tension. But (v. 4,) his kingdom shall soon be broken, and divided into four parts, but not to his posterity; nor shall any of his successors reign according to his dominion; none of them shall have such large territories, nor such an absolute power. His kingdom was plucked up for others besides those of his own family. Aridens, his brother, was made king in Macedonia; Olympeus, Alexander's mother, killed him, and poisoned Alexander's two sons, Hercules and Alexander; thus was his family rooted out by its own hands. See what decaying, perishing things worldly pomp and possessions are; and the powers by which they are got. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things showed more evidently than in the story of Alexander; all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

5. And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail; and shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through; then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish,
the vision; but they shall fall. 15. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities; and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. 16. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him; and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed. 17. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her; but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. 18. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many; but a prince for his own behove shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. 19. Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and be not found. 20. Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger nor in battle.

Here are foretold,

1. The rise and power of two great kingdoms out of the remains of Alexander's conquests, v. 3. 1. The kingdom of Egypt, which was made considerable by Ptolemaus Lagus, one of Alexander's captains, whose successors were from him called the Lagides. He is called the king of the south, Egypt, named here, v. 8, 42, 43. The countries that at first belonged to Ptolemy, are reckoned to be Egypt, Phoenicia, Arabia, Lybia, Ethiopia, &c. Theocr. Idyl. 17. 2. The kingdom of Syria, which was set up by Seleucus, or the conqueror of the Parthians, one of Alexander's princes, and became stronger than the other, and had the greatest dominion of all, was the most powerful of all Alexander's successors; it was said that he had no less than seventy-two kingdoms under him. Both these were strong against Judah; (the affairs of which are particularly eyed in this prediction;) Ptolemy, soon after he gained Egypt, invaded Judea, and took Jerusalem on a sudden, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave disturbance to Juden. Selenus also gave disturbance to Judea.

11. The fruitless attempt to unite these two kingdoms, as iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image; (v. 6.) At the end of certain years, about seventy after Alexander's death, the Legi and the Seleucids shall associate, but not in sincerity. Ptolemy Philopater, king of Egypt, shall marry his daughter Berenice to Antiochus Theos, king of Syria, who had already a wife called Laodice. Berenice shall come to the king of the north, to make an agreement, but it shall not hold; She shall not retain the power of the arm; neither she nor her posterity shall establish themselves in the kingdom of the north, neither shall Ptolemy her father, nor Antiochus her husband, (betwixt whom there was to be a great alliance,) stand, nor their arm, but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, all that projected that unhappy marriage between her and Antiochus, which occasioned so much mischief, instead of producing a coalition between the northern and southern crowns, as was hoped. Antiochus divorced Berenice, took his former wife Laodice again, who soon after poisoned him, procured Berenice and her son to be murdered, and set up her own son by Antiochus, to be king, who was called Seleucus Callinicus.

IV. A war between the two kingdoms; (v. 7, 8.) A branch from the same root with Berenice shall stand up in his estate. Ptolemaus Evergetes, the son and successor of Ptolemaus Philopater, shall come with an army against Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria, to avenge his sister's quarrel, and shall prevail. And he shall carry away a rich booty both of persons and goods into Egypt; and shall continue such a war for several years; when Seleucus, king of Syria, shall have reigned forty-six years; and Justin says that if his own affairs had not called him home, he had, in this war, made himself master of the whole kingdom of Syria. But (v. 9.) he shall be forced to come into his kingdom, and return into his own land, to keep peace there, so that he can no longer carry on the war abroad. Note, It is very common for a treacherous peace to end in a bloody war.

1. The king of the south, in this war, shall at first have very great success. Ptolemaus Philopater, moved with indignation at the indignities done by Antiochus the Great, shall (though otherwise a slothful prince) come forth, and fight with him, and shall bring a vast army into the field of 70,000 men, and 5,000 horse, and 75 elephants. And the other king, Antiochus, being upon a surprise; (v. 6.) having 62,000 foot, and 6,000 horse, and 102 elephants) shall be given into his hand. Polybius, who lived with Scipio, has given a particular account of this battle of Raphia. Ptolemaus Philopater, having gained this victory, grew very insolent; his heart was lifted up, then he went into the temple of God at Jerusalem, and, in defiance of the law, entered the most holy place; for which God has a controversy with him, so that, though he shall cast down many myriads, yet he shall not be strengthened by it, so as to secure his interest. For, 2. The king of the north, Antiochus the Great, shall return with a greater army than the former; and, at the end of times, that is, years, he shall come often with a mighty army, and great riches, against the king of the south; that is, Ptolemaus Philopater, who succeeded Ptolemaus Philopater his father, when he was a child, which gave advantage to Antiochus the Great. In this expedition, he had some powerful allies; (v. 14.) Many shall stand up against the king of the south; Philip of Macedon was confederate with Antiochus against the king of Egypt, and Scopas his general, whom he sent into Syra; Antiochus routed him, destroyed a great part of his army; whereupon the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined with him, helped him to besiege Ptolemaus's garrisons; then the robbers of the people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision, to help forward the accomplishment of this prophecy; but they shall
DANIEL, XI.

fall, and shall come to nothing, v. 14. Hereupon, (v. 13.) the king of the north, this same Antiochus Magnus, shall carry on his design against the king of the south another way. (1.) He shall surprise his strong holds; all that he has got in Syria and Samaria, and the arms of the north, all the power of the king of the south, shall come against him. See how dubious and variable the turns of the scale of war are; like buying and selling, it is winning and losing; sometimes one side gets the better, and sometimes the other; yet neither by chance; it is not, as they call it, the fortune of war, but according to the will and counsel of God, who brings some low, and raises others up. (2.) He shall make his land, and Judea, a prey, and carry away all before him, and do what he pleases, and he shall stand, and get footing, in the glorious land; so the land of Israel was, and by his hand it was wasted and consumed; for with the spoil of that good land he victualled his vast army. The land of Judea lay between these two potent kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, so that in all the struggles between them, that was sore to suffer; for to it they both bore ill will. Yet some read this, By his hand it shall be perfected; as if it intimates that the land of Judea, being taken under the protection of this Antiochus, shall flourish, and be in better condition than it had been. (3.) He shall still push on his war against the king of Egypt, and set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, taking advantage of those of Ptolemy Epiphanes, and the upright ones, many of the pious Israelites, siding with him, v. 17. In prosecution of his design, he shall give him his daughter Cleopatra to wife; designing, as Saul in giving his daughter to David, that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; but she shall not stand of her father's side, nor be for him, but for her husband, and so that plot failed him. (4.) His war with the Romans is here foretold; (v. 18.) He shall turn his face to the isles, (v. 18.) the isles of the Gentiles, (Gen. x. 5.) Greece and Italy. He took many of the isles about the Hellespont—Rhodes, Samos, Delos, &c. which by war or treaty he made himself master of; but a prince, or state, (so some;) even the Roman senate, or a leader, even the Roman general, by whom the Roman army is directed, shall brave his refractions, which abused the Romans, upon himself, or shall make his shame rest on himself; and, without his own shame, or any disgrace to himself, shall pay him again. This was fulfilled when the two Scipios were sent with an army against Antiochus; Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy, and waste it as he had done; but he did not take his advice; and Scipio joined battle with him, and gave him a total defeat, though Antiochus had 70,000 men, and the Romans but 30,000. Thus he caused the refractions of him to cease. (5.) His fall. When he was totally routed by the Romans, and was forced to abandon to them all he had in Europe. and had a very heavy tribute exacted from him, he turned to his own land, and, not knowing which way to raise money to pay his tribute, he plundered a temple of God in his own land, and, not being able to withstand his own objects against him, that they set upon him, and killed him, so he was overthrown, and fell, and was no more found, v. 19. (6.) His next successor, v. 20. There rose up one in his place, a raiser of taxes, a wielder of the extorter, or extorter. This character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopoemer, the elder son of Antiochus the Great; he oppressed them, exacted tribute of all, took from them certain objects, and exacted abundance of money from them; and when he was told he would thereby lose his friends, he said, he knew no better friend than he had money. He likewise attempted to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which this seems especially to refer to. But within a few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle, but poisoned by Heliodorus, one of his own servants; when he had reigned but twelve years, and done nothing remarkable.

From this let us learn, [1.] That God, in his providence, sets up one, and pulls down another, as he pleases; advances some from low beginnings, and deprecates others that were very high. Some have called great men the foot-balls of fortune; or, rather, they are the tools of Providence. [2.] This world is full of wars and fightings, which come from men's lusts, and make it a theatre of sin and misery. [3.] Peace and war, as the seasons of the states and kingdoms, and every event, even the most minute and contingent, were plainly and perfectly foreseen by the God of heaven, and to him nothing is new. [4.] No word of God shall fall to the ground; but what he has designed, what he has declared, shall infallibly come to pass; and even the sins of men shall be made to serve his purpose, and contribute to the bringing of his counsels to birth in their season; and yet God is not the Author of sin. [5.] That, for the right understanding of some parts of scripture, it is necessary that heathen authors be consulted, which give light to the scripture, and show the accomplishment of what is there foretold; we have therefore reason to bless God for the human learning, with which many have done great service to divine truths.

21. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overthrown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23. And after the league made with him shall he work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches; yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. 25. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26. Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain. 27. And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. 28. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits and return to his own land. 29. At the time
appointed he shall return, and come toward the south: but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30. For the ships of Chittim shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant; so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. 31. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. 32. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall be corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. 33. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many; yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. 34. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. 36. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. 37. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces; and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. 40. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43. But he shall have power over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. 44. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain: yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

All this is a prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn spoken of before, (ch. viii. 9.) a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those that adhered to it. What troubles the Jews every where with the reign of the Persian kings, were not so particularly foretold to Daniel as these; because then they had living prophets with them, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage them; but these troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold, because, before that time, prophecy would cease, and they would find it necessary to have recourse to the written word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus are alluded to in the New Testament predictions of the antichrist, especially v. 36, 37. And as it is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the prosperity of the Jewish church, to make use of such expressions as were applicable to the kingdom of Christ, and insensibly to slide into a prophecy of that, so, when they foretell the troubles of the church, they make use of such expressions as have a further reference to the kingdom of the antichrist, the rise and ruin of that.

Now concerning Antiochus, the angel foretells here,

I. His character; He shall be a vile person. He called himself Epiphanes—the illustrious, but his character was the reverse of his surname. The heathen writers describe him to be an odd-humoured man, rude and boisterous, base and sordid. He would sometimes steal out of the court into the city, and herd himself with any infamous company, inognito—in disguise; he made himself a companion of the common sort, and of the basest strangers that came to town. He had the most unaccountable whims, so that some took him to be silly, others to be mad. He was called Epiphanes—the mad man. He is called a vile person, a madman, because he was a long time a hostage at Rome for the fidelity of his father, when the Romans had subdued him; and it was agreed that when the other hostages were exchanged, he should continue a prisoner at large.

II. His accession to the crown. By a trick he got his elder brother's son, Demetrius, to be sent a hostage to Rome, in exchange for him, contrary to the cartel; and his elder brother being made away with by Heliodorus, (v. 20.) he took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not give it him, (v. 21.) because they knew it belonged to his elder brother's son, nor did he get it by the sword, but came in peaceably, pretending to reign for his brother's son, Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome. But with the help of Eumenes and Attalus, neighbouring princes, he gained an interest in the people, and by flatteries obtained the kingdom, established himself in it, and crushed Heliodorus, who made head against him with the arms of a foe; they that opposed him, were overthrown and broken before him: even the prince of the covenant, his nephew, the rightful heir, whom he pretended to covet and with. But he was master to all. Whenever he should return, v. 22. But (v. 23.) after the league made with him, he shall work deceitfully, as one whose arrowed maxim it is, that princes ought not to be

Vol. iv.—5 R
bound by their word any longer than it is for their interest. And with a small people, that at first clause to him, he shall become strong, and (v. 24.) he shall enter peaceably upon the fastest places of the kingdom of Syria, and, very unlike his prede-
scessors, shall scatter among them the spoil, and riches, to insinuate himself into their affections; but at the same time, he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, to make himself master of them, so that his generosity shall last but for a time; when he has got the garrisons into his hands, he will scatter his spoil no more, but rule by force, as those commonly do, that come in by fraud. In this interpretation. Some understand these verses of his first expedition into Egypt, when he came not as an enemy, but as a friend and guardian to the young king Ptolemæus Philometer, and therefore brought with him but few followers, yet those stout men, and faithful to his interest, whom he placed in divers of the strong holds in Egypt, thereby making himself master of them.

III. His war with Egypt; which was his second expedition thither. This is described, v. 25—27. Antiochus shall stir up his power and courage against Ptolemæus Philometer king of Egypt. Pto-
lemæ, thereupon, shall be stirred up to battle against him, shall come against him with a very great and mighty army; but Ptolemæus, though he has such a vast army, shall not be able to stand before him: for Antiochus shall overcome both his army and power it, and great multitudes of the Egyptian army shall fall down slain. And no marvel, for the king of Egypt shall be betrayed by his own counsellors; that they fed of the portion of his meat, that cat of his bread, and live upon him, being bribed by An-
tiochus, shall forecast devices against him, and even they shall destroy him; and what fence is there against such treachery? After the battle, a time of peace shall be set on foot, and these two kings shall meet at one council-board, to adjust the arti-
cles of peace between them; but they shall neither of them be sincere in it, for they shall, in their pretences and promises of amity and friendship, lie to one another, for their hearts shall be at the same time to do one another all the mischief they can. And then no marvel that it shall be said, they put the spoils of war, that shall be great; but the end of it shall be at the time appointed in the Divine Providence, and then the war shall break out again, as a sore that is only skinned over.

IV. Another expedition against Egypt. From the former he returned with great riches, (v. 28.) and therefore took the first occasion to invade Egypt again, at the time appointed by the Divine Provi-
dence, two years after, in the eighth year of his reign, v. 29. He shall come toward the south. But this attempt shall not succeed, as the former did, nor shall he gain his point, as he had done be-
fore once and again; for, (v. 30.) the ships of Chit-
tim shall come against him, that is, the navy of the Romans, or only ambassadors from the Roman se-
ate, who came in ships. Ptolemæus Philometer, king of Egypt, being now in a strict alliance with the Romans, craved their aid against Antiochus, who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of Alexandria. The Roman senate, there-
upon, sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege; which, when he desired some time to consider of, and consult with his friends, Popilius, one of the ambassadors, with his chieftains, and a circle about him, and told him, as one having authority, he should give a positive an-
swer before he came out of that circle; whereupon, fearing the Roman power, he was forced immedi-
ately to give orders for the raising of the siege, and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. So Livy

and others relate the story which this prophecy re-
fers to; He shall be grieved, and return; for it was a great vexation to him to be forced to yield thus.

V. His rage and cruel practices against the Jews.

This is that part of his government, or mis-government that rages in the days of Antiochus. The main subject of this prediction. In his return from his expedition into Egypt, (which is prophesied of, v. 28,) he did ex-
loit against the Jews, in the sixth year of his reign; then he spoiled the city and temple; but the most terrible storm was in his return from Egypt, two years after, prophesied of, v. 30. Then he took Judea in his way home; and because he could not get the form of a battle, he cast his eyes upon the (v. 31.) city, and the temple, accompanied with his army, and razed it to the ground, with the most cruel and blood-curdling decrees. He thereupon, thereupon, not only his own nation which he now brought from Egypt, but a great party of deserters from the Jewish religion that joined with them; and they polluted the sanctuary of strength, not only the holy city, but the temple. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. i. 21, &c. He entered proudly into the sanctuary, took away the golden altar, and the candlestick, &c. And they (v. 23.) there was a great mourning in Israel, the priests and people 
mourned, &c. And (2 Mac. i. 15, &c.) Antiochus 
went into the most holy temple, Menelaus, that tutor to the lawns, and to his own country, being his guide. Antiochus, having resolved to bring all about him to be of his religion, took away the daily
sacrifice, v. 31. Some observe that the word 
Tumeth, which signifies no more than daily, is only 
here, and in the parallel place, used for the daily 
sacrifice; if that be the case, the deduced liberty left 
to supply it either with sacrifice, which was suppressed 
by Antiochus, or with gospel-worship, which was 
suppressed by the antichrist. Then he set up the 
abomination of desolation upon the altar, (1 Mac. 
1. 54.) even an idolater, (v. 39.) and called the tem-
ple The temple of Jupiter Olympius, 2 Mac. vi. 2.
4. He persecutes all his subjects with ver-
geny. Though there are many who forsake the 
eovenant, and do wickedly against it, yet there is 
a people who do know their God, and retain the 
knowledge of him, and they shall be strong, and do 
exploits; (v. 32.) when others yield to the tyrant's 
demands, and surrender their consciences to his im-
positions, they bravely keep their ground, resist the 
temptation, and make the tyrant himself ashamed of 
his attempt upon them. Good old Eleazar, one of 
the principal scribes, when he had swine's flesh 
thrust into his mouth, bravely spit it out again, 
though he knew he must be tormented to death for 
doing; and was so, 2 Mac. vi. 19. The mother 
and her seven sons were put to death for adhering 
to their religion, 2 Mac. vii. This might well be 
called a gross reproach for such a matter, and 
stronger than sin, is a great exploit. And it was by 
faith, by being strong in faith, that they did those ex-
plioits; that they were tortured, not accepting 
deliverance, as the apostle speaks, probably with refer-
ce to that story, Heb. xi. 35. Or, it may refer 
to the military courage and achievements of Judas 
Maccabæus, and others in opposition to them. Note, 
The right knowledge of God and will be the 
strength of the soul, and, in the strength of that, 
gracious souls do exploits. They that know 
his name, will put their trust in him, and by that trust 
will do great things.

Now concerning this people that knew their God, 
we are here told, (1.) That they shall instruct 
many, v. 33. They shall make it their business to 
show others what they have learned themselves of 
the difference between truth and falsehood, good and 
ever. Note, They that have the knowledge of God 
themselves, should communicate their knowledge 
to those about them, and this spiritual charity must 
be extensive; they must instruct many. Some 
understand this of a society newly erected for the 
propagation of divine knowledge, called Asidæus, 
godly men of Piæus, (so the Sept. translate it,) that 
were the keepers of the faithful in the last 
and instructing many. Note, In times of persecution 
and apostasy, which are trying times, those that 
have knowledge ought to make use of it for the 
strengthening and establishing of others. They that 
understand aright themselves, ought to do what 
they can to bring others to understand; for know-
ledge is a talent that must be traded with. Or, They 
shall instruct many, by their perseverance in their 
duty, and their patient suffering for it. Good ex-
amples instruct many, and with many are the most 
powerful instructions. (2.) They shall fall by 
the cruelty of Antiochus; shall be put to the torture, 
and put to death, by his rage. Though they are so 
excellent and intelligent themselves, and so useful 
and serviceable to others, that they could easily 
maintain their own; yet they do not, and they 
are put to death. So it may be read, Rev. vi. 10. Thou 
shalt have tribulation ten days. We read much, in the books 
of the Maccabees, of Antiochus's barbarous usage 
of the pious Jews, how many he slew in wars, and 
how many he murdered in cold blood. Women 
were put to death for having their children circumcised, 
and their infants were hanged about their 
necks, 1 Mac. i. 60, 61. But why did God suffer 
this? How can this be reconciled with the justice 
and goodness of God? I answer, Very well, if we 
consider what it was that God aimed at in this; (v. 2.) 
Some observe of expiating sufferings; but it 
shall be for the good of the Gentiles, and for their 
own spiritual benefit. It shall be to try them, and 
to purge, and to make them white. They needed 
these afflictions themselves; the best have their 
spots, which must be washed off, their dress, which 
must be purged out; and their troubles, particularly 
their share in the public troubles, help to do this; 
and yet these same persecutions and trials, which are means of mortifying their corruptions, wean 
them from the world, and awakening them to 
greater seriousness, and diligence in religion. They 
try them, as silver in the furnace is refined from its 
dross; they purge them, as wheat in the barn is 
winnowed from the chaff; and make them white, as cloth 
by the fuller is cleared from its spots. See 1 Pet. i. 7. 
Their sufferings for righteousness' sake, and 
and purge the nation of the Jews, would convince 
them of the truth, excellency, and power of that 
 holy religion which these understanding men died 
for their adherence to. The blood of the martyrs 
is the seed of the church; it is precious blood, and net 
a drop of it should be shed but upon such a valuable 
consideration. (3.) The cause of religion, though 
they might suffer for it, if they should fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, 
but they shall be hallowed with a little help, v. 34. 
Judas Maccabæus, and his brethren, and a few with 
them, shall make head against the tyrant, and as-
sert the injure cause of their religion; they pulled 
down the idolatrous altars, circumcised the children 
that they found uncircumcised, recovered the law out 
of the hands of the Gentiles, and the work prospered 
in their hands, 1 Mac. ii. 45. &c. Note, Those 
that stand by the cause of religion when it is threat-
ened and struck at, though they may not immedi-
ately be delivered, and made victorious, shall yet 
have present help. A little help must not be 
despised; but when times are very bad, we must be 
thankful for some reviving. It is likewise foretold 
that many shall cleave to them with, latters; when 
they see the Maccabees prosper, some Jews shall 
join with them, that are no true friends to religion, 
but will only pretend friendship, either with design 
to betray them, or in hope to rise with them; but the 
 fury trial, (v. 35.) will separate between the pre-
cious and the vile, and by it they that are perfect 
will be made manifest, and they that are not. (4.) 
Though these troubles may continue long, yet they 
have a limit; they have not been set on foot at 
a limited time, fixed in the divine counsels; this 
warfare shall be accomplished; hitherto the power 
of the enemy shall come, and no further, here shall 
its proud waves be stayed.

3. He grew very proud, insolent, and profane, 
and, being puffed up with the conquests, bade de-
ference to Heaven, and triumphed upon every thing 
that was holy, 3 Mac. v. 1. 8c. He that 
begins a prophecy of the antichrist, the papal king-
dom. It is plain that St. Paul, in his prophecy of the 
rise and reign of the man of sin, alludes to this 
here, (2 Thess. i. 4.) which shows that Antiochus 
was a type and figure of that enemy, as Babylon also 
was; but this being joined in a continued discourse 
in the foregoing prophecies, concerning Antiochus, 
not to mention (so to speak) that he refers to 
him, and in him had its primary accomplishment, 
and has reference to the other only by way of 
commutation.

(1.) He shall impiously dishonour the God of Is-
rael, the only living and true God, called here the 
God of gods. He shall, in defiance of him and his 
authority, do according to his will against his people 
and his holy religion; he shall exalt himself, as he 
would, above all that are called gods, and shall talk 
marvellous
things against him, and against his laws and institutions. This was fulfilled when Antiochus forbade sacrifices to be offered in God's temple, and ordered the sabbaths to be profaned, the sanctuary and the holy people to be polluted, &c. to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And this, upon pain of death, 1 Macc. i. 45.

(2.) He shall proudly put contempt upon all other gods; shall magnify himself above every god, even the god of the earth; he shall do all things as his kingdom, that every one should leave the gods he had worshipped, and worship such as he ordered, contrary to the practice of all the conquerors that went before him; (1 Macc. i. 41, 42.) And all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king: fond as they were of their gods, they did not think them worth suffering for, but, their gods being idols, it was all alike to them what gods they worshipped. Antiochus did not regard any god, but magnified himself above all, v. 37.

His pride so increased, that he thought himself above the condition of a mortal man, that he could command the waves of the sea, and reach to the stars of heaven, as his insolence and haughtiness are expressed, 2 Macc. ix. 8, 10. Thus he carried all before him, till the indignation of God came upon him. (44.) He had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity; for which is determined shall be done, and nothing more, nothing short.

(3.) He shall, contrary to the way of the heathen, disregard the god of his fathers, v. 37. Though an affection to the religion of their ancestors was, among the heathen, almost as natural to them as the desire of women, (for if you search through the isles of Chittim, you will not find an instance of a nation which has changed its gods, Jer. ii. 10, 11.) yet Antiochus shall not regard the god of his fathers; he made laws to abolish the religion of his country, and to bring in the idols of the Greeks. And though his predecessors had honoured the God of Israel, and given great gifts to the temple at Jerusalem, (2 Macc. iii. 2, 3.) he did the greatest indignities to God and his temple. His not regarding the desire of women, may be spoken either his barbarous cruelty, he shall spare no age or sex, no, not the tender ones: or, his unnatural lusts, or, in general, his contempt of everything which men of honour have a concern for: or, it might be accomplished in something we meet not with in history. Its being joined to his not regarding the god of his fathers, intimates that the idolatries of his country had in them more of the gratifications of the flesh than in the two former. (45.) And he shall write of the Syrian goddesses; and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

(4.) He shall set up an unknown god; a new god, v. 38. In his estate, in the room of the god of his fathers, (Apollo and Diana, deities of his pleasure,) he shall honour the god of forces, a supposed deity of power, a god whom his fathers knew not, nor would they have taken him for his god. He shall make strength to excel his fathers, he shall honour this god with gold, and silver and precious stones, thinking nothing too good for the god he had taken in fancy to. This seems to be Jupiter Olympius; known among the Phenicians by the name of Baal-Sennim, the lord of heaven, but never introduced among the Syrians till Antiochus did it. Thus he shall set up his image in the temple of the Mede, which is called the sanctuary of strength, (v. 31.) and here the fortresses of munitions; there he shall set up the image of this strange god. Some read it, He shall commit the munitions of strength, or of the most strong God, the city of Jerusalem, to a strange god; he put it under the protection and government of Jupiter Olympius. This god he shall not only acknowledge, but shall increase with glory, by setting his image upon God’s altar.

And he shall cause them that minister to this idol, to rule over many, shall put them into places of power and trust, and they shall divide the land for gain, shall be maintained richly out of the profits of the country. Some by the Mahazzim, or god of forces, that Antiochus shall worship, understand money, which is said to answer all things, and which is the great idol of worldly people.

Now here is very much that is applicable to the modern state and the state of his followers. He pretends not to regard the desire of women; and honours the god of forces, the god Mahazzim, or strong holds, saints and angels, whom his followers take for their protectors, as the heathen did of old their demons; these he make presidents of several countries; &c. These he honours with vast treasures dedicated to them, and therein the learned Mr. Mede thinks that this prophecy was fulfilled, and that it is referred to, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

VI. Here seems to be another expedition into Egypt, or, at least, a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had tied him up from invading Parthia, but now that king of the south fashions him, (v. 40.) whom you see a king of Egypt, who is strong upon some of his territories; whereupon Antiochus, the king of the north, comes against him like a whirlwind, with incredible swiftness and fury, with chariots, and horses, and many ships, a great force; he shall come through countries, and shall overthrow and pass over; in this flying march many countries shall be overthrown by him; and he shall enter into the glorious land, the land of Israel; it is the same word that is translated the pleasant land, ch. viii. 9. He shall make dreadful work among the nations thereof: yet some shall escape his fury, particularly Ed m and M°b, and the chief of the children of Ammon, v. 41. He did not put these countries under contribution, because they had joined with him against the Jews. But especially the land of Egypt shall not escape, but he will quite beggar that, so bare will he strip it. This some reckon his fourth and last expedition against Egypt, in the tenth or eleventh year of his reign, under pretence of assisting the younger brother of Ptolemaeus Philometer against him. We read not of any great slaughter made in this expedition, but great plunder; for, it should seem, that was it he came for; He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt; (42.) He shall take but little of the spoil, except horses and gold, and silver and precious stones; (43.) he has written of the Syrian goddesses; and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

VII. Here is a prediction of the fall and ruin of Antiochus; as before, (ch. viii. 23.) when he is in the height of his honour, flushed with victory, and king as he is, he shall come up to the head of the north; (out of the north-east,) shall trouble him, v. 44. Or, He shall have intelligence, both from the eastern and northern parts, that the king of Parthia is invading his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprises he had in hand, and to go against the Persians and Parthians that were revolting from him; and this vexed him; for now he thought utterly to have ruined and extinguished the Jewish nation. when that expedition called him off.
in which he perished. This is explained by a passage in Tacitus, (though an impious one,) where he commends Antiochus for his attempt to take away the superstitition of the Jews, and bring in the manners of the Greeks among them, (at tertium Germanorum, "by which a new race of nations") and laments that he was hindered from accomplishing it by the Parthian war. Now here is,

1. The last effort of his rage against the Jews; when he finds himself perplexed and embarrassed in his affairs, he shall go forth with great fury, to destroy and utterly to make away many, v. 44. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. iii. 27. &c. When the Lord will hearken to the prayers of the people, he will come to the aid of Judas Maccabæus, and the orders he gave to Lyssias to destroy Jerusalem! Then he flattered the tabernacles of his palace, or tents of his court, between the seas, between the Great sea and the Dead sea. He set up his royal pavilion at Emmaus, near Jerusalem, in token, that though he could not be present himself, yet he gave full power to his captains to prosecute the war against the Jews with the utmost rigor. He placed his tent there, as if he had taken possession of the glorious holy mountain, and called it his own. Note, When impiety grows very impudent, we may see its ruin near.

2. His exit; II. shall come to his end, and none shall help him. God shall cut him off in the midst of his days, and none shall be left of his house. The Lord is the sovereign God, that was foretold, (ch. viii. 28.) He shall be broken without hand; where we took a view of his miserable end. Note, When God's time is come to bring proud oppressors to their end, none shall be able to help them, nor perhaps inclined to help them; for those that covet to be feared by all, when they are in their grandeur, will be least esteemed and despised by all, that are hated and abhorred; none will lend them so much as a hand, or a prayer, to help them; and if the Lord do not help, who shall?

Of the kings that came after Antiochus, nothing is here prophesied, for that was the most malicious, mischievous enemy to the church, that was a type of the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming, and none shall help him.

CHAP. XII.

After the prediction of the troubles of the Jews under Antiochus, prefiguring the troubles of the Christian church under the antichristian power, we have here, I. Comforts, and very precious ones, prescribed as cordials for the support of God's people in those times of trouble, and they are as such as indifferently serve both for those former times of trouble under Antiochus, and those latter which were prefigured by them, v. 1...4. II. A conference between Christ and an angel, concerning the time of the continuance of these events, designed for Daniel's satisfaction, v. 5...7. III. Daniel's inquiry for his own satisfaction, v. 8. And the answer he received to that inquiry, v. 9...13.

1. And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn

many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. 4. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

It is usual with the prophets, when they foretell the grievances of the church, to furnish it at the same time with proper antidotes; a remedy for every malady. And no relief is so sovereign, of such general application, so easily accommodated to every case, and of such powerful efficacy, as those that are fetched from Christ, and the future state; thence the comforts here are fetched.

1. Jesus Christ shall appear his church's Patron and Protector. At that time, when the persecutor is at the hottest, Michael shall stand up, v. 1. The angel had told Daniel what a fast friend Michael was to the church, ch. x. 21. He all along showed it in the upper world, the angels knew it; but now Michael shall stand up in his providence, and work deliverance for the Jews, when he sees that their power is gone, Deut. xxxiii. 36. Christ is that great Prince, for he is the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. And if he stand up for his church, who can be against it? But this is not all; At that time, soon after, Michael shall stand up for the working out of our eternal salvation, the Son of Righteousness shall be manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Christ stood up for the children of our people, when he was made Sin and a Curse for them, stood in their stead as a Sacrifice, bore the curse for them, to bear it from them. He stands for them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the vail; stands up for them, and stands their Friend. And after the angel showed the Son of Righteousness shall be a type, Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, shall appear for the complete redemption of all his.

2. When Christ appears, he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people. There shall be a time of trouble, threatening to all, but ruining to all the impenitent enemies of God's kingdom among men, such trouble as never was since there was a nation. Which is applicable, (1.) To the destruction of Jerusalem; which Christ calls (perhaps with no eye to this here) such a great tribulation as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, Matt. xxiv. 21. This the angel had spoken much of; (ch. ix. 26, 27.) and it happened about the same time, that Christ set up the gospel-kingdom of God in the world, and shall be the means of the destruction of their nation. (2.) To the judgment of the great day; that day that shall burn as an oven, and consume the proud, and all that do wickedly; that will be such a day of trouble as never was, to all those whom Michael our Prince stands against.

3. He will work salvation for his people; "At that time thy people shall be delivered, delivered from their enemies, and none shall be able to destroy them by Antiochus, even all those that were marked for preservation, that were written among the living," Isa. iv. 3. When Christ comes into the world, he will save his spiritual Israel from sin and hell, and will, at his second coming, complete their salvation, even the salvation of as many as were given him, as many as his Father had given him in the union of the Son with the Father. They were written there before the world, and will be found written there at the end of the world, when the book shall be opened.

4. There shall be a distinguishing resurrection of them that sleep in the dust, v. 2. (1.) When God works deliverance for his people from persecution, it is a kind of resurrection; so the Jews released out of Babylon was represented in vision, (Ezek. xxxvii.) and so the deliverance of the Jews from
Antiochus, and other restorations of the church to outward glory; and they were as life unto the dead. Many of them who had long slept in the dust of obscurity and calumny, shall then awake, some to that life and honour and comfort which will be lasting, everlasting, but to others, who, when they return to their prosperity, will return to their iniquity, it will be a resurrection to shame and contempt, for the prosperity of fools will but expose them and their profession. (2.) When then, upon the approach of Michael our Prince, his help is preached, many of them who sleep in the dust, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be awakened by it, to take upon them a profession of religion, and shall rise out of their heathenism or Judaism; but since there will be always a mixture of hypocrites with true saints, it is but some of them who are raised to life, to whom the gospel is a saviour; life unto life, but others will be raised by it to shame and contempt, to whom the gospel of Christ will be a saviour of death unto death; and Christ himself set for their fall. The net of the gospel encloses both good and bad. But, (3.) It must be meant of the general resurrection at the last day; The multitude of them that sleep in the dust, shall awake, that is, all, which shall be a great many. Or, Of them that sleep in the dust, the dead, of both the just and unjust, (John vi.) and upon this the Jews are said by St. Paul to expect a resurrection of the dead both of the just and of the unjust, Acts xxiv. 15. And nothing could come in more seasonably here, for, under Antiochus's persecution, some beseechently betrayed their religion, others bravely adhered to it. Now it would be a trouble to them, that when the storm was over, they could neither reward the one, nor punish the other; this therefore would be a satisfaction to them, that they would both be recompensed according to their works in the resurrection. And the apostle, speaking of the pious Jews that suffered martyrdom under Antiochus, tells us, that though they were tortured, yet they accepted not deliverance, because they hoped to obtain this better resurrection, Heb. xi. 35. 5. There shall be a glorious reward conferred on those who, in the day of trouble and distress, being themselves wise, did instruct many. Such were taken care of, even under disease of persecution, (ch. xli. 33.) that they should do eminent service, and yet should fall by the sword and by flame; now if there were not another life after this, they would be of all men most miserable; and therefore we are here assured that they shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just; (v. 3.) They that are wise, (that are teachers, so some read it,) for particular notice is given to them of the prophecy, that they (if they have wisdom themselves, should communicate it to others,) they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, shall shine in glory, heavenly glory, the glory of the upper world; and they that by the wisdom they have, and the instructions they give, are instrumental to turn any, especially to turn many, to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever, to the admiration of the world. (Jam. vi. 20.) will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their own crown, and especially to those, who have obtained mercy of him to be faithful and successful, and so are made burning and shining lights in this world, and shall shine very bright in the other world, shall shine as the stars. Christ is the Sun, the Fountain of the lights, both of grace and glory; ministers, as stars, shine in both, with a light derived from him, and a diminutive light in comparison to that of the sun; whereas in the Resurrection vessels it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall shine as the stars of different magnitudes, some in lesser, others in greater, lustre; but whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven as leaves in autumn, these stars shall shine for ever and ever, shall never set, never be eclipsed. 6. That this prophecy of these times, though scaled up now, would be of great use to them that should live then, v. 4. Daniel must now shut up the words, and seal the book; because the time would be long ere these things would be accomplished; and it was some comfort that the Jewish nation, though, in the infancy of their return from Babylon, while they were few and weak, they met with obstructions in their work, yet they should see, after the religion till a long time after, when they were grown to some strength and maturity. He must seal the book, because it would not be understood, and therefore would not be regarded, till the things contained in it were accomplished; but he must keep it safe, as a treasure of great value, laid up for the ages to come, to whom it would be of great service; for many shall then run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. Then this hid treasure shall be opened, and many shall search into it, and dig for the knowledge of it, as for silver. They shall run to and fro, to inquire out copies of it, shall collate them, and see that they are true and authentic; they shall read it over and over, shall meditate upon it, and run it over in their minds; discerne, they shall discourse of it, and talk it over among themselves, and compare notes about it, if by any means they may sift out the meaning of it, and thus knowledge shall be increased; by consulting this prophecy on this occasion they shall be led to search other scriptures, which shall contribute much to their advancement in useful knowledge; for then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord; Hos. vi. 3. (2.) We shall know, if we will, that things increased, must take pains, must not sit still in slothfulness and bare wishes, but run to and fro; must make use of all the means of knowledge, and improve all opportunities of getting their mistakes rectified, their doubts resolved, and their acquaintance with the things of God improved; to know more, and to know better, what they do know. And amongst the things of God, which are now dark and obscure, will hereafter be made clear, and easy to be understood. Truth is the daughter of Time. Scripture-prophecies will be expanded by the accomplish-ment of them; therefore they are given, and for that explanation they are reserved. Therefore they are told us before, that when they do come to pass, we may believe, and the words shall be fulfilled. (1.) Those that would have God amongst them, despised and neglected, and thrown by us as less, shall be brought into reputation, shall be found to be of great service, and be brought into request; for divine revelation, however slighted for a time, shall be magnified and made honourable, and, above all, in the judgment of the great day, when the books shall be opened, and that book among the rest. 5. Then I Daniel looked, and, behold there stood other two, the one on this side
Daniel had been made to foresee the amazing revolu-
tions of states and kingdoms, as far as the Israel
of God was concerned in them; in them he foresaw
troublous times to the church, suffering, trying
times, the prospect of which much affected him,
and filled him with concern: now there were two
questions proper to be asked upon this head: When
shall the end be? And, What shall the end be?
These questions are answered and asked here,
in the close of the book; and though the comforts
prescribed in the foregoing verses, one would think,
were satisfactory enough, yet, for more abundant
satisfaction, this is added,
I. The question, When the end shall be? is asked
by an angel, v. 5, 6. Concerning this we may ob-
serv,
1. Who it was that asked the question. Daniel
had had a vision of Christ in his glory, the Man
clothed in linen, ch. x. 5. But his discourse had
been with the angel Gabriel, and now he looks,
and behold, other two (v. 5.) two angels that he had not
seen before; one upon the bank of the river on
one side, and the other on the other side, that, the
river being between them, they might not whisper
to one another, but what they said might be heard.
Christ stood on the waters of the river, (v. 6.)
between the banks of Ula; it was therefore proper
that the angels his attendants should stand on either
bank, that they might be ready to go one way
and the other the other way, as he should order
them. These angels appeared, (1.) To adorn the
vision, and make it the more illustrious; and to add
to the glory of the Son of man, Heb. i. 6. Daniel
had not seen them before, though it is probable that
they were there; but now when they began to
speak, he looked up, and saw them. Note, The
further we look into the things of God, and the
more we converse with them, the more we shall see
of those things, and still new discoveries will be
made to us; they that know much, if they improve
it, shall know more. (2.) To confirm the discovery,
that out of the mouth of two or three wise men
the Lord might be established. These angels appeared
to Abraham. (3.) To inform themselves, to hear
and ask questions; for the mysteries of God's king-
dom are things which the angels desire to look into,
(1 Pet. i. 12.) and they are known to the church,
Eph. iii. 10. Now one of these two angels said,
When shall the end be? Perhaps they both asked, first
one, and then the other, but Daniel heard only one.
2. To the end of this question; When shall the end
be? an angel clothed in linen, of whom we read before; (ch. x.
5.) to Christ our great High Priest, who was upon
the waters of the river, and whose spokesman, or
interpreter, the angel Gabriel had all this while
been. This river was Hiddekel, (ch. x. 4.) the same
with Tigris, the place whereabout many of the
events prophesied of would happen; there therefore
is the scene laid. Hiddekel was mentioned as one of the rivers that watered the garden
of Eden; (Gen. ii. 14.) fitly therefore does Christ
stand upon that river, for by him the trees in the
paradise of God are watered. Waters signify peo-
ple, and so his standing upon the waters denotes his
domination over all; he sits upon the flood, (Ps. xxvii.
8.) he stands upon the waves, (Isa. xxiii. 10.) as
Angel Christ, to show that this was he, in the days
of the flesh, walked upon the waters, Matth. xiv.
23. He was above the waters of the river; (some read it) he appeared in the air over the river.
3. What the question was; How long shall it be
to the end of these wonders? Daniel would not
ask the question, because he would not try to what
it should be reduced, nor when it should happen;
times and seasons, which the Father has put in
his own power, Acts i. 7. But that he might have
the satisfaction of the answer, the angel put the
question in his hearing. Our Lord Jesus sometimes
answered the questions which his disciples were
afraid or ashamed to ask, John xvi. 19. The angel
asked as one concerned, How long shall it be?
with the view of preparing the church for the
end of the wonders, these suffering, trying
times, that are to pass over the people of God?
Note, (1.) The troubles of the church are the won-
der of angels. They are astounded that God will
suffer his church to be thus afflicted, and are anx-
ious to know what good he will do his church by
its afflictions. (2.) Good angels know no more
times of things to come than God is pleased to disclose
them, much less do evil angels. (3.) The holy
angels in heaven are concerned for the church
on earth, and lay to heart its afflictions; how much more
then should we, who are more immediately related
to it, and have so much of our peace in its peace?
4. What answer was returned to it, by him who is
indeed the Numberer of secrets, and knows
the things that are, and the things that shall be.
(1.) Here is a more general account given of the
continuance of these troubles, to the angel that made
the inquiry; (v. 7.) that they shall continue for a
time, times, and a half; a year, two years, and
a half year, as was before intimated, (ch. vii. 23.) but
the one half of a prophetic week; some under-
stand it indefinitely, a certain time for an uncer-
tain time; it shall be for a time, a consumable time.
times, a longer time yet, double to what it was
thought at first that it would be; and yet indeed it
shall be but half a time, or a part of a time; when
it is over, it shall seem not half so much as was feared.
But it is rather to be taken for a certain
time; we meet with it in the Revelation, under
the title sometimes of three days and a half, put for
three years and a half; sometimes forty-two months, or sometimes 1260 days. Now this determination of the time is being, [1.] Confirmed by an oath. The man clothed in linen lifted up both his hands to heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, that it shall be so. Thus the mighty angel whom St. John saw, is brought in, with a plain reference to this vision here, standing with his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and with his hand lifted up to heaven, swearing. Daniel 12:13, 14, Revelation 10:5. The Mighty One that Daniel saw, stood with both feet on the water, and swore with both hands lifted up. Note, An oath is of use for confirmation; God only is to be sworn by, for he is the proper Judge to whom we are to appeal; and lifting up the hand is a very proper and significant sign to be used in a solemn oath. [2.] It is illustrated with a reason; God will suffer him to prevail till he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people. God will suffer him to do his worst, and run his utmost length, and then all these things shall be finished. Note, God's time to succour and relieve his people, is when their affairs are brought to the last extremity; in the mouth of the Lord it shall be seen that Isaac is saved just then when he lies ready to be sacrificed. Now the end of these troubles and events was reached, and expressly, in his book of the wars of the Jews, that Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, surprised Jerusalem by force, and held it three years and six months, and is then cast out of the the country by the Apostles, when he had 360 days, that is, years, at the end of which he shall begin to fall; but thirty years after, he shall be quite fallen, at the end of 1290 days; and whoever lives forty years longer, to 1335 days, will see glorious times indeed. Whether it looks so far forward or no, I cannot tell; but this, however, we may learn, First, That there is a time fixed for the period of the church's troubles, and the bringing about of her deliverance, and that this time will be punctually observed to a day. Secondly, That this time must be waited for with faith and patience. Thirdly, That, when it comes, it will abundantly recompense us for our long expectations of it. Blessed is he who, having waited long, comes to it at last, for he will then have reason to say, Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him. 11. The question, What the end shall be Is asked by Daniel, and an answer given to it. Observe, 1. Why Daniel asked this question? It was because, though he heard what was said to the angel, yet he did not understand it, v. 8. Daniel was a very intelligent man, and had been conversant in visions and prophecies, and yet here he was fuzziest of all; he did not understand the meaning of the time, times, and the part of a time, at least, not so clearly and with so much certainty as he wished. Note, The best men are often much at a loss in their inquiries concerning divine things, and meet with that which they do not understand. But the better they are, the more sensible they are of their own weakness and ignorance, and the more ready to acknowledge it. 2. What the question was; O my Lord, What shall be the end of these things? He directs his inquiry, not to the angel that talked with him, but immediately to Christ, for to whom else should we go with our inquiries? What shall be the final issue of these events? What do they tend to? What will they end in? Note, When we take a view of the affairs of the church, and the events of God's kingdom, we cannot but think, What will be the end of these things? We see things more as if they would end in the utter ruin of God's kingdom among men; when we observe the prevalence of vice and impiety, the decay of religion, the sufferings of the righteous, and the triumphs of the ungodly over them, we may well ask, O, my Lord, what will be the end of these things? But this must satisfy us in general, that all will end well at last. Great is the truth, and will prevail at long run. All opposing rule, principality, and power, will be put down, and holiness and love will triumph, and be in honour, to eternity. The end, this end, will come. 3. What answer is returned to this question. Besides what refers to the time, (v. 11, 12.) of which we have here some general church answers. This answer sticks us in Daniel, with which he is dismissed from further attendance. (1.) He must content himself with the discoveries that had been made to him, and not inquire any further; "Go thy way, Daniel; let it suffice thee that thou hast been admitted thus far to the fore sight of things to come, but stop here. [27.] Go thy way, and record what thou hast seen and heard, for the benefit of posterity, and covet not to see and hear
more at present." Note. Communion with God is not our continual feast; this world we sometimes are to be witnesses of Christ's glory, and we say, "It is good to be here; but we must go down from the mount, and have there no continuing city. These that know much, know but in part, and still see there is a great deal that they are kept in the dark about, and are likely to be so till the vast is rent: hitherto their knowledge shall go, but no further: Go thy way, Daniel, satisfied with what thou hast been told.

[2.] He must not expect that what had been said to him would be fully understood till it was accomplished: The words are closed up and sealed, are involved in perplexities, and are likely to be so, till the time of the end, till the end of all things: Daniel was ordered to seal the book to the end of the time. The Jews used to say, "When Elias cometh he will tell us all things." They are closed up and sealed; the discovery designed to be made by him is now fully settled and completed; nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it, for it is closed up and sealed, ask not therefore after more." Nescire velle quae Magister maximi num invenire non velit, eruditissima est regina. He has learned much, who is willing to be ignorant of that which the great Teacher does not choose to impart.

[3.] He must count upon no other than that, as long as the world stands, there will be still in it such a mixture as now we see there is of good and bad, v. 10. We long to see all wheat, and no tares, in God's field; all corn, and no chaff, in God's floor; but it will not be till the time of gathering, till the winnowing-day comes; both must grow together until the harvest. As it has been so, it is, and will be, "The wicked shall do wickedly, but the wise shall understand." In this, as in other things, St. John's Revelation closes as Daniel's did; (Rev. xxii. 11.) He who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he who is holy, let him be holy still. [1.] There is no remedy, but that wicked people will do wickedly; and such people there are, and will be, in the world, to the end of time. So said the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceeds from the wicked; (1 Sam. xxiv. 13.) and the observation of the moderns says the same. Bad men will do bad things; and a corrupt tree will never bring forth good fruit: do men gather grapes of thorns, or bring forth good things from an evil tree? No, the natural products of wicked principles and dispositions. Marvel not at the matter then, Eccl. v. 8. We are told before, that the wicked will do wickedly, we can expect no better from them; but, which is worse, none of the wicked shall understand. This is either, First, A part of their sin: they will not understand, they shut their eyes against the light, and none so blind as they that will not see. They do wickedly, because they will not understand. If they did but rightly know the truths of God, they would readily obey the laws of God, Ps. lxxxvii. 5. Willful sin is the effect of willing ignorance; therefore they will not understand, because they are wicked; therefore they hate the light, and come not to the light, because their deeds are evil, John iii. 19. Or, Secondly, It was not put into their hearts to do wickedly, but therefore God has given them up to the mind of evil. If we consider all this, we shall not understand, nor be converted and healed, Matth. xiii. 14, 15. God will not give them eyes to see, because they will do wickedly, Deut. xxix. 4.

[2.] Yet, bad as the world is, God will secure to himself a remnant of good people in it: still there shall be some, there shall be many, to whom the providences and ordinances of God shall be a favour
AN EXPOSITION,
WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET
HOSEA.

We have now before us,
I. The twelve minor prophets; which some of the ancients, in reckoning up the books of the Old Testament, put all together, and reckon but as one book. They are called the lesser prophets, not because their writings are of any less authority or usefulness than those of the greater prophets, or as if these prophets were less in God's account, or might be so in ours, than the other, but only because they are shorter, and less in bulk, than the other.

We have reason to think that these prophets preached as much as the others, but that they did not write so much, nor is so much of their preaching kept upon record. Many excellent prophets wrote nothing, and others but little, who yet were very useful in their day. And so in the Christian church there have been many burning and shining lights, who are not known to posterity by their writings, and yet were in no way inferior in gifts, and graces, and serviceableness, to their own generation, than those who are; and some who have left but little behind them, and make no great figure among authors, were yet as valuable men as the more voluminous writers. These twelve small prophets, Josephus says, were put into one volume by the men of the great synagogue in Ezra's time, of which learned and pious body of men the three last of these twelve prophets are supposed to have been themselves members. These are what remained of the scattered pieces of inspired writing. Antiquaries value the fragmenta veterum—the fragments of antiquity; these are the fragments of prophecy, which are carefully gathered up by the Divine Providence and the care of the church, that nothing might be lost; as St. Paul's short epistles after his long ones. The son of Sirach speaks of these twelve prophets with honour, as men that strengthened Jacob, Ecclus. xlix. 10. Nine of these prophets prophesied before the captivity, and the three last after the return of the Jews to their own land. Some difference there is in the order of these books. We place them as the ancient Hebrew did; and all agree to put Hosea first; but the ancient Septuagint places the six first in this order—Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah; the thing is not material. And if we covet to place them according to their seniority, as to some of them we shall find no certainty.

II. We have before us the prophecy of Hosea, who was first of all the writing prophets, somewhat before Isaiah. The ancients say, He was of Beth-shemesh, and of the tribe of Issachar. He continued very long a prophet; the Jews reckon that he prophesied near fourscore and ten years; so that, as Jerom observes, he prophesied of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes, when it was at a great distance, and lived himself to see and lament it, and to improve it when it was over, for warning to its sister kingdom. The scope of his prophecy is to discover sin, and to denounce the judgments of God against a people that would not be reformed. The style is very concise and sententious, above any of the prophets; and in some places it seems to be like the book of Proverbs, without connexion, and rather to be called Hosea's sayings than Hosea's sermons. And a weighty adage may sometimes do more service than a laboured discourse. Huetius observes that many passages in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to refer to, and to be borrowed from, the prophet Hosea, who wrote a good while before them. As Jer. vii. 34.—xvi. 9.—xxv. 10. and Ezek. xxvi. 13. speak the same with Hos. ii. 11. so Ezek. xvi. 16, &c. is taken from Hos. ii. 8. And that promise of serving the Lord their God, and David their king, Jer. xxx. 8, 9. Ezek. xxxiv, 23. Hosea had before, ch. iii. 5. And Ezek. xix. 12. is taken from Hos. xiii. 15. Thus one prophet confirms and corroborates another; and all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit.
The mind of God is revealed to his prophet, and by him to the people, in the three first chapters, by signs and types; but, afterward, only by discourse. In this chapter, we have, I. The general title of the whole book, v. 1. II. Some particular instructions which he was ordered to give to the people of God. I. He must convince them of their sin, in going a whoring from the Lord, v. 2. 3. II. He must foretell the ruin coming upon them, in the names of their sons, which signified God’s disowning and abandoning of them, v. 4. I. He must speak to the kingdom of Judah, which still retained the pure worship of God, and assure them of the salvation of the Lord, v. 5. 4. He must give an intimation of the great mercy which was prepared for them, both for the kingdom of Judah and the latter days; (v. 10, 11.) for in this prophecy many precious promises of mercy are mixed with the threatenings of wrath.

1. The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

Here is, 1. The prophet’s name and surname, which he himself, as other prophets, prefixes to his prophecy, for the sake of his honor, in order to attest what he writes to be of God; he sets his hand to it, as that which he will stand by. His name Hosea, or Hoshea, (for it is the very same with Joshua’s original name,) signifies a saviour; for prophets were instruments of salvation to the people of God, so are faithful ministers, they help to save many a soul from death, by saving it from sin. 2. His surname was Ben-Beeri; as with us now, so with them then, some had their surname from their place, as Micah the Morashite, Nahum the Elkoshite; others from their parents, as Joel the son of Bethuel, and here Hosea the son of Beeri. And perhaps they made use of that distinction when the eminence of their parents was such as would derive honour upon them; but it is a groundless conceit of the Jews, that where a prophet’s father’s name is named, he also was a prophet. Beeri signifies a well, which may put us in mind of the Fountain of life and living waters from which prophets are drawn, and must be continually drawing.

2. Here is his authority and commission: The word of the Lord came to him. It was to him; it came to him as an actual mission, as a commission to do and say a certain service; and to him as to one who was his special instrument and agent. It was to him; it came over him; thus God’s word is said to fall upon a man, as in plenary or particular sense, so as to make an impression upon his understanding and conscience. It was revealed to him, a real thing, not a fancy or imagination of his own; in some such way as God then discovered himself to his servants the prophets. What he said and wrote was by divine inspiration; it was by the word of the Lord, as St. Paul speaks concerning that which he had purely by revelation, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Therefore this book was always received among the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is confirmed by what is quoted out of it in the New Testament, Matt. ii. 15.—ix. 13.—xii. 7. Rom. ix. 25, 26. 1 Pet. ii. 10. For the word of the Lord endures for ever.

3. Here is a particular account of the times in which he prophesied; in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. We have only this general date of his prophecy, and not the date of any particular part of it, as before, in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and afterward, in Haggai, and Zechariah. Here is only one king of Israel named, the time of which we may more within this time; because, having mentioned the kings of Judah, there was no necessity of naming the other; and, they being all wicked, he took no pleasure in naming them, nor would do them the honour. Now by this account here given of the several reigns in which Hosea prophesied, (and it should seem the word of the Lord still came to him, more or less, at times, throughout all these reigns,) it appears,

1. That he prophesied a long time; that he began when he was very young, which gave him the advantage of strength and sprightliness; and that he continued at his work till he was very old, which gave him the advantage of experience and authority.

2. He was a great honour to him to be thus long employed in such good work, and a great mercy to the people to have a minister so long among them, that so well knew their state, and naturally cared for it; one they had been long used to, and therefore was the more likely to be useful to them. And yet, for aught that appears, he did but little good among them; the longer they enjoyed him, the less they regarded him; they despised his youth first, and afterward his age.

3. That he began to prophesy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad, when God was himself contending in a more immediate way with that sinful people, who fell into the hands of the Lord, before they were turned over into the hands of many; for in the days of Uzziah, and of Jeroboam, his contemporary, the dreadful earthquake was, mentioned, Zech. xiv. 5. and Amos i. 1. And thus was the plague of locusts, Joel i. 2. 4. Amos vii. 1. Hos. iv. 5(299,789),(551,819). The rod of God is sent to enforce the word, and the word of God is sent to explain the rod, yet neither prevails till God by his Spirit opens the ear to instruction and discipline.

4. That he began to prophesy in Israel at a time when their kingdom was in a flourishing, prosperous condition, for so it was in the reign of Jeroboam the second, as we find, 2 Kings xiv. 25. He restored the coast of Israel, and God saved them by his hand; yet then Hosea boldly tells them of their sins, and foretells their destruction. Men are not to be flattered by these sinful ways because they are so in the world, but even then must be faithfully reproved, and plainly told that their prosperity will not be their security, nor will it last long if they go on still in their trespasses.

2. The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord. So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son. And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jelus, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And God said unto him, Call...
her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. 7. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

These words, The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea, may refer, either, 1. To that glorious set of prophets which was raised up about this time. At this time there lived and prophesied Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah, Obadiah, and Isaiah;* but Hosea was the first of them that foretold the destruction of Israel; the beginning of the word of the Lord was this. 2. Or we might consider the history of this Jeroboam here named, (2 Kings xiv. 27.) that the Lord had not yet said, he would blot out the name of Israel, but soon after he said he would, and Hosea was the man that began to say it; which made it so much the harder task to him, to be the first that should carry an unpleasing message, and some time before any were raised up to second him. Our Lord's own parables were the first such messages. He was the first message God sent him upon to this people, to tell them that they were an evil and an adulterous generation. He might have desired to be excused from dealing so roughly with them, till he had gained authority and reputation, and some interest in their affections. No, he must begin with this, that they might know what to expect from a prophet of the Lord. We are not to read in this message to Hosea what lies beyond this to them, but he must write it, and publish it, and leave it upon record as a witness against them. Now here,

I. The prophet must, as it were, in a looking-glass, show them their sin, and show it to be exceeding sinful, exceeding hateful. The prophet is ordered to take unto him a wife of whomrodems, and children of whomrodems, v. 2. And he did so, v. 3. He married a woman of ill fame, Gomer the daughter of Diosib; not one that had been married, and had committed adultery, for then she must have been put to death, but one that had lived scandallously in the single state. To marry such a one was not malum in se—evil in itself, but only malum per accidens—incidentally an evil; not prudent, decent, or expedient, and therefore forbidden to the priests, and they were really evil. He would be guilty of this to them, but he must write it, and publish it, and leave it upon record as a witness against them.

Now here,

I. The prophet must, as it were, through a perspectival glass, show them their ruin; and this he does in the names given to the children born of this adulteress; for as lust, when it has conceived, bringeth forth sin, so sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 1. He foretells the fall of the royal family in the name he is appointed to give to his first child, which was a son; Call his name Jezreel; v. 4. We find these prophetic names given to his children (Isa. vii. 3.—viii. 3.) so this prophet here. Jezreel signifies the seed of God; so they should have been: but it signifies also the scattered of God; they shall be as sheep on the mountains, that have no shepherd. Call them not Israel, which signifies dominion, they have lost all the honour of that name; but call them Jezreel, which signifies dispersed, for they shall be dispersed from the Lord, the Lord will scatter them, to be scattered amongst a great multitude. They have been scattered as chaff; let them now be scattered as a chaff. Jezreel was the name of one of the royal seats of the kings of Israel: it was a beautiful city, seated in a pleasant valley, and it is with allusion to that city, that this child is called Jezreel, for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and the house of Joram. (1 Kings xxi.) We find that God has a controversy with; it is the house of Jehu, from whom the present king, Jeroboam, was lineally descended. The house of Jehu smarled for the sins of Jehu, for God often lays up men's iniquity for their children, and visits it upon them. It is the kingdom of the house of Israel, which may be either of the present royal family, that of Jehu, which God did quickly cause to cease, for the son of this Jeroboam, Zechariah, with. Giving that glory to any creature which is due to God alone, is such an injury and affront to God as if we should say, here is another ag-
rith, reigned but six months, and he was the last of Jehu's race; or of the whole kingdom in general, which continued corrupt and wicked, and which was preserved in the kingdom of Israel, about seventy years after; and with God that is but a little while. Note, Neither the pomp of kings, nor the power of kingdoms, can secure them from God's destroying judgments, if they continue to rebel against him.

(2.) What is the ground of this controversy? I am prepared to show, that the blood of Jezeel shed upon the house of Jehu, the blood which Jehu shed at Jezerel, when, by command, he utterly destroyed the house of Ahab, and all that were in alliance with it, with all the worshippers of Baal. God approved of what he did; (2 Kings x. 30.) Thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes; and yet here will God avenge that blood upon the house of Jehu, when the time is expired during which it was promised that his family should reign, even to the fourth generation. But how comes the same action to be both rewarded and punished? Very justly; the matter of it was good; it was the execution of a righteous sentence passed upon the house of Ahab, and, as such, it was rewarded; but Jehu did it not in the name of God, or in God's interest, but in his own, not at the glory of God, and mingled his own resentments with the execution of God's justice. He did it with a malice against the sinners, but not with any antipathy to the sin; for he kept up the worship of the golden calves, and took no heed to walk in the law of God, 2 Kings x. 31. And therefore when the measure of the iniquity of his house was full, and God came to reckon with them, the first article in the account is, (and, being first, it is put for all the rest,) for the blood of the house of Ahab, here called the blood of Jezeel. Thus when the house of Baasha was rooted out, it was because he did like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him, 1 Kings xvi. 7. Note, Those that are intrusted with the administration of justice, are concerned to see to it, that they do it from a right principle, and with a right intention, and that they do not themselves live in those sins which they punish in others, lest even their just executions should be reckoned for, another day, as little less than murders.

(3.) How far the controversy shall proceed; it shall be not a correction, but a destruction. Some may think we have been hasty in ascribing the murder of Jezerel upon the house of Jehu. To signify, not as we read it, the revenging of that bloodshed, but the repeating of that bloodshed; "I will punish the house of Jehu, as I punished the house of Ahab, because Jehu did not take warning by the punishment of his predecessors, but trod in the steps of their idolatry. And after the house of Jehu is destroyed, I will cause to desolate the kingdom of the house of Israel; I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish." After the death of Zacharias, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdom of the ten tribes went to decay, and dwindled sensibly. And, in order to the ruin of it, it is threatened. (v. 5.) I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezerel; the strength of the warriors of Israel; so the Chaldees cause to desolate the kingdom of the house of Israel; I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish. After the death of Zacharias, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdom of the ten tribes went to decay, and dwindled sensibly. And, in order to the ruin of it, it is threatened. (v. 5.) I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezerel; the strength of the warriors of Israel; so the Chaldees cause to desolate the kingdom of the house of Israel; I will begin to bring it down, though now it flourish.

Note, There is no fence against God's controversy; when he comes forth against a people, their strong bows are soon broken, and their strong holds broken down. In the valley of Jezerel they shed that blood which the righteous God would in that very place avenge upon them; and this is the more strange, considering it was by means which the Jews so often reprehended, and where the villany they suffer for was perpetuated; that the punishment may answer the sin.

2. He foretells God's abandoning the whole nation in the name he gives to the second child. This was a daughter, as the former was a son, to intimate that both sons and daughters had corrupted themselves with sin; but, whereas some make this name a woman's name, as if God would enfranchise, and was thereby enfranchised and made weak. Call the name of this daughter, Lo-ruhamah—not beloved; so it is translated, (Rom. ix. 25.) or not having obtained mercy, so it is translated, 1 Pet. ii. 10. It comes all to the same. This reads the doom of the house of Israel; I will no more have mercy upon them. This intimates that God had showed them great mercy, but they had abused his favours, and forfeited them, and now he would show them favour no more. Note, Those that forsake their own mercies for lying vanities, have reason to expect that their own mercies should forsake them, and that they should be left to their lying vanities, Jonah ii. 8. Sin turns away the mercy of God, even from the house of Israel, his own professing house, with all its advantages. But God says that he will no more have mercy upon them. And then it follows, I will utterly take them away; will utterly remove them, (so some,) will utterly pluck them up, so others. Note, When the streams of mercy are stopped, we can expect no other than that the vials of wrath should be opened. Those whom God will no more have mercy upon, shall be utterly taken away, as dust and dung. The word for taking away, or uprooting, signifies to forgive sin; and some take it in that sense here. I will no more have mercy upon them, though in pardoning I have pardoned them heretofore. Though God has borne long he will not bear always, with a people that hate to be reformed. Or, I will no more have mercy upon them, that should in any wise pardon them; or (as our margin reads it) that I should at all together pardon them. If pardoning mercy is denied, no other mercy can be expected, for that opens the door to all the rest. Some make this to speak comfort; I will no more have mercy upon them till in pardoning I shall pardon them, till the Redeemer comes to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Chaldees reads it, But if they return in pardoning I will pardon them, and destroy the greatest sinners, to the utmost of their heads, and pethink themselves, and return, and will find that there is forgiveness with God.

III. He must show them what mercy God had in store for the house of Judah, at the same time that he was thus contending with the house of Israel; (v. 7.) But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah. Note, Though the Jews were guilty of their disobedience, yet God will show us to himself a remnant that shall be the vessels and monuments of mercy. When divine justice is glorified in some, yet there are others in whom free grace is glorified. And though some through unbelief are broken off, yet God will have a church in this world till the end of time. It aggravates the rejection of them, that God will not permit mercy to Judah, and not on them, and magnifies God's mercy to Judah, that though they have also done wickedly, yet God did not reject them, as he rejected Israel; I will have mercy upon them, and will save them. Note, Our salvation is owing purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Now, 1. This, without doubt, refers to the temporal salvations which God wrought for Judah in a distinguishing way, the favours shown to them, and not to Israel. When the Assyrian armies had destroyed Samaria,
and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem; but God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them by the vast slaughter, and many of the children of Israel, slain in the battle of the Assyrians; then they were saved by the Lord their God immediately, and not by sword or bow; when the ten tribes were continued in their captivity, and their land was possessed by others, when, being utterly taken away, God had mercy on the house of Judah, and saved them, and, after seventy years, brought them back, not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord over it. (v. 6.) I will save them by the Lord their God, by myself. God will be exalted in his own strength, will take the work into his hands. That salvation is sure, which he undertakes to be the Author of; for if he will work, none shall hinder. And that salvation is most acceptable, which he does by himself. So the Lord alone did lead him. The less there is of man in any salvation and the more of God, the brighter it shines, and the sweeter it tastes. I will save them in the word of the Lord, (so the Chaldee,) for the sake of Christ, the eternal Word, and by his power; I will save them not by bow nor by sword. That is, (1.) They shall be saved when they are reduced to so low an ebb, that they have neither bow nor sword, to defend themselves with, (Judg. v. 8. 1 Sam. xiii. 22. ) (2.) They shall be saved from trusting to their own strength and their weapons of war, Ps. xlv. 6. (3.) They shall be saved easily, without the trouble of sword and bow, (Isa. ix. 5.) I will save them by the Lord their God. In calling him their God, he upbraids the ten tribes who had cast him off from being theirs, for which reason he had cast them off, and intimates what was the true reason why he had mercy, distinguishing mercy, for the house of Judah, and saved them; it was in pursuance of his covenant with them as the Lord their God, and in recompense for their faithful adherence to him and to his word and worship. But, 2. This may refer also to the salvation of Judah from idolatry, which qualified and prepared them for their other salvations. And this is indeed a salvation by the Lord their God; it is wrought only by the power of his grace, and can never be wrought by sword or bow. Just at the time that the kingdom of Israel was utterly taken away under Hoshea, the kingdom of Judah was gloriously reformed under Hezekiah, and was therefore preserved; and in Babylon God saved them from their idolatry first, and then from their captivity. 3. Some make this promise to look forward to the great salvation which, in the fulness of time, was to be wrought out by the Lord our God, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save his people from their sins.

3. Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. 9. Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi—for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. 10. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. 11. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

We have here a prediction,

I. Of the rejection of Israel for a time, which is signified by the name of another child that Hosea should have by his second wife; that is, if you will not observe that these children whose names carried these direful omens in them to Israel, were all children of whoredoms, (v. 2.) all born of the harlot that Hosea married, to intimate that the ruin of Israel was the natural product of the sin of Israel. If they had not first revolted from God, they had never been rejected by him; God never leaves and forlorn them but till they first leave him. Here is, 1. The birth of this child; when she had weaned her daughter, she conceived and bare a son. Notice is taken of the delay of the birth of this child, which was to carry in its name a certain presage of their utter rejection, to intimate God's patience with them, and his loathness to proceed to extremity. Some think that her bearing another son signifies that people's persisting in their wickedness; lastly conceived and brought forth, they added to do evil; so the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it; they were old in adulteries, and obstinate.

2. The name given him. Call him Lo-ammi—not my people. When they were told that God would no more have mercy on them, they regarded it not, but buoyed up themselves with this comfort, that it was not of their own merit, but of God's grace; they could not but have mercy on. And therefore he plucks that staff from under them, and disowns all relation to them; Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. I will not be yours; (so the word is;) I will be in no relation to you, will have nothing to do with you; I will not be your King, your Father, your Patron and Protector. We supply it very well with that which includes all, and I will not be your God; I will not be to you what I have been, nor what you vainly expect I should be, nor what I would have been if you had kept close to me.” Observe, “You are not my people; you do not act as becomes my people, you are not observant of me, and obedient to me, as my people should be; you are not my people, but the people of this and the other dungey deal; and therefore I will not own you, or regard you, nor put you in any claim to you, nor demand you, nor deliver you out of the hands of those that have seized you; let them take you, you are none of mine; you will not have me to be your God, but pay your homage to the pretenders, and therefore I will not be your God; you shall have no interest in me, shall expect no benefit from me.” Note, Our being taken into covenant with God is owing purely to him, as his grace, for then it begins on his side; I will be to them a God, and then they shall be to me a people; we love him because he first loved us; but our being cast out of covenant is owing purely to ourselves and our own folly. The breach is on man's side; You are not my people, and therefore I will not be your God; if God hate any, it is because they first spurned him, and their sin was not only not removed, but were utterly taken away into the land of Assyria, and their place knew them no more. They were no God's people, for they lost their knowledge and worship of him; no prophets were sent them, no promises made them, as were to the two tribes in their captivity; nay, they were no longer a people, but, for aught that appears, were mingled with the nations into which they were carried, and lost amongst them.

II. Of the reduction and restoration of Israel in the fulness of time. Here, as before, mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath; the rejection, as it shall not be total, so it shall not be final, (v. 10, 11.) yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea. See how the same hand
that wounded is stretched forth to heal, and how tenderly he that has torn, binds up; though God cause grief by his threatenings, yet is all his love, and the sweetness of his everlasting kindness. They are very precious promises which are here made concerning the Israel of God, and which may be of use to us now.

1. Some think that these promises had their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when many of the ten tribes joined themselves to Judah, under the guidance of Isaiah, and the Chaldean Captivity was no longer a problem; and took up the residence of the Jews, which Cyrus proclaimed; came up in great numbers out of the several countries into which they were dispersed, to their own land, appointed Zerubbabel their head, and coalesced into one people, whereas before they had been two distinct nations. And in their own land, where God had by his prophets disowned and rejected them as none of his, he would by his prophets own them and appear for them as his children; and from all parts of the country they shall come up to the temple to worship. And we have reason to think that though this promise has a further reference, yet it was graciously intended and piously used for the support and comfort of the captives in Babylon, as giving them a general assurance of mercy which God had for all the children of his name, who should not be destroyed so long as this blessing was in, it was in reserve for it.

2. Some think that these promises will not have their accomplishment, at least not in full, till the general conversion of the Jews in the latter days, which is expected yet to come; when the vast, incredible numbers of Jews, that are now dispersed as the sand of the sea, shall be brought to embrace the faith of Christ, and be incorporated in the gospel-church. Then, and not till then, God will own them as his people, his children, even there where they had lain under the dismal tokens of their rejection. The Jewish doctors look upon this promise as not having had its accomplishment yet. But,

3. It is certain that this promise had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it, for to this these words are applied by St. Paul, Rom. ix. 25, 26, and by St. Peter when he writes to the Jews of the dispersion, 1 Pet. ii. 10. Israel here is the gospel-church, the spiritual Israel, (Gal. vi. 16.) all believers who follow the steps, and inherit the blessing of God's people, are all the children of that one that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, Rom. iv. 11, 12. Now let us see what is promised concerning this Israel.

(1.) That it shall greatly multiply, and the numbers of it be increased; it shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered. Though Israel according to the flesh be diminished and numbered, and the people of the kingdom be few, the spiritual Israel shall be huge and vast, the high father of a multitude, had its full accomplishment, (Gen. xvii. 5.) and that, Gen. xxii. 17. Some observe, that they are here compared to the sand of the sea, not only for their numbers, but as the sand of the sea serves for a boundary to the waters, that they shall not overflow the earth, so the Israelites indeed are a wall of defence to the places where they live, to keep off judgments. God can do nothing against Sodom while Lot is there.

(2.) That God will renew his covenant with the gospel-Israel, and will incorporate it a church to himself, bringing in all the Gentiles which the Old Testament church was incorporated; may, and its privileges shall be much greater. "In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall ye be again admitted into covenant, and owned as my people." The abandoned Gentiles in their respective places, and the rejected Jews in theirs, shall be favoured and blessed. And as in the days in which God was angry with their unbelief, the children, upon their believing, shall be taken in. This is a blessed resurrection, the making of these the people of God, that were not a people. Nay, but the privilege is enlarged; now it is not only, Ye are my people, as formerly, but, Ye are the sons of the living God, whether by birth ye were Jews or Gentiles. Israel under the law was God's son, his first-born, but then they were as children under age; now, under the gospel, they are grown up both to greater understanding and greater liberty, Gal. iv. 1, 2. Note, [1.] It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers, that they have the living God for their Father, the ever-living God, and may look upon themselves as his children by grace and adoption. [2.] The sonship of all believers is never lost. Wherever they are, there shall be said to them, for their comfort and satisfaction, and it shall be said for their honour in the hearing of the world, Ye are the sons of the living God. Let not the saints despise themselves, let not others despise them; for, sooner or later, there shall be a manifestation of the children of God, and all the world shall be made to know their excellency, and the value God has for them. [3.] It will add much to their comfort, very much to their honour, when they are dignified with the tokens of God's favour in that very place where they had lain long under the tokens of his displeasure. This speaks comfort to the believing Gentiles, that they need not go up to Jerusalem, to be received and owned as God's children; no, they may stay where they are, and in that place, though it be in the remotest corner of the earth; "In that place, where you were at a distance, where it was said, You are not God's people, but are separated from them, (Isa. liv. 3, 6.) even there, without leaving your country and kindred, you may by faith receive the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with your spirits, that you are the children of God." [4.] The children who had been at variance, should be haply brought together; (v. 11.) Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together. This uniting of Judah and Israel, those two kingdoms that were now so much at variance, biting and devouring one another, is mentioned as a specimen, or one instance, of the happy effect of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, the bringing of those that had been the greatest enemies or against another, to a good understanding one of another, and a good affection one to another. This was literally fulfilled, when the Galileans, who inhabited that part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, and, probably, for the most part, were descended from them, so heartily joined with those that were probably called Jews, that was the case with the Galileans and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, embracing his gospel; and his first disciples were partly Jews, and partly Galileans. The first that were blessed with the light of the gospel, were of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali; (Matth. iv. 15.) and though there was no good will at all between the Jews and the Galileans, yet, upon their believing in Christ, they were happily consolidated, and there were no remains of the former dissatisfaction: they had to one another; nay, when the Samaritans believed, though between them and the Jews there
HOSEA, II.

The scene of this chapter seems to be much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and to point at the same events, and the causes of them. As there, so here, God threateneth Israel with their own decay, and chargeth on them, the sin of their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, their serving idols, and forgetting God, and their oblations to him, v. 1, 2, 5, 8. He threat- eneth to take away from them all the good things, with which they had served their idols, and to abandon them to rain without remedy, v. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 13. III. Yet he promises at last to return in ways of mercy to them for his own sake, (v. 14,) to restore them to their former plenty, (v. 15,) to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, (v. 16, 17,) to renew his covenant with them, (v. 18, 20,) and to bless them with all good things, v. 21, 25.

1. SAY ye unto your brethren, Anni, and to your sisters, Ruhamah. 2. Plead with your mother, plead; for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her, therefore, put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; 3. Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and shay her with thirst. 4. And I will not have mercy upon her children, for they be the children of whoredoms. 5. For their mother hath played the harlot; she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

The first words of this chapter some make the close of the foregoing chapter, and add it to the promises which we have here of the great things God would do for them; when they shall have appointed Christ their Head, and Head of all good Gentiles without distinction, shall call one another brethren and sisters, shall own another for the people of God, and beloved of him, and, for that reason, shall embrace one another, and stir up one another both to give thanks for, and to walk worthy of this common salvation which they partake of. Or, rather, because the following words seem to have a coherence with these, these alone are designed for description and ex- hibition. The mother, (v. 2,) seems to be the same with the brethren and sisters, (v. 1,) the church of the ten tribes, the body of the people, which were brethren, and in a special manner with the heads and leaders, which were as the mother by whom the rest were brought up and nursed. But who are the children that must plead with their mother thus? Either, 1. The godly that were among them, that pleaded against the iniquities of the times, let them boldly go on to bear their testimony against the idolatries and gross corruptions that prevail with them. Let them that had bowed the knee to Baal, reason the case with those that had, and endeavour to convince them with such arguments as are here put in their mouths. Note. Private persons may, and ought, in their places, to appear against the public professions of God's name and worship. Children may humbly and modestly argue with their parents, when they do amiss, Plead with your mother, plead; as Jonathan with Saul concerning David. Or, 2. The sufferers among them, that shared in the calamities of the times, let them not complain of God, let them not quarrel with him, but lay the blame on him, as if he had dealt barely with them, and not like a tender father; no, let them plead with their mother, and lay the fault on her, where it ought to be laid; compare Isa. 1. 1. "For her transgressions in your mother put away: she may thank herself, and you
may thank her, for all your miseries." Let us see now how they must plead with her.

I. They must put her in mind of the relation wherein she had stood to God, the kindness he had had for her, the many favours he had bestowed upon her, and the further favours he had designed her. Let them tell them their brethren and sisters, that they had been Ammi and Rahamah, that they had been God's people, and vessels of his mercy, and might have been so still, if it had not been their own fault, v. 1. Note, Our relation to God and dependence upon his grace, are the great aggravation of our revolts from him and rebellions against him.

II. They must, in God's name, charge her with the violation of the marriage-covenant between her and God: let them tell her that God does not look upon her as his wife, nor upon himself as her Husband, any longer. Tell her (v. 2.) that she is not my wife, neither am I her husband; that by her spiritual whoredom she has forfeited all the honour and comfort of her relation to God, and provoked him to give her a bill of divorce. Note, No consideration can be more powerful to awaken us to repentance than the provocation we have by sin given to God to disown and cast us off. It is time to look about us, and to think what course we must take, whether we are in a province of grace or in that of apostacy, whether we be not our Husband. They must charge this home upon her, (v. 5.) Their mother has played the harlot; their congregation has run a whoring after false prophets, (so the Chaldee,) or, rather, after idols, wherein they were encouraged by their false prophets; she that conceived them has done shamefully, in making and worshipping idols. An idol is called a shanah, (ch. ix. 10.) and idolatry is a shameful thing. It is not only an affront to God, but a reproach to men, to fall down to the stock of a tree, as the prophet speaks; or it denotes that the sinner was shameless, impudent in sin, and could not blush; Jer. vi. 15. Or, She has made ashamed, has made all that see her ashamed of her; her own children be ashamed of their relation to her.

III. They must upbraid her with her horrid ingratitude to God her Benefactor, in ascribing to her idols the glory of the gifts he had given her, and then giving that for a reason why she paid them the homage due to him only, v. 5. In this she did shamefully indeed, that she said, I will go after my lovers, that is, my idols, (ch. ix. 10.) and idolatry is a shameful thing. It is not only an affront to God, but a reproach to men, to fall down to the stock of a tree, as the prophet speaks; or it denotes that the sinner was shameless, impudent in sin, and could not blush; Jer. vi. 15. Or, She has made ashamed, has made all that see her ashamed of her; her own children are ashamed of their relation to her.

IV. They must persuade her to repent and reform; God will disown her if she persist in her whoredoms, let her therefore put away her whoredoms, v. 2. Let her be convinced that it is possible for her to reform; the idols, dear as they are, may yet be parted with, and it will certainly be well with her, if she do so. God and his congregation must be to drive them to repentance, not to drive them to despair. Let her put away her whoredoms, and her adulteries; the doubling of words to the same purport, and both plural, denotes the abundance of idolatries they were guilty of, all which must be abandoned, ere God would be reconciled to them. Let her put them out of her sight, as detestable things which she cannot endure to look upon; let her say unto them, Get ye hence, Isa. xxx. 22. Let her put them from her face, and from between her breasts. Let her not do as harlots use to do, that both discover their own wicked disposition, and allure others to wickedness, by painting their faces, and exposing their naked breasts, and adorning them; let her not thus, by annexing all possible allurements and attractions, and worshiping herself, allure herself, and allure others, to it. Let her put away all these. Every sinful course, persisted in, is an adulterous departure from God. And here we may see what it is truly to repent of, and turn from it. 1. True penitents will forsake both open sins and secret sins; will put away not only the whoredoms that lie in sight, but those that lie in secret between their breasts; the sin that is repented under the tongue as a sweet morsel. 2. They will both avoid the outward occasions of sin, and mortify the inward disposition to it. Idolaters walked after their own cresses, which went a whoring after their idols; (Ezek. vi. 9. Deut. iv. 19.) and therefore they must put them away out of their sight, lest they should be tempted to worship them; Look not upon the naked woman, when it is red. But when the root must be laid to the root, the corrupt bent and inclination of the heart must be changed, and it must be put away from between the breasts, that Christ alone may have the innermost and uppermost place there, Cant. i. 13.

V. They must show her the utter ruin that will certainly be the fatal consequence of such sin; it do not repent and reform, (v. 3.) Let me strip her naked. This comes in here not by way of sentence passed upon her, but by way of warning given to her, that she may prevent it; Let her put away her
whereatons, that I may not strip her naked; so it may be; and intimating that God will show mercy to sinners, if they would but qually themselves for that mercy. It is here said, that God would deal with her as the just and jealous husband at length does with an adulterous wife, that has filled his house with a surfeite brood, and will not be reclaimed; he turns her and her children out of doors and sends them a begging; I will not have mercy upon her children; (v. 4.) the particular persons that share in the calamity of the nation, and the former generation, shall be reproved by it, for they and their children, of whoredoms, and keep up no conversation received by tradition from their fathers. Now it is here threatened that they shall be both stripped and starved; they thought their idols gave them their bread and their water, their wool and their flax; but God, by taking them away, will let them know it was he that gave them.

1. They shall be stripped; Let I strip her of all her ornaments which she is proud of, and with which she courts her lovers; strip, her, and set her as in the day that she was born, and her as naked out of the world as she came into it; this death does, Job i. 21. I will strip her, and so expose her to cold, and expose her to shame; and justly is she exposed to shame, that did shamefully, v. 5. The day when God brought them out of Egypt, where they were not, and the day of the long obedience, was the day in which they were born; and God threatens to bring them back to as low and miserable a condition as he then found them in. Whatever they had that either gained them respect, or screened them from contempt, among their neighbours, should be taken from them. See Ezek. xvi. 4, 5.

2. They shall be starved; shall be deprived not only of their honours, but of her comforts and necessary supports. She shall be famished, shall be made as a wilderness and a dry land, and slain with thirst. That boasted so much of her bread and water, her oil, and her drinks, which her lovers had given her, shall not have so much as necessary food. The land shall not afford subsistence for the inhab- itants, for want of the rain of heaven; or, if it do, it shall be taken from them by the enemy, so that the rightful owners shall perish for want of it. Some understand it thus; I will make her as she was in the wilderness, and set her as she was in the desert land, where she was sometimes ready to perish for thirst. So it explains the former part of the verse, I will set her as in the day that she was born; for it was in the vast howling wilderness that Israel was first taken from Egypt. Thus she shall be in a deplorable condition as their fathers were in, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and, in this respect, worse, that then the children were reserved to be heirs of the land of promise, but now, I will not have mercy upon her children, for their mother has played the harlot.

6. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of my hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. And I will destroy her vines, and her fig-trees, wherewith she hath said, These are my rewards, that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. And I will visit upon her the days of Balahim, wherein she burnt incense to them, and she decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord.

God here goes on to threaten what he would do with this treacherous, idolatrous people; and therefore he warns, that he may not wond, therefore he threatens, that he may not strike. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; (Ps. vii. 12.) but if he turn, he will sheathe it. They did not turn, and therefore all this came upon them; and its being threatened before, shows that it was the execution of a divine sentence, upon them for their wickedness; and it is written for admonition to us. I. They shall be perplexed and embarrassed in all their counsels, and disappointed in all their expectations. This is threatened, v. 6, 7. But to the threatening is annexed a promise, that this shall be a means to convince them of their folly, and bring them home to their duty; and they shall go no more like to a threatening, but in truth to the mercy God has yet in reserve for them. And this being the happy fruit and effect of the distress, it is hard to say whether the prediction or the distress itself, should be called a threatening or a promise.

1. God will raise up difficulties and troubles in their way, so that their public counsels and affairs shall have no success, nor shall they be able to get forward. Then I will hedge up thy way with thorns, with such crosses as, like thorns and briers, are the product of sin and the curse, and are scratching, and tearing, and vexing, and, when the way we are in is hedged up with them, stop our progress, and force us to turn back. She said, I will go after my lovers; I will pursue my leagues and alliances with foreign powers, and depend upon them. But God says, She shall be frustrated in these projects, and not able to proceed in them. I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and if that do not serve, I will make a wall. If some lesser difficulties be got over, and prevail not to break thy measures, God will raise greater, for he will overcome when he judges. It shall be such a hedge, and such a wall, that she shall not find her paths. The changes of the person that I, I will hedge up thy way, and then, She shall not find it, is usual in scripture, especially in an earnest way of speaking. "Sinner, do thou take notice, I will hedge up thy way, and all you that are by-standers, take notice what will be the effect of this, you may observe that she cannot find her paths." She shall be as a traveller that in a new way not which way to go, of many that are before him, but that finds no way at all to go forward. And then she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; she shall endeavour to make an interest in the Assyrians and Egyptians, and to have them for her protectors, but she shall not gain her point; they shall either not come into confederacy with her, or not do her
serve, shall help in vain, and be as the staff of a broken reed. She shall seek them, but shall not find them, shall seek to her idols, but shall not find that satisfaction in them, that she promised herself; the gods whom she trusted and courted, not only can do nothing for her, but have nothing to say to her, to encourage her. Now, (1.) This is such a just judgment as the Solomonites met with, that were struck with blindness, and deserted themselves to find the door, (Gen. xix. 11.) and the Syrians, 2 Kings vi. 18. Note, Those that are most resolute in their sinful pursuits, are commonly most crossed in them. Thorns and snares are in the way of the firebrands; (Prov. xxv. 5.) and thus with them God shows himself firebrand, (Ps. xviii. 26.) and walks contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 25, 28, 24. The planting prevails, if the tenders are so to be accounted; they are God's hedges, to keep us from transgressing, to restrain us from wandering out of the green pastures, to withdraw man from his purpose, (Job xxxiii. 17.) to make the way of sin difficult, that we may not go on in it, and to keep us from it whether we will or not. We have reason to bless God for restraining grace, and for those difficulties that God raises up in their way, shall raise up in their minds thoughts of turning back; "Then shall she say, Since I cannot overtake my lovers, I will even go and return to my first husband, will return to God, and humble myself to him, and desire him to take me in again; for when I kept close to him, it was every way better with me than with others." (2.) Two things are here considered from this degenerate, apostate people. (1.) A just acknowledgment of the folly of their apostasy. They are now brought to own that it was better with them while they kept close to their God than ever it was since they forsook him. Note, Whoever have exchanged the service of God for the service of the world and the flesh, have sooner or later, been made to see the palpable change for the worse that while they continued in good company, and went on in the way of good duties, and made conscience how they spent their time, and what they said or did, it was better with them, they had more true comfort and enjoyment of themselves than ever they had since they went astray. (2.) A good purpose to come back again to their duty; I will go, and return to the Lord; and she knows so much of his goodness and readiness to forgive, that she speaks without any doubt of his receiving her again into favour, and making her condition as good as ever. Note, The disappointments we meet with in our pursuits of satisfaction in the creature, should, if nothing else will do it, drive us at length to the Creator, in whom alone it is to be had. When Moab is a curse of my first husband, he shall go to the sanctuary, Isa. xvi. 12. And when the prodigal son is reduced to husks, short allowance indeed, and remembers that in his father's house there is bread enough, then he says, I will arise, and go to my father's house, Luke xv. 17, 18. 

II. The necessary supports and comforts of life so sparingly given them, because they had dishonoured God with all their members, v. 8, 9. Their land was plentiful. Now see here, 1. How graciously their plenty was given to them. God gave them not only corn for necessity, but wine for delight, and oil for ornament. Nay, he multipli-

fied their silver and gold, wherewith to traffic with other nations, and bring home their products, and which they might hold up for posterity. Silver and gold will keep longer than corn, and wine, and oil. He gave them wood and flax too, to cover their nakedness, and to serve for ornament enough to them, Ezek. xvi. 10. Note, God is a bountiful Benefactor even to those who, he forsakes, will be ungrateful and unhumble to him. 2. How basely their plenty was abused by them. (1.) They robbed God of the honour of his gifts; She did not know that I gave her corn and wine; she did not remember it. The law and the prophets had told them, again and again, that all their comforts they received from God's bountiful providence; but they were so often told by their false prophets that they should not depend on God, that their land from such an idol, and their wine from such an idol, &c. that they had quite forgotten their relation to their great Benefactor, and their obligations to him. She did not consider it, she would not acknowledge it; this they were willingly ignorant of, and more bruitly and unhumble to him. 3. 18. How justly their plenty should be taken from them; They prepared them for Baal; they adorned their images with gold and silver, (Jer. x. 4.) and adorned themselves, for therefore shall I take off their images, v. 13. See Ezek. xvi. 17.—19. Where he saith, (so the margin reads it,) the image of Baal. Note, It is a very great dishonour to the God of heaven to make those gifts of his providence the food and fuel of our lusts, which he gave us for our support in his service, and to be oil to the wheels of our obedience. 3. How justly their plenty should be taken from them; "Then shall I return, I will alter my dealings with them, will take another course, and will take away my corn, and other good things that I gave her." I will recover it; a law-term, as a man by due course of law recovers what is unjustly detained from him; or, as when the tenant has committed waste, the landlord recovers locum vastatum—delapidulations. Observe, God calls it my corn and my wine, and not yours and my; they called it theirs, not God's; nor did they think that those things should be given to those who knew that they were not theirs, he only allowed them the use of them as tenants, intrusted them with the management of them as stewards, but still reserved the property in himself; It is my corn and my wine. Note, God will have us to know, not only that we have all our creature-comforts and enjoyments from him, but that he has still an incontestable right and title to them, that they are more his than ours, and therefore are to be used for him, and accounted for to him. He will therefore take it away from them, because they have forfeited it by disowning his right; as a tenant by copy of court- roll, who holds at the will of his lord, forfeits his estate if he makes a sedent of it as though he were a freeholder. He will recover it, will free or deliver it, that it may be no longer abused; as the creature is said to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, under which it groans, Rom. viii. 21. He will take it away in the time thereof, and in the season thereof, then when they expected it, and thought that they were sure of it. It shall suffer shipwreck in the harbour; and the harvest shall be lost. He will take it away by unseasonable weather, or by unreasonable men. Note, Those that abuse the mercies God gives them to his dishonour, cannot expect to enjoy them long. III. They shall lose all their honour, and be exposed to contempt; (v. 10.) "I will discover h.
HOSEA, II.

_10._ The is dependence; will be unless, from this, a _sign_ is to be seen exceeding sinful. And this in the sight of her lovers; in the sight of the neighbouring nations, with whom she courted an alliance, and on whom she had a dependence; they shall despise her, and be ashamed of her because of her weakness, and poverty, and ill conduct; they shall not think her any longer worthy of their friendship._

*Jer. vi. 8.*

She shall despise her, because they have seen her nakedness. Or, in the sight of the sun, which she worshipped as her lovers, before them shall her tenderness be discovered. Compare this with Jer. viii. 1, 2. They shall bring out the bones of their kings and princes, and scatter them before the sun and moon, whom they have loved and served. Note, Sin will have shame; let those expect it that have done shamefully. What other lot can this impudent adulteress expect but that of a common harlot, to be carted through the town? And when God comes to deal thus with her, none shall deliver her out of his hands; neither the gods nor the men they confide in. Note, Those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God's mercy, cannot be delivered out of the hand of his judgment.

IV. They shall lose all their pleasure, and shall be left melancholy; (v. 11.) I will cause her mirth to cease. It seems then, though they had gone a whoring from their God, yet they could find in their hearts to rejoice as other people, which is forbidden, ch. ix. 1. Note, Many who lie under guilt and wrath, are yet very joyous and merry, and live jovially; yet whether they shall find their joy to be sad or no, it is certain that the end of their mirth will be heaviness; for God will cause all their mirth to cease. It is as Mr. Burroughs observes here, Sin and mirth can never hold long together; but if men will not take away sin from their mirth, God will take away mirth from their sin.

1. God will take away the occasions of their sacred mirth; their feast-days, their new moons, their sabbaths, and their festivals. The sabbaths were instituted to be observed in a religious manner, and they were to be observed with rejoicing; and, it seems, though they had departed from the pure worship of God, yet they kept up the observation of these; not at God's temple at Jerusalem, for they had long since forsaken that, but, probably, at Dan and Bethel, where the calves were, or in some other places at meeting that they had. They observed them, not for the honour of God, or with any true devotion toward him, but only because they were times of mirth and feasting, music and dancing, and meeting of friends, received by tradition from their fathers. Thus, when they had lost the power of godliness, and denied that, yet, for the pleasing of a vain and carnal mind, they kept up the form of it; and because the feast-days and sabbaths became an iniquity which God could not be without, Isa. i. 13. Now observe, (1.) God calls them their new moons, and their sabbaths, not his, (he disowns them,) but theirs. (2.) He will cause them to cease. Note, When men by their sins have caused the life and substance of ordinances to cease, it is just with God by his judgments to cause the remembrance of them and their use to cease.

2. He will take away the supports of their carnal mirth. They loved the new moons and the sabbaths, only for the sake of good cheer that was in it, and not for the sake of any religious exercise then performed, these they had dropped long ago; and now God will take away their provisions for these solemnities. (v. 12.) I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees. Note, If men destroy God's word and ordinances, by which he should be honoured on their feast-days, it is just with him to destroy their vines and fig-trees, with which they regale themselves. While they took the pleasure of these, they gave their lovers the praise of them; "These are my rewards which my lovers have given me; I may thank my stars for these, and my worship of them; I may thank my neighbours for these, and my alliance with them." And therefore God will destroy them, will wither them with a blast, or bring in a foreign enemy that shall lay their country waste, so that they shall become a forest; the enclosures shall be thrown down, as is usual in war, all shall be laid in common, so that the beasts of the field shall eat their grapes and their figs. Or, they shall be so blasted with the east wind, that fruit-trees shall be of no more use than forest-trees; but, being withered and good for nothing, what fruit there is shall be left to the beasts of the field. Or, it shall be devoured by their enemies, by men as barbarous as wild beasts.

Now, (1.) This shall be the ruin of their mirth; God will cause all her mirth to cease. How will he do it? Taking away the new moons and the sabbaths will not do it, they can very easily part with them, and find no loss; but I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, will take away her sensual pleasures, and make her to become a forest. Note, The destruction of the vines and the fig-trees causes all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease; it will say, as Micah, You have taken away my gods, and what have I more?

(2.) This shall be the punishment of her idolatry, (v. 13.) I will visit upon her the days of Baalim; I will reckon with her for all the worship of the Baals they had, and then she will think of, from the days of their fathers unto this day. We read of their worshiping Baal as long ago as the time of the Judges, and, for aught I know, this may look as far back as those times, those days of Baalim; for it is in the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, that God threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and justly is that sin so visited, more than any other, because it commonly supports itself by prescription and tradition, from their fathers unto this day. We read of their worshiping Baal as long ago as the time of the Judges, and, for aught I know, this may look as far back as those times, those days of Baalim; for it is in the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, that God threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and justly is that sin so visited, more than any other, because it commonly supports itself by prescription and tradition, from their fathers unto this day. For, if the measure of the iniquity of Israel was full, all their former sins came into the account, and shall be required of this generation. Or, the days of Baalim are the solemn festival-days which they kept in honour of their idols. Days of sinful mirth must be visited in days of mourning. These were the days wherein she burnt incense to idols, and, to grace the solemnity, decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels; that, appearing honourable, the honour she did to Baal might be thought the greater. Or, she was as a wife that decks herself with the ear-rings and jewels that her husband gave her, to make herself amiable to her lovers, whom she follows after, and is ever mindful of. But she forgot me, saith the Lord. Note, Our treacherous departures from God are owing to our forgetfulness of him, of his nature and attributes, his relation to us, and our obligations to him. Many who plead that they have weak memories, and forget the things of God, can remember other things well enough; nay, it is because they are so mindful of lying vanities that they are so forgetful of their own mercies.

14. Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth,
and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt call me no more Baal. 17. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. 18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. 19. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies: 20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear; saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens; and they shall hear the earth; 22. And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jer- reel. 23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.

The state of Israel, ruined by their own sin, did not look so black and dismal in the former part of the chapter, but that the state of Israel, restrained by the divine grace, looks as bright and pleasant here in the latter part of the chapter; and the more surprisingly so, as the promises follow thus close upon the threatenings: nay, which is very strange, they are by a note of connexion joined to, and inferred from, that declaration of their sinfulness, upon which the threatenings of their ruin are grounded: She went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord; therefore I will allure her. Fifty three during the wilderness, which is the note of connexion, immediately followed with a note of admiration, Behold, I will allure her! When it was said, She forgot me, one would think it should have followed, “Therefore I will abandon her, I will forget her, I will never look after her more;” no, Therefore, I will allure her. Note, God’s thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely above ours; his reasons are superintending, which are not known to us. 24. Therefore, because she will not be restrained by the denunciations of wrath, God will try whether she will be wrought upon by the offers of mercy. Some think it may be translated, comforting, or ADONAI Loew, and the design is plainly to magnify free grace to those on whom God will have mercy purely for mercy’s sake.

Now that which is here promised to Israel is, 1. That, though now they were disconsolate, and ready to despair, they should again receive with comforts and hopes, v. 14, 15. This is expressed here with an allusion to God’s dealings with that people when he brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness to Canaan; as their forlorn and de-

The gracious methods God will take with them. (1.) He will bring them into the wilderness, as he did at first when he brought them out of Egypt, where he instructed them, and took them into covenant with himself. The land of their captivity shall be to them now as that wilderness was then, the furnace of affliction, in which God will choose them. See Ezek. xx. 35, 36. I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you. God had said that he would make them as a wilderness, (v. 3.) which was a threatening; now when it is here made part of a promise that he would bring them into the wilderness, the meaning may be, that he would by his grace bring them into their own wilderness, and show them how to live humble lives under humblest providences; being poor, they shall be poor in spirit, shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity, and then they are prepared to have comfort spoken to them. When God delivered Israel out of Egypt, he led them into the wilderness, to humble them and prove them, that he might do them good, (Deut. viii. 2, 3, 16.) and so he will do again. Note, Those whom God has mercy in store for he first brings into a wilderness, into solitude and retirement, that they may the more freely converse with him out of the noise of this world; into distress of mind, through sense of guilt and dread of wrath, which brings a soul to be quite at a loss in itself and bewildered, and by those convictions he prepares for consolation; and sometimes into outward distress and trouble, by that to open the ear to discipline. (2.) He will then allure them, and speak comfortably to them; will persuade them, and speak to their hearts; he will by his word and spirit incline their hearts to return to him, and encourage them to do so. He will allure them with the promises of his favour, as before he had terrified them with the threatenings of his wrath. His word and spirit are the instruments of his grace; such as God has prepared them for; so he will lay his prophesy and by his providences, as before he had spoken roughly; (Isa. xl. 1, 2.) By the hand of my servants the prophets I will speak comfort to her heart; so the Chaldee. This refers to the gospel of Christ, and the offers of divine grace in the gospel, by which we are allured to forsake our sins, and to turn to God, and which speaks to the heart in a way to convince the sinner of sin, and to call him to his case; speaks abundant consolation to those that sorrow for sin, and lament after the Lord. And when by the Spirit it is indeed spoken to the heart effectually, and so as to reach the conscience, (which it is God’s prerogative to do,) O what a blessed change is wrought by it! Note, The best means of regaining that hearts with which God is not pleased is to use the strongest means. By the promise of rest in Christ we are invited to take his yoke upon us; and the work of conversion may be forwarded by comforts as well as by convictions. (3.) He will give her her vineyards from thence; from that time, and from that place where he has afflicted her, and brought her to see her folly, and to humble herself, from thence forward he will do her good; not only speak comfort foritably to her, but do well for her, andundo what he had done against her. He had destroyed her
HOSEA, II.

1. The idols of Baal shall not be mentioned, nor any of the Baals that in the days of Baalim had made so great a noise with O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us. The very names of Baalim shall be taken out of their mouths; they shall be so disdained, that they shall be quite forgotten, as if their names had not been; and in the mouth of a people and a nation so detested, that people will not bear to mention them themselves, or to hear others mention them; so that posterity shall scarcely know that ever there were such things. They shall be so ashamed of their former love to Baal, that they shall do all they can to blot out the remembrance of it. They shall style themselves up to the strictest literal meaning of the word law against their former idolatry. There shall be no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth, as David, Ps. xvi. 4. Thus the apostle expresses the abhorrence we ought to have of all fleshly lusts; Let them not be once named among you, Eph. v. 3. But how can such a change of the Ethiopian's skin be wrought? It is answered, The power of God can do it, and will. I will take away the names of Baalim, Zech. xiii. 2. I will cut off the names of the idole. Note, God's grace in the heart will change the language by making that iniquity to be loathed which was beloved, Zeph. iii. 9. I will turn to the people a pure language. One of the rabbins says, This promise relates to the Gentiles as well as Israel; and we know it had its accomplishment in the turning of the Gentiles, by the preaching of the Gospel from the idolatries which they had been wedded to, 1 Thess. i. 9.

2. The very word Baal shall be hid aside, even its innocent significations. God says, Thou shalt call me Ithi, and call me no more Baal; both signifying my husband, and both had been made use of concerning God, Isa. liv. 5. Thy Maker is thy Husband, thy Baal, so the word is, thy Owner, Patron, and Protector. It is probable that many such people had, accordingly, made use of the word Baal, in worshipping the God of Israel; when their wicked neighbours bowed the knee to Baal, they gloried in this, that God was their Baal; "But," says God, "you shall call me so no more, because I will have the very names of Baalim taken away." Note, That which is very innocent in itself, should, when it has been abused to idolatry, be abolished, and the word itself be taken away out of the minds and mouths of people, to keep idols in remembrance, much less to keep them in reputation. When calling God Ithi will do as well, and signify as much, as Baal, let that word be chosen rather, lest by calling him Baal, others should be put in mind of their quondam Baals. Some think there that is another reason intimated why God would be called Ithi, and not Baal; they both signify my husband, but Ithi is a compellation of love and sweetness and familiarity, Baal of reverence and subjection. Ithi is vir meus—my husband, Baal is dominus meus—my lord. In gospel-times God has so revealed himself to us as to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of his grace, and to use a holy, humble freedom there; we ought to call God our Master, for so he is; but we are more taught to call him our Father. Ithi is man of the Lords, (Gen. iv. 1) and intimates that in gospel-times the church's Husband shall be the Man Christ Jesus; made like unto his brethren, and therefore they shall call him Ithi, not Baal.

III. That though they had been much addicted to the worship of Baal, they should now be perfectly weaned from it, should relinquish and abandon all appearances of idolatry, and approaches towards it, and cleave to God only, and worship him as he appoints, v. 16, 17. Note, The surest pledge and token of God's favour to any people is, his effectual joining between them and their beloved sins. The worship of Baal was the sin that did most easily beset the people of Israel, it was their own iniquity, the sin that had dominion over them; but now that idolatrie shall be quite abolished, and there shall be not the least remnant of it among them.
mischief. 

Transquillus Deus tranquillat omnia—

When God is at peace with us, he makes every creature to be so too. The inferior creatures shall do them no harm, as they had done, when the beasts of the field ate up their vineyards, (v. 12.) and when noisome beasts were one of God's sorer judgments, Ezek. xiv. 13. The foul and the creeping things are taken into this covenant, for they also, when God makes use of them as the instruments of his righteousness, and for their own comfort, and if the inferior creatures are thus laid under an engagement to serve us, it is our part of the covenant not to abuse them, but to serve God with them. Some think that this had its accomplishment in the miraculous power Christ gave his disciples to take up serpents, Mark xvi. 17, 18. It agrees with the promises made particularly to Israel, that they should multiply and possess the land, (Ezek. xlii. 14.) xliii. 9.) that he will cause the evil beasts to come out of the land; and the more general ones to all the saints; (Job v. 22, 23.) The beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee; and, (Ps. xci. 13.) Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder. But this is not all; men are more in danger from one another than from the brute beasts, and therefore it is further promised, that God will not only keep them safe, but make them to lie down safely, as those that know themselves to be under the protection of Heaven, and therefore are not afraid of the powers of hell. 

IV. That, though God had given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms, yet, upon their repentance, he would again take them into covenant with him. The parable of the vineyard, (v. 5.) God's making a covenant for them with the inferior creatures was a great favour; but it was nothing to this, that he took them into covenant with himself, and engaged himself to do them good. Observe, 1. The nature of this covenant; it is a marriage-covenant, founded in choice and love, and founding the nearest relation; I will betroth thee unto me; and again, a third time, I will betroth thee to me. Note, That which are sincerely devoted to God, are betrothed to him; God gives them the most sacred and inviolable security imaginable, that he will love them, protect them, and provide for them; that he will do the part of a husband to them; and that he will incline their hearts to join themselves to him, and will graciously accept of them in so doing. Believing souls are the bride of Christ. 2. This church is the bride, the Lamb's wife; and they would never come into that relation to him, if he did not by the power of his grace betroth them to himself. The separation begins on our side, we alienate ourselves from God; the coalition begins on his side, he betrothes us to himself. 2. The duration of this agreement; I will betroth thee for ever. The covenant itself shall be inviolable; God will not break it on his part, and you shall not on yours; and the blessings of it shall be everlasting. One of the Jewish rabbins says, This is a promise that she shall attain to the life of the world to come, which is abso-

lute eternity or perpetuity. 3. The manner how this covenant shall be made; (1.) In righteousness and judgment; God will deal sincerely and uprightly in covenanting with them; they have broken covenant, and God is righteous; "But," says God, "I will renew the covenant in righteousness." The matter shall be so ordered, that God may receive even these backsliding children into his family again, without any reflection upon his justice; nay, that he may be satisfied with the pleasure he has, very much to the honour of it. But what reason can there be why God should take a people into covenant with him, that had so often dealt treacherously? Will it not reflect upon his wisdom? "No," says God, "I will do it in judgment; not rashly, but upon due consideration; let me alone to give a reason for the thing, and to justify my own conduct. (2.) In loving-kindness and in mercy, God will deal tenderly and graciously in covenanting with them; and will be not only as good as his word, but better; and as he will be just in keeping covenant with them, so he will be merciful in keeping them in the covenant. They are subject to many infirmities, and, if he be extreme to mark what they do amiss, they will soon lose the benefit of the covenant. He therefore spoke these words, that he might show grace, made in a compassionate consideration of their infirmities, so that every transgression in the covenant shall not throw them out of covenant; he will gather with everlasting loving-kindness. (3.) In faithfulness; every article of the covenant shall be punctually performed; faithful is he that has called them, and so will he do, he cannot deny himself. "The more they have trespassed, the more they shall be kept right and faithful to the covenant on their part. Thou shalt know the Lord. This is not only a promise that God will reveal himself to them more fully and clearly than ever, but that he will give them a heart to know him; they shall know more of him, and shall know him in another manner than ever yet. The ground of their apostasy was, not knowing God to be his Benefactor; (v. 8.) therefore, to prevent the like, they shall all be taught of God to know him. Note, God keeps up his interest in men's souls by giving them a good understanding and a right knowledge of things, Heb. viii. 11. 4. That, though the heavens had been to them as brass, and the earth as iron, now the heavens shall yield back to them. The earth yieldeth not its fruits, v. 21, 22. God having united them, the gospel-church, and in it all believers, to himself, now shall he not with himself and with his Son freely give them all things, all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things they need or can desire! All is theirs, for they are Christ's, betrothed to him; and with the righteousness of the kingdom of God, which they seek, all other things shall be added unto them. And yet this promise of corn and wine is to be taken also in a spiritual sense; (so the learned Dr. Pocock thinks; it is an effusion of those blessings and graces which relate to the soul, that is here promised under the metaphor of temporal blessings; the dew of heaven, as well as the fatness of the earth, and that put first, as in the blessing of God, which they seek, v. 24.) God ren- unded (v. 9.) that he would take away the corn and the wine; but now he promises to restore them again, and that in the common course and order of nature. While they lay under the judgment of famine, they call to the earth for corn and wine for the support of themselves and their families; very gladly would the earth have supplied them, but she cannot give unless she receive, cannot produce corn and wine unless she be enriched with the river of God; (Ps. lxxv. 9.) and therefore she calls to the heavens for rain, the former and latter rain in their season, gapes for it, and by her melancholy aspect when
rain is denied, pleads for it; "But," say the heavens, "we have no rain to give, unless he who has the key of the clouds, unlock them, and open these bottles; so that if the Lord do not help you, we cannot." But when God takes them into covenant with himself, then the wheel of nature shall be set going again in favour of them, and the streams of mercy shall flow in the usual channel; Then I will hear the heathen, and answer the earth, and pour down seasonable rain upon it; and then the earth shall bear the corn and views, and supply them with moisture, and they shall be inhabited; and be replenished with and refreshment for them that inhabit Jezreel. See here the coherence of second causes with one another, as links in a chain, and the necessary dependence they all have upon God the first Cause. Note, We must expect all our comforts from God in the usual method and by the appointed means; and when we are at any time disappointed in them, we must look up to God, to God, and to God; and take heart, and be comforted, and be sufficient for them that inhabit Jezreel. See here how the creatures are to serve the people of God, how desirous of the honour; the corn cries to the earth, the earth to the heavens, the heavens to God, and all that they may supply them. And see how ready God is to give relief; I will hear, saith the Lord, yea, I will hear. And if God will hear the cry of the heavens for his people, how much more he will hear the petition of his for them, who is made higher than the heavens. See what a peculiar delight those that are in covenant with God may take in their creature-comforts, as seeing them all come to them from the hand of God; they can run up all the streams to the fountain, and taste covenant-love in common mercies, which makes them doubly sweet.

VI. That, where there were now dispersed, not only as Simon and Levi, divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel, but divided and scattered all the world over, God will turn this curse, as he did that, into a blessing; "I will not only water the earth for her, but will sow her unto me in the earth; her dispersion shall be not like that of the chaff in the floor, which the wind drives away, but like that of the seed in the field, in order to its greater increase; whereas they are scattered, and shall take root downward, and bear fruit upward. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. I will sow her unto me." This alludes to the name Jeroboam, which signifies, son of God, or for God; as she was scattered of him, (which is one signification of the words,) so she shall be sown of him; and to what he sows he will give the increase. When in all parts of the world Christianity got footing, and everywhere there were professors of it, then this promise was fulfilled, I will sow her unto me in the earth. Note, The greatest blessing of this earth is, that God has a church in it, and from that arises all the tributes of glory which he has out of it; it is what he has sown to himself, and what he will therefore secure to himself. When God's people had been Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah—not a people, and not finding mercy with God, now they shall be restored to his favour, and taken again into covenant with him; (v. 23.) They had not obtained mercy, but seemed to be abandoned; they were not my people, not distinguished, not dealt with, as my people, but left to lie in common with the nations; this was the case of the most part of the church of old, and of the most part of the church of our days. The most favourable was that of the Gentile world, (to whom the apostle applies this, Rom. ix. 24, 25.) that had no hope, and were without God in the world; but when great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were, upon their believing in Christ, incorporated into a Christian church, then, 1. God had mercy on those who had not obtained mercy. Those found favour with God, and became the children of his love, who had been long out of favour, and the children of his wrath, and if infinite mercy had not interposed, would have been for ever so. Note, God's mercy must not be despised. It is not the condition of those on whom his mercy is bestowed; he is gracious to the ungracious, to the undeserving, to the most undeserving, and grants it to the unworthy. 2. He took those into a covenant-relationship to himself, who had been strangers and foreigners; He says to them, "Thou art my people, whom I will own and bless, protect and provide for;" and they shall say, "Thou art my God, whom I will serve and worship, and to whose honour I will be entirely and for ever devoted." Note, (1.) The sum total of the happiness of believers is the mutual relation that is between them and God, that he is theirs and they are his; this is the crown of all the promises. (2.) This relation is founded in free grace; we have not chosen him, but he has chosen us. He first says, they are my people, and makes them willing to be so in the day of his power, and then they avouch him to be theirs. (3.) As we need desire no more than what is made use of, so God will use no more to our comfort than we need; so we need desire no more to make us easy and cheerful, than to have him to assure us that we are so; to say unto us, by his Spirit witnessing with ours, Thou art my people. (4.) Those that have accepted of the Lord for their God, must avouch him to be so, must go to him in prayer, and tell him so, Thou art my God, and must be ready to make profession before men. (5.) It adds to the covenant with our God; that in it there is a common of saints, who, though they are many, yet here they are one. It is not, I will say to them, Ye are my people; but, Thou art; for he looks upon them as all one in Christ, and, as such in him; he speaks to them, and covenants with them; and they also do not say, Thou art our God, for they look upon themselves as one body, and therefore, Thou art my God, and to any triumph therein, as Moses and all Israel did; (Exod. xv. 2.) He is my God, and my father's God.

CHAP. III.

God is still by the prophet inculcating the same thing upon this careless people, and much in the same manner as before, by a type or sign, that of the dealings of a husband with an adulterous wife. In this chapter, we have,

1. He had chartered with the people of Israel how they were to be treated of and by the Athenians, (Acts xvii. 16.) wholly given to idolatry, v. 1. II. The low condition which they should be reduced to by their captivity, and the other instances of God's own dealings with them, v. 2. 4. III. The blessed reformation that should at length be wrought upon them in the latter days, v. 5.

1. THEN said the Lord unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flags of wine. 2. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for a homer of barley, and a half homer of barley. 3. And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for
of Israel; it is love to the loveless, to the unloved,
that have a thousand times forloved it.
N. S. In God's good will to poor sinners, his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and his love is more condescending and compassionate than ours;
or can be; in this, as much as any thing, he is God and not man, Hos. xi. 9.

11. The method found for the bringing of a God so very good, and a people so very bad, together again; this is the thing aimed at, and what God does at his own behest. Teraphim we find there, and we find a breach thus wide as the sea, effectually healed; miracles cease not so long as divine mercy does not cease. Observe here,

1. The course God takes to humble them, and make them know themselves; (v. 2.) I have bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley; I courted her to be reconciled, to leave her all courses, and return to her first husband, as ch. ii. 14. I allured her, and spake comfortably to her; as the Levite who went after his coabundance that had played the harlot from him, and was run away with another man, spake friendly to her, Judg. xix. 3. But here the present which the prophet brought her for the purchasing of her favor, which is observed, and is brought, is a small one; but it was all that was intended for her sake and motive, and in it she is reduced to a short allowance, and, to punish her for her pride, is made to look very mean. When Samson went to be reconciled to his wife that had disobliged him, he visited her with a kid, (Judg. xv. 1.) which was a genteel entertainment. But the prophet here visited his wife with fifteen pieces of silver, a small sum, that he might be content to live upon a great while, so long as till her husband thought fit to restore her to her first estate. She shall also have a homer and a half of barley, for bread-corn, and that is all she must expect till she be sufficiently humbled, and, by a competent time of trial, satisfactory proof given that she is indeed reformed. Let her be made sensible that it is not for her own merit that her husband makes court to her, it is but at a lame price that he values her; the price of a servant was thirty shekels, Exod. xxi. 32. This was but half so much; yet let her know that it is more than she is worth. God had given Egypt for Israel's ransom once, so precious were they then in his sight, and so honourable, Isa. xlIII. 3, 4. But now that they have gone a whoring after their idols, he will give but fifteen pieces of silver for them; so much have they lost in their value by their iniquity. Note, Those whom God designs honour and comfort for, he first makes sensible of their own worthlessness, and brings them to acknowledge, with the prophet, I am no more worthy to be called thy son. Time was when Israel was fed with the finest of the wheat, but they grew wanton, and loved flagons of wine; and therefore, in order to the humbling and reducing of them, they must be brought in the land of their captivity to eat barley-bread, and be thankful they can get it, and to eat that too by weight and measure, whereas they did not use to be stinted. Note, Poverty and disgrace sometimes prove a happy means of making great sinners true penitents.

2. The tears upon which God is willing to come with them; (v. 5.) Thou shalt abide for me many days, and shalt not be for another, so will I be for thee. He might justly have given them a bill of divorce, and have resolved to have no more to do with them; but he is willing to show them kindness, and that the matter should be compromised; he will not take them in the notes, he will not reap the rigour of the law, but according to the multitude of his mercies; and it represents God's gracious dealings with the apostate race of mankind, that had gone a whoring from him; he bought them

Vol. IV. - 5 U
indeed with an inestimable price, not for their honour, but for the honour of his own justice; and now this is the proposal he makes to them, the covenant of grace he is willing to enter into with them—they must be to him a people, and he will be to them a God; the same with the proposal here made to Israel.

(1.) They must take to themselves the shame of their apostasy from him, must submit to, and accept of, the punishment of their iniquity; Thou shalt abide for me many days in solitude and silence, as a widow that is desolate and in sorrow; they must lay aside their ornaments, and wait with patience and submission to know what God will do with them, and whether he will please to admit such unworthy remnant of Israel as remained to him, according to Hosea ii. 4, 5. Their father, their husband, has spilt in their face, (as God said concerning Miriam,) has put them under the marks of his displeasure, and therefore, like her, they must be ashamed seven days, and be shut out of the camp; (Numb. xii. 14.) till their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, Lev. xxvi. 41. Let them sit alone and keep silence, waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and in the mean time to go about the yoke, (Isa. iii. 26—28.) Let them not expect that God should speedily return in mercy to them, as sometimes he has done, that comfort should come over-cheap and easy to them; no, let them want it, let them wait for it many days during all the days of their captivity, and reckon it a miracle of mercy, and well worth waiting for, if it come at last. Note, Those whom God designs mercy for, will first bring to abuse themselves, and to put a high value upon his favours.

(2.) They must never return to folly again; that is the condition upon which God will speak peace to his people, and to his saints, (Ps. lxxxv. 8.) and no other. "Thou shalt not play the harlot, shalt not worship idols in the land of thy captivity, while thou art there set apart for thine uncleanness." Note, It is not enough to take shame to ourselves for the sins we have committed, and to justify God in convicting us for them, but we must resolve, in the strength of God's grace, that we will not offend any more, that we will not again go a whoring from God, after the world and the flesh. Blessed be God, though it is the law of the covenant, it is not the condition of it, that we shall never in any thing do contrary to it. Note, Those whom God does not expect shall not serve other gods, shall not be for another man." In the land of their captivity, they would be courted to worship the idols of the country; that would be a trial for them, a long trial, many days; "But if thou keep thy ground, and hold fast thine integrity, if, when all this is come upon thee, thou dost not stretch out thy hand to a strange god, thou wilt be qualified for the return of a thankful heart."

Note, It is a certain sign that our afflictions are means of much good to us, and earnest of more, when we are kept by the grace of God from being overcome by the temptations of an afflicted state.

(3.) Upon these terms, their Maker will again be their Husband; so will I also be for thee. This is the covenant between God and returning sinners, that he will not for the reprobate of him, I will be for them to save them. Let them renounce and abjure all rivals with God for the throne in the heart, and devote themselves entirely to him, and him only, and he will be to them a God all-sufficient. If we be faithful and constant to God in a way of duty, and will never leave nor forsake him, he will be so to us in a way of mercy, and shall not forsake us. And a faithful people could not but be more.

Now in the two last verses we have the interpretation of the parable, and the application of it to Israel.

[1.] They must long sit like a widow, stripped of all their joy and honours; (Lam. iv. 1, 2.) They shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince; and a nation in this condition may well be called a widow. They want the blessing, First, Of civil government; They shall abide without a king, and without a prince, of their own. There were kings and princes over them to oppress them and for the time being to protect them; God is willing to protect them, to fight their battles for them, to administer justice to them, and to take care of their common safety and welfare. Note, Magnificence is a very great blessing to a people, and it is a sad and sore judgment to want it. Secondly, Of public worship; They shall abide without a sacrifice, and without an altar, (or a statute, or pillar;) it must be used in the land of their captivity; (xxvi. 18—xxxi. 45—xxxi. 20.) and without an ephod and teraphim. The teraphim being here closely joined to the ephod, some think the Arim and thummim were meant by it in the breastplate of the High Priest. The meaning is, that in their captivity they should not only have no face of a nation upon them, but no face of a church; they should not have (as a learned expositor speaks) "hid by it of public worship, and thus exercise of religion, either true or false, according to their choice. They shall have no sacrifice or altar; (so the LXX.) and therefore no sacrifice, because no altar. They shall have no ephod, or teraphim, no legal priesthood, no means of knowing God's mind, no oracle to consult in doubtful cases; but shall be all in the dark. Note, The case of those is very melancholy, that are deprived of all opportunities to worship God in public. This was the case of the Jews in their captivity; and is so far the case of the scattered Jews at this day, that, though they have their synagogue, they have no temple-service. Desolate in deed is their condition, that are shut out from communion with God, that have no opportunity of directing their addresses to God by sacrifice and altar, and of receiving instructions from him by ephod and teraphim.

[2.] They shall at length be received again as a wife; (v. 5.) Afterward, in process of time, when they have gone through this discipline, they shall return, they shall repent of their idolatries, and forsake them, they shall apply themselves to God, and adhere to him, and herein they shall be accepted by him, and shall be called the sons of God, and shall be restored to the enjoyment of all the privileges of their return, and steps toward their acceptance with God in their return.

First, The inquiries they shall make after God; They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king. Note, Those that would find God, and find favour with him, must seek him; must ask after him, covet acquaintance with him, desire to be reclaimed to him, set their love on him, and labor after this, that they may be accepted of him. Their seeking him implies that they had lost him, that they were lamenting the loss, and that they were solicitous to retrieve what they had lost. They shall seek him as their God; for should not a people seek unto their God? And they shall seek David their king; who can be no other than the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. The son of David, the Root and Offspring of David, whom David himself called Lord. (Ps. cx. 1.) and to whom God gave the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. The Chaldee reads it, They shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah, the Son of David their King. Compare this with Jer. xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxiv. xxxvii. 25. Notice, those that would seek the Lord so as to find him, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ, and must seek to him as their King, and become his willing people, and take an oath of fealty and allegiance to him. Secondiy, The reverence they shall have of God,
They shall fear the Lord and his goodness. Some by his goodness here understand the temple, toward which they shall look, in worshipping God. The Jews say, There were three things which Israel cast off in the days of Rehobam—the kingdom of heaven, the family of David, and the house of the sanctuary; and it will never be well with them, till they return, and seek them all three, which is here promised; They shall seek the kingdom of heaven in the Lord their God, the royal family in David their King, and the temple in the goodness of the Lord. But as the goodness of God differs in different persons, so shall they understand Christ of the same with David their King. But it is rather to be taken for that attribute of God, which he showed as his glory, and by which he proclaimed his name. Note, It is not only the Lord and his greatness that we are to fear, but the Lord and his goodness, not only his majesty, but his mercy. They shall fire for fear to the Lord and his goodness; (so some take it,) shall flee to it as their city of refuge. We must fear God’s goodness, we must admire it, and stand amazed at it, must adore it, and worship as Moses did at the proclaiming of this name, Exod. xxxiv. 6. We must be afraid of offending his goodness, of making any ungrateful returns for it, and so forfeiting it. There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared; Ps. cxxx. 4. We must rejoice with thankfulness at his goodness; God must not be high-minded, but fear.

Now this promise had its accomplishment, when by the gospel of Christ great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were brought home to God, and incorporated in the New Testament church; served God in Christ, with a filial fear of divine grace, and were accepted of God as his Israel. And some think it is yet further accomplished in the conversion of those Jews to the faith of Christ, who shall remain in unbelief; when they shall seek their Messiah as David their king, and by him all Israel shall be saved, when the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in. Time was, when they sought him, to put him to death, saying, We have no king but Caesar; but, the day is coming, when they shall seek him, to anoint him their Head, and to lay their necks under his yoke. He that has here promised that they shall do it, will enable them to do it, and bring about this great work in his own way and time; in the latter days of the last times, the times of the Messiah; but alas, who shall live when God doth this? How far we are to expect a general conversion of that nation, I cannot say; but I am sure we ought to pray that the Jews may be converted.

CHAP. IV

Prophets were sent to reprove, to tell people of their faults, and to warn them of the judgments of God, to which by sin they exposed themselves; so the prophet is employed in this and the following chapters. He is here, as counsel for the King of kings, opening an indictment against the people of Israel, and labouring to convince them of their miseries by a show and sound, as cause of sin, that he might prevail with them to repent and reform. 1. He shows them what were the grounds of God’s controversy with them; a general prevalence of sin, and special sins. 1. (v. 1, 2.) They had known God, and not his goodness, (y. 6, 7.) the worldliness-mindedness of the priests, (v. 8.) drunkenness and uncleanness, (v. 11.) using divination and witchcraft, (v. 12.) offering sacrifice, (v. 13.) worshipping their gods, and being idol worshippers, (V. 14.) whoredoms, and harlotry among magistrates, v. 18. 11. He shows what they would be the consequences of God’s controversy; God would punish them for these things, v. 9. That they were wasting away, laid waste the earth, they spared not the souls of people cut off, (v. 5.) their honour lost, (v. 7.) their creature-comforts unsatisfying, (v. 10.) and themselves made ashamed, v. 19. And, which is several times mentioned here as the sorest judgment of all, they should be left alone in their sins, (v. 17.) they shall not reproved one another, (v. 4.) God will not punish them, (v. 14.)

May, he will let them prosper, v. 16. III. He gives warning to Judah, not to tread in the steps of Israel, because they saw their steps went down to hell, v. 15.

1. HEAR the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, in the land. 2. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood. 3. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the birds of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. 4. Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for this people are as they that strive with the priest. 5. Therefore shall thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

Here is, I. The court set, and both attendance and attention demanded; *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel, for to you is the word of this conviction sent, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear.* Whom may God expect to give him this hearing, and take him in his fair warning, but the children of Israel, his own professing people? Yea, they will be ready enough to hear when God speaks comfortably to them; but are they willing to hear when he has a controversy with them? Yes, they must hear him when he pleads against them, when he has something to lay to their charge: *The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, of this land, of this holy land.* Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker; it sows discord between God and Israel. God sees sin in his own people, and a good action he has against them for it. Some more particular actions lie against his own people, which do not lie against other sinners. He has a controversy with them for breaking covenant with him, for bringing a reproach upon him, and for an unthankful return to him for his favours. God’s controversy will be pleaded; pleaded by the judgments of his mouth before they are pleaded by the judgments of his hand; that he may be justified in all he does, and may make it appear that he desires not the death of sinners; and God’s pleadings ought to be attended to, for, sooner or later, they shall have a hearing.

II. The indictment read, by which the whole nation stands charged with crimes of a heinous nature, by which God is highly provoked. 1. They are charged with national omissions of the most important duties; *There is no truth nor mercy; neither justice, nor charity; these most weighty matters of the few, as our Saviour accounts them, (Matt. xxiii. 23.) judgment, mercy, and faith. The generality of the people seemed to have no sense at all of the thing called honesty; they made no conscience of what they said and did, though ever so contrary to the truth, and injustices to their neighbour. Much less had they any sense of mercy, or any obligation they were under to pity and help the poor. And it is not strange that there is no truth and mercy, when there is no knowledge of God in the land.* What good can be expected where there is no knowledge of God? It was the privilege of that land, that in Israel God was made known, and his name great, which was an aggravation of their sin, that they did
not know him, Ps. lxxxvi. 1. 2. Hence follow national commotions of the most enormous sins against God, and a failure of the God's people to take warning at all to either. Swearing, lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, against the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments, were to be found in all corners of the land, and among all orders and degrees of men among them, v. 2. The corruption was universal; what good people there were among them were either incapable of or readi for such contagion, for, when they got out, they transgress all bounds of reason and conscience, and the divine law; they have exceeded; (Job xxxvi. 9.) they have been overmuch wicked, (Ecc. vii. 17.) they suffer their corruptions to break out, they themselves over, and break through, all that stands in their way, and would stop them in their sinful career, as water overflows the banks. Note, Sin is a violent thing, and its power excoriating; when men's hearts are fully set in them to do evil, (Ecc. viii. 11.) what will be restrained from them? Gen. xi. 6. When they break out thus, blood touches blood, abundance of murders are committed in all parts of the country, and, as it were, in a constant series and succession. Cites alia alia sunt contingue.—Murders touch murders; a stream of blood ran among them, every man's blood was shed to shed, it was about this time that there was so much blood shed in grasping at the crown; Shallum slew Zecaiah, and Menahem slew Shallum, Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; and the like bloody work, it is likely, there was among other contending parties; when the land was polluted with blood, (Ps. civ. 38.) it was filled with blood from one end to the other, 2 Kings xxv. 16. III. Sentence passed upon the guilty and polluted land; (v. 3.) It shall be utterly destroyed and laid waste. The whole land is infected with sin, and therefore the whole land shall mourn under God's sore judgments; shall sit in mourning, being stripped of all its wealth and beauty. As the valleys are said to shew for joy, and sing, when there are plenty and peace, so here they are said to mourn, when by war and famine they are made desolate. The whole land shall be brimstone, and salt, and burning, as was threatened in the law, Deut. xxix. 23. They had broken all God's commandments, and now God threatens to take away all their comforts. The land mourns, when there is neither grass for the cattle, nor hay for the service of man; and then every one that dwells therein shall languish for want of nice food, or, as the margin has it, choice food; and it is the usual delicacies for delight. The beasts of the field will languish, Jer. xiv. 5, 6. Nay, the destruction of the fruits of the earth shall be so great, that there shall not be picking for the fruits of the air, to keep them alive; they shall suffer with man, and their dying, or growing lean, will be a punishment to those who used to have their tables replenished with whatever was wanting, vi. 14. The wheat and barley, away, or gathered together, that they may go away in swarms to some other coast, and then the fishing trade will be worth nothing. This desolation shall be in that respect more general than that by Noah's flood, for that did not affect the fishes of the sea, but this shall. It was part of one of the plagues of Egypt, that he slew their fish; (Ps. cv. 35.) neither the river nor the sea, nor any fish shall be there, (2. Zeph. ii. 6.) Note, When man becomes disobedient to God, it is just that the inferior creatures should be made unserviceable to man. O what reason have we to admire God's patience and mercy to our land, that though there are in it so much swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, yet there is plenty of flesh, and fish, and fowl, on our tables! IV. An order of court, that no pains should be taken with the condemned criminal to bring him to repentance, with the reason for that order. Ob- serves, 1. The order itself; (v. 4.) Yet let no man strive or reprove another; let no means be used to reduce and reclaim them, let their physicians give them up as desperate and past cure. It intimates that as long as there is any hope, we ought to reprove sinners for their sins; it is a duty we owe to one another to give and to take reproofs, it was one of the laws of Moses; (Lev. xi. 17.) Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour; it is an instance of brotherly love. Sometimes there is need to rebuke sharply, not only to reprove, but to strive, so loath are men to part with their sins. But it is a sign that persons and people are abandoned to ruin, when God says, Let them not be reproved. Yet this is to be understood as God's command sometimes to the prophets, not to pray for them, notwithstanding which they did pray for them; but the meaning is, They are so hardened in sin, and so ripened for ruin, that it will be to little purpose, either to deal with them, or to deal with God for them. Note, It bodes ill to a people when reprovers are silenced, and when those who should witness against the sins of the times, retire into a corner, and give up the cause. See 2 Chron. xxxiii. 17. The order is injurious to this order; Let them not reprove one another; for, (1.) They are determined to go on in sin, and no reproves will cure them of that; They people are as they that strive with the priests; they are grown so very impudent in sin, so very insolent, and impatient of reproof, that they will fly in the face even of a priest himself, if he should but give them the least check, with out any regard to his character and office; and how then can it be thought that they should take a reprofe from a private person? Note, Those sinners have their hearts wickedly hardened, who quarel with their ministers for dealing faithfully with them; and those who rebel against ministerial reproof, which is an ordinance of God for their reformation, have forfeited the benefit of brotherly reproof too. Perhaps this may refer to the late wickedness of Josiah king of Judah, and his people, who stoned Zecariah, the son of Jehoiada, for delivering them a message from God, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. He was a priest, with him they strive, when he was officiating between the temple and the altar; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks the prophet had an eye to his case when he spake, (v. 2.) of blood touching blood; the blood of the prophet and the blood of the priest; that is, they were used to take with them the usual delicacies for delight. That says he, was the apex of their wickedness, from thence their ruin was to be dated, (Matth. xxiii. 35.) as this is of their incorrigibleness, that they are as these who strive with the priest, therefore let no man reprove them; for, (2.) God also is determined to proceed in their ruin; (v. 5.) Therefore, because thou wilt take no reproof, neither have they taken no reproof, let the reproof of God, which is sent to thee in the same year, prevent it, for the decree is gone forth. Thou shalt stumble and fall in the day, and the prophet, the false prophet that flattered and seduced thee, shall fall with thee in the night; both thou and thy prophet shall fall night and day, shall be continually falling into one calamity or another; the darkness is upon the right eye, and the light is upon the left; the light of the day helpeth thee to see, but the light of the night helpeth thee to flee from it. The prophets are blind leaders, and the people blind followers; and to the blind, day and night are alike, so that whether it be day or night, both shall fall together into the ditch. "Then shalt fall in the day, when thy fall is least feared by thyself, and thou art very secure; and in the day, when it will be seen and observed by others, and turn neither to thy shame; and the prophet shall fall in the night, when to himself it will be most terrible." Note,
The ruin of those who have helped to ruin others, will, in a special manner, be intolerable. And did the children think that when they are in danger of falling their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for _I will destroy thy mother_; Samaria, the mother-city; the whole state, or kingdom, which is as a mother to every part. It shall all be made silent. Note, When all are involved in guilt, nothing less can be expected, than that all should be involved in ruin.

6. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. 7. As they were increased, so they sinned against me; therefore will I change their glory into shame.

3. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. 9. And there shall be, like people, like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. 10. For they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord. 11. Whoredom, and wine, and new wine, take away the heart.

God is here proceeding in his controversy, both with the priests, and with the people; the people were as those that _strue with the priests_, (v. 4.) here is a charge upon the priests, who should have taught them the knowledge of God; but they did not, because of their unbelief, and because of the generality of them lived in the neglect of their duty, and here is a word for those priests, and for the people that love to have it so, Jer. v. 31. And it is observable here, how the punishment answers to the sin, and how, for the justifying of his own proceedings, God sets the one over against the other.

1. The _people strive with the priests_, that should have taught them the knowledge of God; but they therefore are they destroyed for lack of knowledge, v. 6. Note, Those that rebel against the light, can expect no other than to perish in the dark. Or, it is a charge upon the priests, who should have been still teaching the people knowledge, (Ecc. xii. 9.) but they did not, or did it in such a manner, that it was as if they had not done it at all, so there was no knowledge of God in the land; and because there was no vision, or none to any purpose, the people _perished_, Prov. xxxix. 18. Note, IGNORANCE is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the mother of destruction; lack of knowledge is ruining to any person or people. They are my people, that are thus destroyed, their relation to God as his people, aggravates both their sin in not taking pains to get knowledge, and their own miseries. They were under and with whom they were taken into covenant, and their sin likewise, who should have taught them; God set his children to school to them, and they never minded them, nor took any pains with them.

2. Both priests and people _rejected knowledge;_ and justly therefore will God reject them. The reason why people did not teach, and the priests did not teach, was, not because they had not the light, but because they hated it; not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God, and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it; they rejected it. They desired not the knowledge of God's ways, put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light; and therefore if I will also reject thee, I will refuse to take cognizance of thee, and to own thee; you will not know me, but bid me depart; I will therefore say, Depart from me, I know you not. Then shalt thou be no priest to me._ (1.) The priests shall be no longer admitted to the privileges, or employed in the services, of the priesthood, nor shall they ever be received again, as we find, Ezek. xiv. 13. Note, Ministers that reject knowledge, that are grossly ignorant and senseless, ought not to be owned as ministers; but that which they seem to have, should be taken away, Luke viii. 18. (2.) The people shall be no longer, as they have been, a _kingdom of priests_, a royal priesthood, Exod. xix. 6. God's people, by rejecting knowledge, forfeit their honour, and profane their own crown.

3. They forget the law of God, neither desired nor endeavoured to retain it in mind, or transmit the remembrance of it to their posterity, and therefore justly will God forget them and their children; the people's children, they did not educate them, as they ought to have done, in the knowledge of God, and their duty to him, and therefore God will disown them, as not in covenant with him. Note, If parents do not teach their children, when they are young, to remember their Creator, they cannot expect that their Creator should remember them. Or, it may be meant of the _priests' children_; they shall not succeed in the priests' office, but shall be reduced to poverty, as is threatened against Eli's house. 1 Sam. ii. 20. 4. They dishonoured God with that which was their honour, and justly therefore will God strip them of it, v. 7. It was their honour, that they were increased in number, wealth, power, and dignity; the beginning of their nation was small, but in process of time it greatly increased, and grew very considerable in power; and of priests increased wonderfully; but as they were increased, so they sinned against God; the more populous the nation grew, the more sin was committed, and the more profane they were; their wealth, honour, and power did make them the more daring in sin. Therefore, says God, will I change their glory into shame. Are their numbers their glory? God will diminish them, and cut them off from the earth; and is their wealth their glory? God will impoverish them, and bring them low; so that they shall themselves be ashamed of that which they gloried in. Their priests shall be made contemptible and base, Mal. ii. 9. Note, That which is our honour, if we dishonour God with it, will, sooner or later, be turned into shame to us; for they that despise God shall be lightly esteemed, 1 Sam. ii. 30.

5. The priests ate up the sin of God's people; and therefore they shall eat, and not have enough. (1.) They abused the maintenance that was allowed to the priests, to the priests of the house of Aaron, by the law of God, and to the mock-priests of the calves by their constitution; (v. 8.) They _eat up the sin of my people_, that is, their sin-offerings. If God meant by his priests the true priests, it was because of their seizing that which they had no right to; they usurped the revenues of the priests though they were no priests. If it be meant of those who were legal priests, it intimates their greediness of the profits and perquisites of their office, when they took no care at all to do the duty of it. They feasted upon their part of the offerings of the Lord, but for priests, and of the work for which they were so paid; thus they set their hearts upon the people's iniquities, they lifted up their soul to them, they were glad when people did commit iniquity, that they might be obliged to bring an offering to make atonement for it, which they should have shared of; the more sins, the more sacrifices, and therefore they cared not how much sin people were guilty of. Instead
of warning the people against sin, from the consi-
deration of the sacrifices, which showed them what
an offence sin was to God, since it needed such an
expiration, they abandoned and encouraged the
people to sin, since an atonement might be made
so small an expense. Thus they gloated themselves
upon the sins of the people, and helped to keep up
that which they should have beaten down. Note,
It is a very wicked thing to be well pleased with
the sins of others, because, some way or other, they
may turn to our advantage. (2.) God will therefore
deny them his blessing upon their maintenance,
(v. 5, 6.) Though they have great plenty by the abundance
of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have
no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield
no good nourishment, or their greedy appetites shall
not be satisfied with it. Note, What is unlawfully
gained, cannot be comfortably used; nor, nor that
which is inordinately coveted; it is just that the de-
sires which are insatiable, should always be unsat-
sisfied; and that those should never have enough, who
never know when they have enough. See Mic. vi.
14. Hag. i. 6.

6. The more they increased, the more they sinned; (v. 7.) and therefore though they commit whoredom,
though they take the most wicked methods to mul-
tiply their people, yet they shall not increase. Those
they have are many waves and combings, and Solomon
had, yet they shall not have their families
built up by it in a numerous progeny, any more than
he had. Note, Those that hope any way to increase
by unlawful means, will be disappointed. And
therefore God will thus blast all their projects, be-
cause they have left off to take heed to the Lord;
time was, when they had some regard to God, and
to his authority over them, and interest in them,
but they have left it off; they take no heed to his
word or to his providences, they do not eye him in
either. They forsake him, so as not to take heed to
him; they have apostatized to that degree, that they
have no manner of regard to God, but are perfectly
without God in the world. Note, Those that leave
off to take heed to the Lord, leave off all good, and
can expect no other than that all good should leave
them.

7. The people and the priests did harden one an-
other in sin; and therefore justly shall they shew
in the sharers in the punishment; (v. 9.) There shall be,
like people, like priest. So they were in character;
people and priest were both alike ignorant and pro-
fane, regardless of God and their duty, and addicted
to sin and sinning; and so they shall be in condition; God
will bring judgments upon them, that shall be the
destruction both of priest and people; the famine
that deprives the people of their meat, shall deprive
the priests of their meat-offerings, Joel i. 9. It is
part of the description of an universal desolation,
that it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest,
Isi. xxiv. 2. God's judgments, when they come
with commission, will make no difference. Note, Sin
spreads itself to all kinds, and comes upon all kinds.
Thus God will punish them both for their ways, and
reward them their doings. God will cause their
doings to return upon them; so the word is; when
a sin is committed, the sinner thinks it is gone,
and he shall hear no more of it, but he shall find it called
over again, and made to return, either to his hu-
mor, or to his condemnation.

8. They increase in the delights of sense, to hold up
their hearts; but they shall find that they take away
their hearts; (v. 11.) Whoredom, and wine, and new
wine take away the heart. Some join this with the foregoing words, They have
forsaken the Lord, to take heed to whoredom, and
wine, and new wine; Or, Because these have taken
away their heart. Their sensual pleasures have
taken them off from their devotions, and drowned
all that is good in them. Or, we may take it as a
distinct sentence, containing a great truth which we
see confirmed by every day's experience; theft,
violence, drunkenness, and uncleanness, are sins that
beget and infatuate men, weaken and enfeeble them.
They take away both the understanding and the
courage.

12. My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their
staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to
err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. 13. They sacrifice upon
the tops of the mountains, and burn incense
upon the hills, under oaks, and poplars, and
elms, because the shadow thereof is
good: therefore your daughters shall commit
whoredom, and your spouses shall commit
adultery. 14. I will not punish your daughters
when they commit whoredom, nor your
spouses when they commit adultery; for
themselves are separated with whores, and
they sacrifice with harlots, therefore the people that
doth not understand shall fall.
15. Though thou, Israel, play the harlot,
yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven,
nor swear, The Lord liveth. 16. For Israel shideth back as a backsliding heifer:
now the Lord will send them as a lamb in
a large place. 17. Ephraim is joined to idols:
let him alone. 18. Their drink is sour; they
have committed whoredom continually: her
rulers with shame do love. Give ye.

The wind hath bound her up in her wings,
and they shall be ashamed because of their
sacrifices.

In these verses we have, as before,
1. The sins charged upon the people of Israel; for
which God had a controversy with them.

And they are,
1. Spiritual whoredom, idolatry. They have in-
them a spirit of whoredoms, a strong inclination to
that sin; the bent and bias of their hearts are that,
that it is their own iniquity; they are carried out
towards it with an accountable violence, and this
causes them to err. Note, The errors and mistakes
of the judgment are commonly owing to the corrupt
affections; men therefore have a good opinion of sin,
because they have a disposition towards it. And,
having such erroneous notions of idols, and such pas-
sonate motions towards them, no marvel that with
such a heart, and such a movement, they should have
wandered ever from under their God, v. 12. They ought
to have been in subjection to him as their Head and
Husband, to have been under his conduct and com-
mand, but they revolted from their allegiance, and
put themselves under the conduct and protection of
false gods. So (v. 15.) Israel has played the harlot;
their conduct in the worship of their idols was like
that of a harlot, wanton and impudent. And (v. 16.)
Israel slipeth back, as a backsliding heifer; as an
untamed heifer, so some; or, as a perverse or re-
fractory one, some others; as a heifer that is turned
loose, runs madly about the pasture; or, if put under
the yoke, (which seems rather to be alluded to here,)
will draw back instead of going forward, will strug-
gle to get her neck out of the yoke, and her feet cut
of the furrow. Thus unruly, ungovernmental, untractable, were the people of Israel. They had begun to draw in the yoke of God's ordinances, but they drew back, as children of Bethal, that will not endure the yoke; as in the worship of were sent with the gods of reproof, to put them forward, they kicked against the furies, and ran backwards. The sum of all this, (v. 17.) Ephraim is joined to idols, is perfectly wedded to them, his affections are glued to them, and his heart is upon them.

There are two instances given of their spiritual whoredom, in both which they gave that honour to God which was due to his idols. (1.) They consulted them as oracles, and used those arts of divination which they had learned from their idolatrous priests; (v. 12.) _My people ask counsel at their stocks, their wooden gods; they apply themselves to them for advice and direction in what they should do, and for information concerning the event._ They say to a stock, _Thou art my father; (Jer. ii. 27.) and if it were indeed a father, it were worthy of this honour; but it was a great affront to God, who was indeed their Father, and whose lively oracles they had among them, with which they had liberty to consult at any time, thus to ask counsel at their stocks._ And they expect that their staff should declare to them what course they should take, and what event should happen to them. Thus priests and learned men are trusted with the secrets of God's affairs; He refers to some wicked methods of divination used among the Gentiles, and which the Jews learned from them, by a piece of wood, or by a staff, like Nebuchadnezzar's divining by his arrows, Ezek. xxi. 21. Note, Those who forsake the oracles of God, to take their measures from the world and the flesh, do in effect but consult with their stocks and their images. They offer sacred sacrifice to them as gods, whose favour they wanted, and whose wrath they dreaded and deprecated; (v. 13.) _They sacrifice to them, to atone and pacify them, and burn incense to them, to please and gratify them; and hope by both to recommend themselves to them._ God had pitched upon the place where he would record his name; but they, having forsaken that, chose places for their irreligious rites, which pleased their own fancies; they chose, _[1.]_ high places, _upon the tops of the mountains, and upon the hills; foolishly imagining that the height of the ground gave them some advantage in their approaches toward heaven._ [2.] Study places, _under oaks, and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is pleasant to them, especially in those hot countries, and therefore they thought their worship more acceptable to them._ They fancied that a thick shade befriends contemplation, possesses the mind with something of awe, and therefore is proper for devotion.

2. Corporal whoredom is another crime here charged upon them; _They have committed whoredom continually, v. 18._ They drove a trade of uncleanness; it was not only a single act, but their constant practice, as it is of many that have eyes full of adultery, and which cannot cease from that sin, 2 Pet. ii. 14. Now the abominable filthiness and lewdness that was found in Israel is here spoken of, (1.) As a concomitant of their idolatry, their false gods drew them to it; for the devil whom they worshipped, though a spirit, is an unclean spirit. They were like dogs that walked about a sepulchre, were separated with whores, and they sacrificed with harlots; for because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, but disdained him, therefore God gave them up to vile affections, by the indulging of which they dishonoured themselves, Rom. i. 24, 28. (2.) As a punishment of it; _The men that worshipped idols, were separated with whores that assured the defilement of the worship, and the Israelites were contaminated._ But God has in his Word, Num. xxv. 1, 2. To punish them for that, God gave up their wives and daughters to the like vile affections, they committed whoredom and adultery, (v. 13.) which could not but be a great grief and reproach to their husbands and parents; for those that are not chaste themselves, desire to have their wives and daughters so; but thus they might reap their sin in their punishment, as David's adultery was punished in the debauching of his concubines by his own son, 2 Sam. xii. 11. Note, When the same sin in others is made men's grief and affliction, which they have themselves been guilty of, they must own the Lord is righteous.

3. The inventing of justice; (v. 18.) _Their rulers (be it spoken to their shame) do love, Give ye; they love bribes, and have it continually in their mouths, Give, give; they are given to filthy lucre; every one that has any business with them, must expect to be asked, What will you give? Though, as rulers, they are bound by office to do justice, yet none can have justice done them without a fee; and you may be sure that for a fee they will do injustice._ Note, The love of money is the ruin of equity, and the root of all iniquity. But of all men it is a shame for rulers (who should be men fearing God, and hating covetousness) to love, Give ye. Perhaps this is intended in that part of the charge here, _Their drink is sour, it is dead, it is gone. Justice, duly administered, is refreshing, like the waters of Merom; but when men and rulers take rewards either to acquit the guilty, or to condemn the innocent, the drink is sour; they turn judgment into wormwood, Amos v. 7._ Or, It may refer in general to the depraved morals of the whole nation; they had lost all their life and spirit, and were as offensive to God as dead and sour drink is to us. See Deut. xxxiii. 32, 33.

4. The tokens of God's wrath against them for their sins.

1. Their wives and daughters should not be punished for the injury and disgrace they did to their families; (v. 14.) I will not punish your daughters; and, not being punished for it, they would go on in it. Note, The impurity of one sinner is sometimes made the punishment of another. Or, I will not punish them so as I will punish you; for you must own, as Judah did concerning his daughter-in-law, that they are more righteous than you, Gen. xxxviii. 26.

2. They themselves should prosper for awhile, but their prosperity should help to destroy them. It comes in as a token of God's wrath, (v. 16.) _The lamb will eat the fat pasture, and a large one, in which they shall be fed to the full, and fed with the best, but it shall be only to prepare them for the slaughter, as a lamb is that is so fed. If they wax fat and kick, they do but wax fat for the butcher. But others make them feed as a lamb on the common, a large place indeed, but where it is short grass, and lies exposed. The Shepherd of Israel will turn them both out of his pastures, and out of his protection._

3. No means should be used to bring them to repentance; (v. 17.) Ephraim is joined to idols, is in love with them, and addicted to them, and therefore, let him alone, as v. 4. Let no man reprove him. Let him be given up to his own heart's lust, and let the course be pursued, let us be healed, and he would not be healed, therefore forsake him. See what their end will be, Deut. xxxxi. 20. Note, It is a sad and sore judgment for any man to be let alone in sin, for God to say concerning a sinner, "He is joined to his idols, the world and the flesh, he is incurably proud, covetous, or profane, an incurable rake, or a drunkard, or an adulterer, and conscience, let him alone; minister, let him alone; providences, let him alone._ Let nothing awaken him till the flames of hell do it._

The father cor
rects not the rebellious son any more, when he determines to disinherit him. Those that are not disturbed in their sin, will be destroyed for their sin.

4. They should be hurried away with a swift and shameful destruction; (v. 19.) The wind hath bound her up in her wings, to carry her away into captivity, suddenly, violently, and irresistibly; he shall take them away with a whirlwind, Ps. lxi. 9. And then they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifice, and the sin of their idols, ashamed of their folly in putting themselves to such an expense upon gods that have no power to help them, and thereby to make that God their Enemy, who has almighty power to destroy them. Note, There are sacrifices that men will one day be ashamed of. Those that have sacrificed their time, strength, honour, and all their comforts, to the world and the flesh, shall be made ashamed of it, ver. 10, and those that bring to God blind, and lame, and heartless sacrifices, will be ashamed of them too.

III. The warning given to Judah, not to sin after the similitude of Israel's transgression. It is said in the close of v. 14. They that do not understand, shall fall; they must needs fall, that do not understand how to avoid, or get over, the stumbling-blocks that lie in their way. (v. 15.) But they that hearken, shall stand fast; he stands, take heed lest he fall, particularly the two tribes; (v. 15.) Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend. Though Israel be given to idolatry, yet let not Judah take the infection. Now, I. This was a very needful caution. The men of Israel were brethren, and near neighbours to the men of Judah; Israel was more numerous, and more in prosperity in a prosperous condition, and therefore there was danger lest the men of Judah should learn their way, and get a snare to their souls. Note, The nearer we are to the infection of sin, the more need we have to stand upon our guard. 2. It was a very rational caution; Let Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah do so; for Judah has greater means of knowledge than Israel has, the temple and priesthood, and a king of the house of David; from Judah, Shiloh is to come; and for Judah, God has reserved great blessings in store; therefore let not Judah offend, for more is expected from them than from Israel, they will have more to answer for if they do offend, and from them God will take it more unkindly. If Israel play the harlot, let not Judah do so too, for then God will have no professing people in the world. God bespeaks Judah in his heart, Ch. iv. 2, 3, Lord, they have turned their backs upon him, will ye also go away? John vi. 67. Note, Those that have hitherto kept their integrity, should for that reason still hold it fast, even in times of general apostasy. Now, to preserve Judah from offending as Israel had done, two rules are here given. I. That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must keep at a distance from the places of idolatry; Come no more into Gilgal, where all their wickedness was; (ch. x. 13. — xii. 11.) there they multiplied transgression, (Amos iv. 4.) and perhaps they contracted a censure for that place, because there it was said to Joshua, The place where thou standest is holy ground; (Josh. v. 13.) therefore they are forbidden to enter into Gilgal, Amos v. 5. And for the same reason to enter no more into Bethel, come no more into Bethel, save the house of vanity, for so Beth-given signifies, not the house of God, as Bethel signifies. Note, Those that were kept from sin, and not fall into the devil's hand, must studiously avoid the occasions of sin, and not come upon the devil's ground. (2.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must take heed of professorism, and not swear, The Lord liveth, in truth and righteousness; (Jer. iv. 2.) and therefore which is here forbidden, is swearing so in untruth and unrighteousness; swearing rashly and lightly, or falsely and with deceit; or swearing by the Lord and the idol, Zeph. i. 5. Note, Those that would be steady in their adherence to God, must possess themselves with an awe and reverence of God, and always speak of him with solemnity and seriousness; for these that can make a jest of the true God, will make a god of any thing.

CHAP. V.

The scope of this chapter is the same with the foregoing chapter, to discover the sin both of Israel and Judah, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. I. They are called to hearken to the charge, v. 1, 8. They are assembled in many sins which are here aggravated. 1. Persecution, v. 1, 2. Spiritual whoredom, v. 3, 4. Pride, v. 5. 4. Apostasy from God, v. 7, 5. The tyranny of the princes, and the tameness of the people in the coming trouble, and religious affairs; Judah was threatened with God's displeasure for their sins; he knows all their wickedness, (v. 5.) and makes known his wrath against them for it, v. 9. They shall fall in their iniquity, v. 5. 2. God will forsake them, v. 6. 3. Their portions shall be devoured, v. 7. 4. God will rebuke them, and pour out his wrath upon them, v. 9, 10. 5. They shall be oppressed, v. 11. 6. God will be as a moth to them in secret judgments, v. 12.) and as a lion in public judgments, v. 14.) They are blamed for the wrong course they took under their afflictions, v. 13. V. It is intimated that they shall at length take a right course, v. 15. The more generally these things are expressed, and so much as one or two of them are for our learning, and particularly for our admonition.

1. HEAR ye this, O priests; and hearken, ye house of Israel; and give ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. 2. And the revolters are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all. 3. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committedtest whoredom, and Israel is defiled. 4. They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord. 5. And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity; Judah also shall fall with them. 6. They shall go with their flocks, and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them. 7. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord; for they have begotten strange children: now shall a mouth devour them with their portions.

Here, I. All orders and degrees of men are cited to appear and answer to such things as shall be laid to their charge; (v. 1.) Hear ye this, O priests, whether in holy orders, as those in Judah, and perhaps many in Israel too, for in the ten tribes there were divers cities of priests and Levites, who, it is probable, stood in their own lot after the revolt of the ten tribes, and did so much of their office as might be done at a distance from the temple; or pretending to holy orders, as the priests of the calves, who, some think, are included here. Hearken, ye house of Israel, and give ear, O house of the king; let them all take notice, for they have all contributed to the national guilt, and they shall
all share in the national judgments. Note, If neither the sanctity of the priesthood, nor the dignity of the royal family, will prevail to keep them from sin, it cannot be expected that they should avoid to keep out wrath. If the priests, and the house of the king, though they bear such noble characters, sin like others, their noble characters will not excuse them, but they must smart like others. Nor shall it be any plea for the house of Israel, that they were misled by the priests, and princes, but they shall receive the same reproof, and punishment, and be brought to the shame, not merely, or in one sense, but as it were, for the blame on their own hands, as if it were their own sin: they whose lips shall be defended by their teachers, and they have not defended themselves, shall be held guilty.

2. Witness is produced against them; one instead of a thousand, it is God's omniscience; (v. 3.) I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me. They have not known the Lord, (v. 4.) but the Lord has known them; knows their true character, however disguised; knows their secret wickedness, however concealed. Note, Men's rejecting the knowledge of God will not secure them from his knowledge of them; and when he contends with them, he will prove their sins upon them by his own knowledge, so that it will be sin vain to plead Not guilty.

3. Very bad things are laid to their charge. They had been very ingenuous and very industrious to draw people either into sin, or into trouble; Ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor; (v. 1.) such snares and nets as the huntsmen use to lay upon those mountains, in pursuit of their game. When the worship of the calves was set up in Israel, the patrons of that idolatry, and sticklers for it, contrived by all possible arts and wiles to draw men into it, and recommended it to them, that at first had a dread of it. Note, Those that allure and entice men to sin, however they may pretend friendship and good will, are to be looked upon as snares and nets to them, and their hands as bands, Excl. vii. 26. But to those whom they could not seduce into sin they were as a net and a snare, to bring them into trouble. Some think it was their practice to set snares in the road, and particularly upon the mountains of Mizpah and Tabor, at the times of the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, to watch if any of their people who were piously affected went thither, and to inform against them, that they might be prosecuted for it; thus doing the devil's work, who disquiets those whom he cannot debauch. The method which men use in carrying on their designs; (v. 2.) The revolters are professed to make slaughter. Note, Those who have themselves apostatized from the truths of God, are often the most subtle and barbarous persecutors of those who still adhere to them. Nothing will serve them, but to make slaughter; it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after, and with the serpent's sting they have their head, they are brazen to do it. O the depth of the depths of Satan, of the wickedness of his agents, of those that have deeply revolted, Isa. xxxi. 6. Now that which aggravated this, was, the many reproofs and warnings that had been given them; though I have been a reaper of them all. The prophet had been so, a reprobator by office; he had many a time told them of the evil of their ways under God, and had delivered them with his own soul with the worship of idols, v. 3. This God was a Witness to, though secretly committed, and artfully palliated. Nay, the piercing eye of God saw the spirit of whoredom that was in the midst of them, their secret inclination and disposition to those sins, the love they had to them, and the delight of their sins, and how much they were under the power of a spirit of whoredom, that root of bitterness which bore all this gall and wormwood, that corrupt and poisonous fountain.

4. They have no disposition at all to come into acquaintance and communion with God. The spirit of whoredom that was in them, noted and kept them wandering endless, v. 4. (1.) They have not known the Lord, nor desire to know him, but have rather declined, nay, dreaded, the knowledge of him, for that would disturb them in their sinful ways. (2.) Therefore they will not frame their doings to turn to God, by which it appeared that they did not know him aright. It speaks their obstinate persisting in their apostasy from God, that they would not turn to God, though he is their God, theirs in covenant, by whose name they have been called, and whom they are obliged to serve. They would not return to the worship of him, from which they had turned aside. Nay, they would not frame their doings to turn to God. They would not consider their ways, nor dispose themselves into serious temper, but their thoughts were of those things that would bring them to God. It is true, we cannot by our own power, without the special grace of God, turn to him; but we may by the due improvement of our own faculties, and the common aids of his Spirit, frame our doings to turn to him. Those that will not do that, that prepare not their hearts to seek the Lord, (2 Chron. xxi. 16.) owe it to themselves that they are not turned, they die because they will die; and to those that will do this, further grace shall not be wanting.

5. They were guilty of notorious arrogancy, and insolence in sin; (v. 5.) The pride of Israel doth testify to his face, doth witness against him, that he is a rebel to God and his government; the spirit of whoredoms which was in the midst of them, showed itself in the grievance and grandiness of their worship, as a harlot is known by her attire, Prov. vii. 10. The wantonness of her dress testifies to her face, that she is not a modest woman; or, their pride in confronting the prophets God sent them, and the message they brought; (Jer. xiii. 2.) or, a haughty, scornful conduct toward their brethren, and those that were convicted against them, that they were not God's people, and justified God in all the humbling judgments he brought upon them. His pride testifies in his face; so some read it, agreeing with Isa. iii. 9. The show of their countenance doth witness against them. They have that proud look which the Lord hates.

6. They departed from God to idols, and bred up their children in idolatry; (v. 7.) They have dealt treacherously against the Lord, as a wife, who, in contempt of the marriage-covenant, forsook her husband, and lives in adultery with another. Thus they who are guilty of spiritual adultery, whose god is their money, whose god is their belly, deal treacherously against the Lord, they violate their engagements to him, and frustrate his expectations from them. Note, With sinners are treacherous dealers. They have begotten strange children; their children which they have begotten are estranged from God, and trained up in a false way of worship, they are a spurious breed, as children of fornication, (John viii. 41.) whom God will disown. Note, Those deal treacherously with God indeed, who not only turn from him, but deal with him himself, but train up their children in wicked ways.

IV. Very sad things are made to be their doom; in general, (v. 1.) Judgment is toward you, God is coming forth to contend with you, and to testify
his displeasure against you for your sins." It is time to hearken when judgment is towards us. In particular,

1. They shall fall in their iniquity. This follows upon their pride testifying to their face; (v. 5.) therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity. Note, They fall as a fruit to the sages and forerunner of them; they that exalt themselves shall be abased. The face in which pride testifies, shall be filled with confusion. They shall not only fall, but fall in their iniquity, the saddest fall of all other. Their pride kept them from repenting of their iniquity, and therefore they shall fall in it. Note, Those that are not humbled for their sins, shall perish for the greatness of their iniquity. It is added, Judah also shall fall with them in her iniquity; as the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria for their idolatry, so the two tribes, in process of time, were carried into Babylon for following their bad example; but the former fell, and were utterly cast down, the latter fell, and were raised up again. Judah had the temple and priesthood, and yet that shall not secure them, but, if they sin with Israel and Ephraim, with them they shall fall.

2. They shall fall short of God's favour, when they profess to seek it; (v. 6.) They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord, but in vain; they shall not find him. This seems to be spoken principally of Judah, when they fell into their iniquity, and when they fell in their iniquity. (1.) When they fell in the iniquity of the Lord; but they did not seek him only, and therefore he was not found of them. When they worshipped strange gods, yet they kept up the show and shadow of the worship of the true God; they went as usual, at the solemn feasts, with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord; but their hearts were not upright with him, because they were not entire for him, and therefore he would not accept them; for then only shall we find him, when we seek him, with our whole heart; not divided between God and Baal, Ezek. xiv. 3. (2.) When they fell in their iniquity, or found themselves falling by it, they sought the Lord; but they did not seek him early, and therefore he will not be found of them. They shall see ruin coming upon them, and shall then, in their distress, flee to God, and think to make his friends with burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but it will be too late then to turn away his wrath, when the decree is gone forth. Even Josiah's reformation did not prevail to turn away the wrath of God, 2 Kings xxiii. 25, 26. Those that go with their flocks and their herds only to seek the Lord, and not with their hearts and souls, cannot expect to find him, for his favour is not to be purchased with thousands of rams. Nor shall those speed, who do not seek the Lord while he may be found, for there is a time when he will not be found. They shall not find him, for he has withdrawn himself; he will not be inquired of by them, but will turn a deaf ear to their prayers, and have no regard to their sacrifices. See how much it is our concern to seek God early, now while the accepted time is, and the day of salvation.

They shall call upon him, who do not seek the Lord, they have dealt treacherously against the Lord, and have thought to strengthen themselves in it by their alliances with strange children; but now shall a month devour them with their portions, their estates and inheritances, all those things which they have taken, and taken up with as their portion; or, their portions, their idols whom they chose for gods, their idols, and the idols of God. Note, He that make an idol of the world, by taking it for their portion, will themselves perish with it. A month shall devour them, or eat them up; a certain time prefixed, and a short time. When God's judgments begin with them, they shall soon make an end; one month will do their business. How much may a body be weakened by one month's sickness, or a kingdom wasted by one month's war! Three sheaf herds (says God) I cut off in one month, Zech. xi. 8. Note, The judgments of God sometimes make quick work with a sinful people. A month devours more, and more portions, than many years can repair.

3. Blow ye the comet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah; cry aloud at Bethaven, after thee, O Benjamin. 9. Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke; among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. 10. The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water. 11. Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment. 12. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. 15. I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early.

Here is,

I. A loud alarm sounded, giving notice of judgments coming; (v. 8.) Blow ye the comet in Gibeah, and in Ramah, two cities near together in the confines of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Gibeah, is in the kingdom of Judah, Ramah, of Israel; so that the warning is hereby sent into both kingdoms; Cry aloud at Bethaven, or Bethel, which place seems to be already seized upon by the enemy, and therefore the trumpet is not sounded there; but you hear the cutters of them that shout for mystery, mixed with theirs that are overcome. Let them cry aloud; "After thee, O Benjamin, comes the enemy. The tribe of Ephraim is already vanquished, and the enemy will be upon thy back, O Benjamin, in a little time, thy turn comes next." The cup of trembling shall go round. The prophet had described God's controversy with them as a trial at law; (ch. iv. 1.) here he describes it as a trial by battle; and here also when he judges he will overcome; let all therefore prepare to meet the God. He had before spoken of the judgments as certain; here he speaks of them as near; and when they are apprehended as just at the door, they are very startling and awakening. The blowing of this comet is explained, v. 9. Among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be, that which is true or certain; so the word is. Note, The destruction of impenitent sinners is a thing which shall surely be; it is not mere talk to frighten them, but it is an irrevocable sentence. And it is a mercy to us, that it is made known to us, that we have timely warning given us of it, that we may flee from the wrath to come. It is the privi-
lege of the tribes of Israel, that, as they are told their duty, so they are told their danger, by the oracles of God committed to them.

11. God's controversy with them.

1. He has a quarrel with the princes of Judah, because they were daring leaders in sin, v. 10. They are like them that remove the bound, or the ancient landmarks. God has given them his law, to be a fence about his own property; but they have sacrilegiously broken through it, and set it aside; they have encroached even upon God's rights, have trampled under foot the divisions between good and evil, and the most sacred obligations of reason and equity, thinking, because they were princes, that they might do anything. Quicquid liber, illet—Their will was a law. Or, it may be understood of their invading the liberty and property of the subject, for the advancing of the prerogative; which was like removing the ancient landmarks. Some have observed that the princes of Judah were more absolute, and assumed a more arbitrary power, than the princes of Israel did; now for this, God has a controversy with them: I will pour out my wrath upon them like water, in great abundance, like the waters of the flood, which were poured upon the giants of the old world, for the violence which the earth was filled with through them, Gen. vi. 13. Note, They that are princes, who would have the world do as they please, must not remove, bounds both of religion and justice, which they are limited by, and which if they break through must know that there is a God above them that will call them to account for it.

2. He has a quarrel with the people of Ephraim, because they were sneaking followers in sin (v. 11). He willingly walked after the commandment, the commandment of Jeroboam, and the succeeding kings of Israel, who obliged all their subjects by a law to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel, and never to go up to Jerusalem to worship; this was the commandment, it was the law of the land, and backed with reasons of state; and the people not only walked after it in a blind, implicit obedience to authority, but they willingly walked after it, from a secret antipathy they had to the worship of God, and a strong bias to the worship of idols. Note, An easy compliance with the commandments of men that thwart the commandments of God, ripens a people for ruin as much as any thing else. And the punishment of the sequacious disobedience (if I may call it so) that Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment, has all his civil rights and liberties broken in upon, and trodden down; and, (1.) It is just with God that it should be so; that those who betray God's property, should lose their own; and those who subject their consciences to an infallible judge, and an arbitrary power, should have enough of both. (2.) There is a natural tendency in the thing itself towards it; they that willingly walk after the commandment, even when it walks contrary to the command of God, will find the commandment an encroaching thing, and that the more power is given it, the more it will claim. Note, Nothing gives greater advantage to a mastiff-like tyranny, that is fierce and furious, than a spaniel-like submission, that is faithless. (3.) There is a natural tendency in the thing itself towards it; they that willingly walk after the commandment, even when it walks contrary to the command of God, will find the commandment an encroaching thing, and that the more power is given it, the more it will claim. Note, Nothing gives greater advantage to a mastiff-like tyranny, that is fierce and furious, than a spaniel-like submission, that is faithless.

III. The different methods that God would take both with Judah and Ephraim, sometimes one method, and sometimes the other; and sometimes both together; rather, by which, first the one, and then the other, he would advance toward their complete ruin.

1. He would begin with lesser judgments, which should sometimes work silently and insensibly; (v. 12.) I will be, unto Ephraim as a moth, nay, (as it might better be supplied,) they are unto Ephraim as a moth, for it is such a sickness as Ephraim now sees, v. 13. Note, The judgments of God are sometimes to a sinful people as a moth, and as rottenness, or as a worm. The former signifies the little animals that breed in clothes, the latter those that breed in wood; as these consume the clothes and the wood, so shall the judgments of God consume them. (1.) Silency, so as not to make any noise in the world, nay, so as they themselves shall not be sensible of it; they shall think themselves safe and thriving, but, when they come to look more narrowly into their state, shall find themselves wasting and decaying. (2.) Slowly, and with long delays and intervals, that he may give them space to repent. Many a nation, as well as many a person, in the prime of its time, dies of a consumption. (3.) Gradually. God comes upon people as a lion, as a vengeance, God's patience is justly a surprise to them, if they will be wise, and take warning; he comes upon them step by step, that he may be willing that they should perish. (4.) The moth breeds in the clothes, and the worm or rottenness in the wood; thus sinners are consumed by a fire of their own kindling.

2. When it appeared that those had not done their work, he would come upon them with greater. Christ is sometimes a Lion of the tribe of Judah, here he is a Lion against that tribe; see what God will do to a people that are secure in sin; Even I will tear. He seems to glory in it, as his prerogative, to be able to destroy, as the alone Lord, the people of the earth; I will make mine own thing mine own, and take it into my own hand; I say it, that will do it. There is a more immediate work of God in some judgments than in others; I will tear, and go away. He will go away, (1.) As not fearing them; he will go away in state, and with a majestic face, as the lion from his prey. (2.) As not helping them. If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by his graces and comforts stays the issue of them, his work is not well enough; but his justice, and these that are delivered into the hands of his grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker.

IV. The different effects of these different methods.

1. When God contended with them by lesser judgments, they neglected him, and sought to creature for relief, but sought in vain, v. 13. When God was to them as a moth, and as rottenness, they perceived their sickness and their wound, after:
a while they found themselves going down the hill, and that they were behindhand in their affairs, their state was sensibly decaying, and then they sent to the Assyrian, to come in their distress, and thereby made their court to king Jareb, which, some think, was one of the names of Pul, or Tiglath-pileser, kings of Assyria, to whom both Israel and Judah applied themselves for relief in their distress, hoping by an alliance with them to repair and re-establish their declining interests. Note, Carnal hearts, in times of trouble, see their sickness, and see their want, but do not see the sickness that is in their sin, nor will be brought to acknowledge that, no, not to acknowledge the hand of God, his mighty hand, much less his righteous hand, in their trouble; and therefore instead of going the next way to the Creator, who could relieve them, they take a great deal of pains to go about to creatures, who can do them no service. Those who repent not that they have offended God by their sins, are both to be beholden to him in their afflictions, but would rather seek relief any where than with him. And what comes of it? Yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. Note, Those who neglect God, and seek to creatures for help, will certainly be disappointed; those who depend upon them for support, will find them, not foundations, but broken reeds; those who build upon them for safety, will find them, not fountains, but broken cisterns; those who depend upon them for comfort and a cure, will find them miserable comforters, and physicians of no value. The kings of Assyria, whom Judah and Israel sought unto, distressed them, and helped them not, 2 Chron. xxxviii. 16, 28. Some make king Jareb signifies the great, potent, or magnificent king, for they built much upon his power; others the king that will plead, or should plead, for they built much upon his wisdom and eloquence, and in his interesting himself in their affairs; they had sent him a present, (ch. x. 6.) a good fee, and, having so reta ined him of counsel for them, they doubted not of his fidelity to them, but he deceived them, as an arm of flesh does those that trust in it, Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

2. When, to convince them of their folly, God brought greater judgments upon them, then they would at length be forced to apply themselves to him, v. 15. When he has torn as a lion, (1.) He will leave them; I will go and return to my place, to heaven, or to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace, which is his glory. When God punishes sinners, he will leave them, or let them go out of his place; (Isa. xxvi. 21.) but when he designs the destruction of his enemies, he will not leave them, he will come to them, where he waits to be gracious, upon their submission. Or, he will return to his place, when he has corrected them, as not regarding them, hiding his face from them, and not taking notice of their troubles or prayers; and this, for their further humiliation, till they are qualified in some measure for the returns of his favour; (2.) He will at length work upon them, and bring them to repentance, to bring off their afflictions; which is the thing he waits for; and then he will no longer withdraw from them. Two things are here mentioned as instances of their return; [1.] Their penitent confession of sin; Till they acknowledge their offence, marg. Till they be guilty; till they be sensible of their guilt, and be brought to own it, and humble themselves before God, as by way of submission before their judges. Or, Till they be more of their sins than of their afflictions, then there begins to be some hope of them; and this is that which God requires of us, when we are under his correcting hand, that we own ourselves in a fault, and justly corrected. [2.] Their humble petition for the favour of God; Till they seek my face, which, it may be expected, they will do when they are brought to the last extremity; and they have tried other helpers in vain; In their affliction they will seek me early, diligently and earnestly, and with great importunity; and if they seek him thus, and be sincere in it, though he calls seeking him late, because it was long ere they were brought to it, yet it is not too late, nay, he is pleased to call it seeking him early, so willing is he to make the best of true penitents in their return to him. Note, When we are under the convictions of sin, and the corrections of the rod, our business is to seek God's face, we must desire the knowledge of him, and an acquaintance with him, that he may manifest himself to us, and for us, in toke of his favours to be in receipt with us. And it may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God, that had long gone astray from him, and kept at a distance. Therefore God for a time turns away from us, that he may turn us to himself, and then return to us. Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.

CHAP. VI. The closing words of the foregoing chapter gave us some hopes that God and his Israel, notwithstanding their sins and their world, might yet he happily brought together again; that they would seek him, and he would be found of them: now this chapter carries that matter further, and some join the beginning of this chapter with the end of that, They will seek me early, saying, Come, and let us return. But God did vain complacence in the declining-ness of this people; for though some did repent and reform, the greater part continued obstinate. Observe, I. Their resolution to return to God, and the comforts wherewith the Lord would encourage them to do it, and the assurance he would give them of the acceptance of their return, v. 1. 3. II. The instability of many of them in their professions and promises of repentance, and the severe course which God therefore took with them, v. 4, 5. III. The covenant God made with them, and his expectations from them; (v. 6.) their violation of that covenant, and frustrating of those expectations, v. 7.-11.

1. Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 3. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth. These may be taken either as the words of the prophet to the people, calling them to repentance, as the words of the Lord to his Son, in encouraging and encouraging one another to seek the Lord, and to humble themselves before him, in hopes of finding mercy with him. God had said, In their affliction they will seek me; now the prophet and the good people his friends, would strike while the iron was hot, and set in with the convictions their neighbours seemed to be under. Note, Those who were disposed to seek the Lord, and found the Lord, God should encourage them, should do all they can to excite, and engage, and encourage others to return to him. Observe, I. What it is they engage to do; "Come, and let us return to the Lord, v. 1. Let us go no more to the Assyrian, nor send to king Jareb, we have enough of that, but let us return to the Lord, return to the worship of him from our idolatries, and come to our God for the spiritual breads of the world." Note, It is the great concern of those who have revolted from God, to return to him. And those who have gone from him by consent, and in a body, drawing one another to sin, should by consent, and in a body, return to him, which will be for his glory and their mutual edification. II. What inducements and encouragements to do this they fasten upon, to stir vp one another with.
1. The experience they had of his displeasure; "Let us return to him, for he has torn us, and has smitten; we have been torn, and it was he that tore us; we were burst asunder, and it was he that did it," therefore let us return to him, because it is for our revolts from him, that he has torn and smitten us in anger, and we cannot expect that he should be reconciled to us till we return to him; and for this end he has afflicted us thus, that we might be wrought upon to return to him; and his hand will be stretched out still against us, if the people turn not to him; (v. 1.)

Note, The consideration of the judgments of God upon us and our land, especially when they are fear judgments, should awaken us to return to God by repentance, and prayer, and reformation.

2. The expectation they had of his favour; "He that has torn, will heal us, that has smitten, will bind us up," as the skilful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bone, or bleeding wound. Note, The same providence of God that afflicts his people, relieves them, and the same Spirit of God which convinces the saints, comforts them; that which is first a Spirit of bondage, is afterward a Spirit of adoption. This is an acknowledgment of the power of God; he can heal though we be ever so torn, and of his mercy he will do it; nay, therefore he that has torn, will heal us, and will bind us up. Some think these points particularly to the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when they sought the Lord, and joined themselves to him, in the prospect of his gracious return to them in a way of mercy. Note, It will be of great use to us, both for our support under our afflictions, and for our encouragement in our repentance, to keep up good thoughts of God, and of his purposes and designs concerning us.

Now this favour of God which they are here in expectation of, is described in several instances.

(1.) They promise themselves that their deliverance out of their troubles should be to them as life from the dead; (v. 2.) After two days he will revive us, that is, in a short time, in a day or two, and the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrefy and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, we shall see his face with comfort, and it shall be reviving to us. Though he forsoke for a small moment, he will gather with everlasting kindness. Note, The people of God may not only be torn and smitten, but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so, but rise up, and live, and be gathered and brought together to the place of God's inheritance; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return, and adhere to him. But this seems to have a further reference, to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the time limited is expressed by the two days and the third day, that it may be a type and figure of Christ's rising the third day, which he is said to do according to the scripture, according to the figures foretold of him; from the figures witnessed of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Let us see and admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in ordering the prophet's words so that when he foretold the deliverance of the church out of her troubles, he should at the same time point out our salvation by Christ, which other salvations were both figures and fruits of; and though they may appear to be obscure, yet they are not so, as they are sure it will come at the time appointed, and will not fail; and the light of his countenance will be both welcome to us, and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. He shall come to us, and be welcome to us, as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth, which refreshes it, and makes it fruitful. Now this looks perhaps rather to the morning of the day of rest, yet no doubt, was to have its full accomplishment in Christ, and the grace of the gospel. The Old Testament saints followed on to know him, earnestly looked for redemption in Jerusalem; and, at length, the outgoings of divine grace in him, in his going forth to visit this world, were, [v. 1.] As the morning to this earth when it is dark, for he went forth as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day-spring from on high visited us. His going forth was pre-
poured as the morning, for he came in the fulness of time; John Baptist was his forerunner, nay, he was himself the bright and shining light. Up to the rain to this earth, yea, when it is dry; He shall come down as the rain upon the mean grass, Ps. lxxvi. 6. In him showers of blessings descend upon this world, which give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, Isa. lv. 10. And the favour of God in Christ is, what is said of the king's favour, like the cloud of the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15. The grace of God in Christ is both the latter and the former rain, for by it the good work of our fruit-bearing is both begun and carried on.

4. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. 5. Therefore have I heewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. 6. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings. 7. But they, like men, have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. 8. Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, and is polluted with blood. 9. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness. 10. I have seen a horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. 11. Also, O Judah, he hath set a harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Two things, two evil things, both Judah and Ephraim are here charged with, and justly accused of.

1. That they were not firm to their own convictions, but were unsteady, unstable as water; (v. 4).

5. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? This is a strange expression; Can Infinite Wisdom be at a loss what to do? Can it be perplexed, or put upon taking new measures? By no means; but God speaks after the manner of men, to show how absurd and unreasonable they were, and how just his proceedings against them were. Let them not complain of him as harsh and severe in terrors them, and smiting them, as he has done; for what else should he do? What other course could he take with them? God had tried various methods with them. (What could have been done more to his vineyard than he had done? Isa. v. 4.) and very least he was to let things go to extremity; he reasons with himself, (as ch. xi. 8, 9.) How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? God would have done them good, but they were not qualified for it; "What shall I do unto thee? What else can I do but cast thee off, when I cannot in honor or glory preserve thee?" Note, God, the gracious sovereign, in judging his sinners till he sees there is no other way with them. See here, 1. What their conduct was toward God; Their goodness, or kindness, was as the morning cloud. Some understand it of their kindness to themselves and their own souls, in their repentance; it is indeed mercy to ourselves to repent of our sins, but they too much trusted it. kindness to themselves, would it again, and wronged their own souls as much as ever; but it is rather taken for their piteous and religion; what good appeared in them some times, it soon vanished and disappeared again, as the morning cloud, or the morning dew is but a show or appearance, is not a true and certain blessing; and the goodness of Israel in Jein's time, and of Judah, in Hezekiah's and Josiah's time; it was soon gone. In time of drought, the morning cloud promises rain, and the early dew is some present refreshment to the earth; but the cloud is dispersed, (and hypocrites are compared to clouds without water, Josh. 1.) the dew does not sink into the ground, but is drawn back again into heaven; and therefore the kindness is parched still. What shall he do with them? Shall he accept their goodness? No, for it passes away; and factum non dictur quod non perseverat—That which continues not, can scarcely be said to be done. Note, That goodness never will be either pleasing to God, or profitable to ourselves, which is as the morning cloud, and the early dew. When men promise by kindness, or by promises of sin, and they begin well in religion, and do not hold on, when they leave their first love, and their first works, or, though they do not cast off religion, are yet unsteady, uneven, and inconsistent in it, then is their goodness as the morning cloud and the early dew.

2. What course God had taken with them; (v. 5.) Therefore because they were so rough and ill-treated, God had made them to go barefoot, and let their head or stone is heved for use; I have slain them by the words of my mouth. What the prophets did, was done by the word of God in their mouths, which never returned void. By it they thought themselves slain, were ready to say that the prophets killed them, or cut them to the heart, when they dealt faithfully with them. (1.) The prophets left them by convictions of sin, endeavouring to cut off their transgressions from them. They were uneven in religion, (v. 4.) therefore God heved them. The hearts of sinners are not only as stone, but as rough stone, which requires a great deal of pains to bring it into shape; or as knotty timber, that is not squared without a deal of difficulty; ministers' work is to hevem them, and God by the minister hevem them, for with the forward he will show himself forward. And there are those whom ministers must rebuke sharply; every word should cut, and though the chips fly in the face of the workman, though the reprieved fly in the face of the reprover, and reckon him an enemy because he tells the truth, yet he goes on with his work. (2.) They slew them by the denunciations of wrath, foretelling that they should be slain, as Ezek. xldii. (Tell the city of the destruction of it, Ezek. xliii. 3.) and God accomplished that which was foretold; "I have slain them by my judgments, according to the words of my mouth." Note, The word of God will be the death either of the sin or of the sinner; a savour either of life unto life, or of death unto death. Some read it, "I have heved the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth; I have commanded the sword, the sword for the people's good, which has wasted their strength, they have spent themselves, and hewed away all their spirits, in their work, and in hazardous service which has cost many of them their lives." Note Ministers are the tools which God makes use of in working upon people; and though with many they labour in vain, yet God will recompense the work out of his own heart; and he will not disannul the labour of ministers, but will be pleased with it. (God will hereby justified in the severest proceedings against them afterward. His prophets had taken a deal of pains with them, had admonished them of their sin and warned them of their danger, but the means used had not the desired effect; some good impressions perhaps were made for the present, but they wore off, and passed away as the morning cloud. How then shall I charge God with severity, if he bring upon them the miseries threatened. The prophet turns to him
and acknowledges, Thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth, evidently just and righteous. Note, Though sinners be not exalted by the pains that ministers take with them, yet thereby God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. See Matth. xi. 17.—19.

II. That they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, 6, 7, &c. Where observe,

1. What the covenant was, that God made with them, and upon what terms they should obtain his favour, and be accepted of him; (v. 6.) I desired mercy, and not sacrifice, that is, rather than sacrifice, and insisted upon the knowledge of God, more than upon burnt-offerings. Mercy here is the same word which we rendered goodness, v. 4. these—favour—satisfaction, instead of sacrificial sacrifice, and it is the same with charity in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbour; and this accompanied with, and flowing from, the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in his word, a firm belief that he is, and is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, a good affection to divine things, guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation; this is that which God by his covenant requires, and not sacrifice and offering. This is fully explained, Jer. vii. 22, 23. I take not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings, (that was the smallest of the matters I spake to them of, and on which the least stress was laid,) but this I said, Obey my voice, Mic. vi. 6, 7. To love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt-offerings, and well accepted in the sight of the Lord; Ps. li. 16. Not but that sacrifice and offering were required, and to be paid, and had their use, and when they were accompanied with mercy and the knowledge of God, were acceptable to him, but, without them, God regarded them not, he despised them, Isa. i. 10, 11. Perhaps this is mentioned here, to show a difference between the God whom they deserted and the gods with whom they went over to. The true God aimed at nothing but that they should be good men, and live good lives for their own good, and the ceremony of honouring him with sacrifices was one of the smallest matters of his law; whereas the false Gods required that only; let their priests and altars be regaled with sacrifices and offerings, and the people might live as they list; what fools was it to build up a covenant of such a nature, that his worshippers a new nature, for gods who aimed at nothing but making themselves a new name! It is mentioned likewise to show that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices, (I will not reprove thee for them, Ps. I. 8.) but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God, among them; (ch. iv. 1.) and to teach us all that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful, and, separate from that, the performances of devotion, though ever so plausible, ever so costly, are of no account. Our Saviour quotes this, to show that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals, when they come in competition, and to justify himself in eating with publicans and sinners, because it was in mercy to the souls of men, and in healing on the sabbath-day, because it was in mercy to the bodies of men, to which the ceremony of singularity in eating and the sabbath-rest must give way, Matth. ix. 13.—xii. 7.

2. How little they had regarded this covenant. They had not regarded it in all things, though they, and not God, would be the gainers by it; yet see here what came of it.

(1.) In general they broke with God, and proved unfaithful; there were good things committed to them, to keep the jewels of mercy and piety, and the knowledge of God, in the cabinet of sacrifice and burnt-offering, but they betrayed their trust, kept the cabinet, but pawned the jewels for the gratifications of a base lust, and this is that for which God has justly a quartet with them; (v. 7.) They, like men, have transgressed the covenant, that covenant which God made with them; they have broken the conditions of it, and so forfeited the benefit of it. By casting over and over, and, burnt-offerings of God, and other instances of disobedience, (1.) They had contracted the guilt of perjury and covenant-breaking; they were like men that transgress a covenant by which they had solemnly bound themselves, which is a thing that all the world eres cut shame on; men that have done so, deserve not again to be valued, or trusted, or dealt with; "There, in that thing, they have dealt treacherously, (Ps. xiv. 2.) They have transgressed the covenant like men, like the Gentiles that transgressed the covenant of nature. Like mean men; the word here used is sometimes put for men of low degree, they have dealt deceitfully, like base men that have no sense of honour. (3.) Herein they trod in the steps of our first parents; they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; (so it might be, the words of the apostle to the city of Jerusalem, Rom. iv. 14.) Low thoughts of God and of his authority and favour was at the bottom of all this; for so some read it. They have transgressed the covenant, as of a man, as it had been but the covenant of a man, that stood upon even ground with them; as if the commands of the covenant were but like those of a man like themselves, and the knowledge of God a mere piece of innocency, so they transgressed the covenant of grace; so treacherously, so foolishly; there in paradise he violated his engagements to God, and there in Canaan, another paradise, they violated their engagements. And by their treacherous dealing they, like Adam, have ruined themselves and theirs. Note, Sin is so much the worse, the worse than in the sin of the nine peads of Adam's transgression, Rom. v. 14. [4.] Low thoughts of God and of his authority and favour was at the bottom of all this; for so some read it. They have transgressed the covenant, as of a man, as it had been but the covenant of a man, that stood upon even ground with them; as if the commands of the covenant were but like those of a man like themselves, and the knowledge of God a mere piece of innocency, so they transgressed the covenant of grace; so treacherously, so foolishly; there in paradise he violated his engagements to God, and there in Canaan, another paradise, they violated their engagements. And by their treacherous dealing they, like Adam, have ruined themselves and theirs.

(2.) Some particular instances of their treachery are here given. There they dealt treacherously, in the places hereafter named.

[1.] Look on the other side Jordan to the country which lay more exposed to the insults of the neighbouring nations, and where therefore the people were concerned to keep themselves under the divine protection; yet there you will find the most darting provocations of the Divine Majesty, v. 8. Gilgal, which lay in the lot of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, was a city of the workers of iniquity. Wickedness was the trade that was driven there; by casting over and over, and burnt-offerings of God, but it was all called a city, because they were all as it were incorporated in one society of rebels against God. Or, (as most think) Ramoth Gilgal is the city here meant, one of the three cities of refuge on the other side Jordan, and a Levites' city; the inhabitants of it, though of the sacred tribe, were workers of iniquity, contrived
it, and practised it. Note, It is bad indeed when a Levite's city is a city of those that work iniquity; when those that are to preach good doctrine, live life of evil. It is a great rebuke to them, as if they were a sin which the wicked Levites were in a special manner guilty of. In popish countries the clergy are observed to be the most bloody persecutors. Or, as it was a city of refuge, by abusing the power it had to judge of murders, it became polluted with blood. They would, for a bribe, protect those that were guilty of willful murder, whom they ought to have put to death; and would deliver them, in the name of the avenger of blood, who were guilty but of chance-medley, if they were poor, and had nothing to give them; and both these ways they were polluted with blood. Note, Blood defiles the land where it is shed, and where no inquisition is made, or no vengeance taken for it. See how the best institutions, that are ever so well designed to keep the balance even between justice and mercy, are capable of being abused and perverted to the manifest prejudice and violation of both.

[2.] Look among those whose business it was to minister in holy things; they were as bad as the worst, and as vile as the vilest; (v. 9.) The company of priests are so, not here and there one that is scandal of his order; but the whole order and body of them, the priests go all one way by consent, with one apiece, and all together. They murder those that they think a people, they are a people, and stand in their way; nothing less will satisfy them. Secondly, They were cunning; They laid wait for men, that they might have a fair opportunity to compass their mischievous, malicious designs; thus the company of priests laid wait for Christ, to take him, saying, Not on the feast-day. Thirdly, They were concaving as one man; They murder in the morning, and in the evening, and in the night, and they make one another worse, more daring, and fierce, and impudent, in sin; more crafty, and more cruel. A company of priests will say and do that in conspiracy, which none of them would dare to say or do singly. The companies of priests were as troops of robbers, as banditti, or gangs of highwaymen, that cut men's throats to get their money. First, They were cruel; and bloodthirsty; They murder those that they think a people, they are a people, and stand in their way; nothing less will satisfy them. Secondly, They were cunning; They laid wait for men, that they might have a fair opportunity to compass their mischievous, malicious designs; thus the company of priests laid wait for Christ, to take him, saying, Not on the feast-day. Thirdly, They were concaving as one man; They murder in the morning, and in the evening, and in the night, and they make one another worse, more daring, and fierce, and impudent, in sin; more crafty, and more cruel. A company of priests will say and do that in conspiracy, which none of them would dare to say or do singly. The companies of priests were as troops of robbers, as banditti, or gangs of highwaymen, that cut men's throats to get their money.

When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without. 2. And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. 3. They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. 4. They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough until it be leavened. 5. In the day of our king the princes have made him sick with bottles of wine: he stretched out his hand with scorners. 6. For they have made ready their heart like an oven, while they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. 7. They are hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges: all their kings are fallen; there is none among them that calleth unto me.

Some take away the last words of the foregoing chapter, and make them the beginning of this; "When I returned, or would have returned, the captivity of my people, when I was about to come toward them in ways of mercy, even when I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim, the country and common people, was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria, the court and the chief city.

Now, in these verses, we may observe, I. A general idea given of the present state of
Israel, v. 1, 2. See how the case now stood with them. 
1. God graciously designed to do well for them; he could have healed Israel. Israel were sick and wounded, their disease was dangerously malignant, and likely to be fatal, Isa. i. 6. But God offered to be their Physician, to undertake the cure, and there was balm in Gilead sufficient to recover the health of the daughter of his people; their case was bad, but it was not desperate, say, it was hopeful, when God would have healed them! (1.) They would have recovered their health, and would have been delivered out of the corruption that was among them, by his laws and prophets. (2.) He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and restored to them their peace and prosperity. Several healing attempts were made, and their declining state seemed sometimes to be in a hopeful way of recovery; but their folly put them back again. Note: If sinful, miserable souls be not healed and helped, but perish in their sin and misery, they cannot lay the blame on God, for he both could, and would, have healed them, he offered to take the rain under his hand. And there are some special seasons when God manifests his readiness to heal a distempered church and nation, when now and then a hopeful crisis, which carefully considered, might, even when the case is very bad, turn the scale for life and health. 
2. They stood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door: When God would have healed them, when they bid fair for reformation and peace, then their iniquity was discovered, and their wickedness, and that stopped that current of God's favours, and undid all again. (1.) Then, when their case came to be examined and inquired into, in order to their cure, that wickedness which had been concealed and palliated, was found out; not that it was ever hid from God, but he speaks after the manner of men; as a surgeon, when he probes a wound in order to the cure of it, and finds that it touches the vitals, and is incurable, goes no further in his endeavour to cure it: so, when God came down to see the case of Israel, (as the expression is, Gen. xvii. 21.) with kind intentions toward them, he found their wickedness so very flagrant, and them so hardened in it, so impudent and importunate, that he could not in honour show them the favour he designed them. Note, Sinners are not healed, because they would not be healed; Christ would have gathered them, and they would not. (2.) Then, when some endeavours were used to reform and reclaim them, that wickedness which had been restrained and kept under, broke out; and from God's steps toward the healing of them they took occasion to be so much the more provoking. When endeavours were used to reform them, vice grew more impetuous and mischievous, so much the higher, as a stream when it is dammed up; when they began to prosper, they grew more proud, wanton and secure, and so stopped the progress of their cure. Note, It is sin that turns away good things from us, then when they are coming towards us; and it is the folly and ruin of multitudes, that, when God would do well for them, they do ill for themselves. An obnoxious, and spread the much mischief? In one word, they commit falsehood, they worship idols, (so some,) defraud one another, (so others,) or, rather, they dissolve with God in their professions of repentance, and regard to him. They say that they are desirous to be healed by him, and, in order to that, willing to be ruled by him; but they be hide him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue. 
3. A practical disbelief of God's omniscience and government was at the bottom of all their wickedness; (v. 2.) They consider not in their hearts, they never say it to their own hearts, never think of this. They receive all their wickedness as if God either could not or would not be, though, he is all capable, and did not heed, though his name is Jealous, or had forgotten it, though he is an eternal Mind that can never be unmindful, or would not reckon for it, though he is the Judge of heaven and earth. This is the sinner's atheism; as good say that there is no God, as say that he is either ignorant or forgetful, that there are none that judges in the earth, as say that he remembers not the least event upon it; it is a high affront they put upon God, it is a damning cheat they put upon themselves; they say, The Lord shall not see, Ps. xcv. 7. They cannot but know that God remembers all their works, they have been told it many a time; nay, if you ask them, they cannot but own it, and yet they do not consider it; they do not think if it when they should, and with application to themselves and their own works, else they would not, they durst not, do as they do. But the time will come when those who thus deceive themselves, shall be unbecoming; "Now their own doings have beset them about; they are come at length to such a pitch of wickedness, that their sins appear on every side of them; they sit in the midst of them, and are there under the Lord's hand; and can they think that God does not see it?" Orr, p. 476, The punishment of their doings beset them about, they are surrounded and embarrased with troubles, so that they cannot get out; by which it appears that the sins they smart for are before my face; not only that I have seen them, but that I am displeased at them; for till God by pardoning our sins has cast them behind his back, they are still before his face. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince those who do not now consider it, that he remembers all their works.

4. God had begun to contend with them by his judgments, in earnest of what was further coming; The thief comes in, and the trooph of robbers spoil without. Some take this as an instance of their wickedness, that they robbed and spoiled one another; Nic horses had hospite tus.—The host and the guest stand in fear of each other. It seems rather to be a punishment of their sin; they were infested with secret thieves among themselves, that robbed their houses and shops, and picked their pockets, and troops of robbers, foreign invaders, that with open violence spoil abroad; so far was moral freedom from all possible surety and security, and wounds given them daily by robbers and spoilers. And all this the effect of sin, all to punish them for robbing God, Isa. xliii. 24. Mal. iii. 8, 11. 

II. A particular account of the sins of the court, the kings and princes, and those about them, and the tokens of God's displeasure that they were under for them. 
1. The king and princes were pleased with the wickedness and pravityness of their subjects, who were imbazoned thereby to be so much the more wicked; (v. 3.) They make the king and princes glad with their wickedness. It pleased them to see the people conform to their wicked laws and examples, in the worship of their idols, and other instances of impiety and immorality; and to hear them use one another and abuse God in their professions of repentance, and regard to him. They say that they are desirous to be healed by him, and, in order to that, willing to be ruled by him; but they be hide him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue.

Vol. IV.—5 Y
those about them, who will fill their ears with such stories; Prov. xxxix. 12. If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, and will make him glad with their lies.

2. Drunkenness and reveling abound much at the holiday of the king. (v. 1.) The day of our king was a merry day with them, either his birthday, or his inauguration-day, of which it is probable that they had an anniversary observation; or, perhaps, it was some holiday of his appointing, which was therefore called his day; on that day the princes met to drink the king's health, and got him among them, to be merry, and made him sick with bottles of wine. It should seem that the king did not ordinarily drink to excess, but he was now upon a high day brought to it by the artifices of the princes, tempted by the goodness of the wine, the gaiety of the company, or the healths they urged; and so little was he used to it, that it made him sick; and it is justly charged as a crime, as crimine base majestatis—treason, upon those who thus imposed upon him, and made him sick; nor would it serve for an excuse, that it was the day of their king, but was rather an aggravation of the crime, that when they pretended to do him honour, they dishonoured him to the highest degree. If it is a great affright and injury to a common person to make him drunk, and there is a wo to those that do it, (Hab. ii. 15.) much more to a crowned head; for the greater any man's dignity is, the greater is the crime of the violation of it. Thus it is for kings, O Lenael, it is not for kings, to drink wine, Prov. xxxi. 4, 5. See what a prejudice the sin of drunkenness is to a man, to a king. (1.) In his health; it made him sick; it is a force upon nature; and strange it is by what charms men, otherwise rational enough, can be drawn to that which, beside the offence it gives to God, and the damage it does to their spiritual and eternal welfare, is a present disorder and distress to their own bodies. (2.) In his honour; for, when he was thus intoxicated, he stretched out his hand with scorners; then he that was intrusted with the government of a kingdom, lost the government of himself, and so far forgot. [1.] The dignity of a king, that he made himself familiar with players and buffoons, and those whose company was a scandal. [2.] The duty of a king, that he should have no dealings with scorners and scoffers, the atheists, and the profane scoffers at religion, whom he ought to have silenced, and put to shame; he sat in the seat of the scornful, of those that are arrived at the highest pitch of impiety; he struck in with them, said as they said, did as they did, and exerted his power, and stretched forth the hand of his government, in concurrence with them. Goodness and good men are often made the song of the daughters ofardois; (Ps. lix. 12—xxxvi. 16.) but wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child as to stretch forth his hand with those that make him so, Eccl. x. 16.

3. Adultery and uncleanness prevailed much among the courtiers. This is spoken of, v. 4, 6, 7; and that of drunkenness comes in in the midst of this. But that is to the end, Prov. xxiii. 33. Those that are inflamed with fleshly lusts, that are adulterers, (v. 4.) are here again and again compared to an oven heated by the baker; (v. 4.) They have made ready their heart like an oven, (v. 6.) they are all hot as an oven, v. 7. Note, (1.) An unclean heart is like an oven heated; and the unclean lusts and affections of it are as the fuel that makes it hot. It is an inward fire, it keeps the heat within itself; so adulterers and fornicators secretly burn in lust, as the expression is, Rom. i. 27. The heat of the oven is an intense heat, especially as it is here described; he that heats it, stirs up the fire, and ceases not from raising it up, till the bread is ready to be put in, being kneaded and leavened. (All which only signifies that they are like an oven when it is at the hottest. Nay, when it is too hot for the baker, (so the learned Dr. Pocock,) when it is hotter than he would have it, so that the raiser up of the fire ceases so long as while the dough that is kneaded in the oven rises.) The inordinate lusts of their hearts consist in a kind of latent, unexpressed, anavitated passion; a little fire hot are the lusts of an unclean heart. (2.) The unclean wait for an opportunity to compass their wicked desires; having made ready their heart like an oven, they lie in wait, to catch their prey. The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, Job xxiv. 13. Their baker sleeps all the night, but in the morning it burns as a flaming fire. As the baker, having kindled a fire in his oven, and laid sufficient fuel to it, goes to bed, and sleeps all night, and in the morning finds his oven well heated, and ready for his purpose; so these wicked people, when they have laid some wicked plot, and formed a design for the gratifying of some covetous, ambitious, revengeful, or unclean lusts, have their hearts so fully set in them to do evil, that, though they may stifle them for awhile, yet the fire of corrupt affections is still glowing within, and as soon as ever there is an opportunity for it, their purposes which they have compassed and imagined, break out into overt acts, as a fire flames out when it has vent given it. Thus they are all hot as an oven. Note, Lust in the heart is like fire in an oven, puts it into a heat; but the day is coming when, when their way shall be stretched forth as a fiery oven with their own vile affections, if that fire be not extinguished by divine grace, shall be made as a fiery oven by divine wrath, (Ps. xxi. 9.) when the day comes, that shall burn as an oven, Mal. iv. 1.

4. They resist the proper methods of reformation and redress; They have devoured their judges, these few good judges that were among them, that would have put out their fire with their reformation, and heated, they fell foul upon them, and would not suffer them to do justice, but were ready to stone them, and perhaps did so; or, as some think, they provoked God to deprive them of the blessing of magistracy, and to leave all in confusion; All their kings are fallen one after another, and their families with them; which could not but put the kingdom into confusion. They have devoured their judges, and among a great many other misdeeds, and occasions a great deal of bloodshed; there are heart-burnings among them, they are hot as an oven, with rage and malice at one another, and this occasions the devouring of their judges, the falling of their kings; for the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof; Prov. xxviii. 2. But in the midst of all this trouble and disorder, there is none among them that calls unto God, that sees his hand stretched out against them in these judgments, and deprecates the strokes of it; none, or next to none, that stir up themselves to take hold on God. Isa. lxiv. 7. Note, These are not only heated with sin, but hardened in sin, that continue to live without prayer, even when they are in trouble and distress. (3.) They have devoured their kings, 8. Or, they have devoured their strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. 10. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face; and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this. 11. Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria: 12. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring
them down as the bowls of the heaven; I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard. 13. Wo unto them! for they have fled from me; destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. 14. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. 15. Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. 16. They return, but not to the Most High; they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Having seen how vicious and corrupt the court was, we now come to inquire how it is with the country; and we find that to be no better; no marvel if the distemper that has so seized the head, affect the whole body, so that there is no soundness in it; the iniquity of Ephraim is discovered, as well as the sin of Samaria, of the people as well as the princes, of which here are divers instances.

II. They were not jealous and distrust God, as they should have done. v. 8. They did not distinguish themselves from the heathen, as God had distinguished them; Ephraim, he has mingled himself among the people; has associated with them, and conformed himself to them, and has in a manner confounded himself with them, and lost his character among them. God had said, The people shall dwell alone; but they mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works, Ps. cxii. 3.

They went up and down among the heathen, to beg help of one of them against another; (so some;) whereas, if they had kept close to God, they had not needed the help of any of them. 2. They were not entirely devoted to God; Ephraim is a cake not turned; and is burnt on one side, and dought on the other side, but good for nothing on either side. As in Noah's time, so now, they threw themselves into God and Baal; sometimes they seemed zealous for God, but at other times as hot for Baal. Note, It is sad to think how many, who, after a sort, profess religion, are made up of contraries and inconsistencies, as a cake not turned; a constant self-contradiction, and always in one extreme or the other.

II. They were strangely insensible of the judgments of God, which they were under, and which threatened their ruin, v. 9. Observe, 1. The condition they were in; God was now to them, in his judgments, as a moth and as rottenness; they were silently and slowly drawing toward the ruin of their state; partly by the encroachments of foreigners upon them; Strangers have devoured his strength, and eaten him up; they have wasted his wealth and treasured store, lessened his numbers, and consumed the fruits of the earth. Some devoured them by open wars, (as 2 Kings xiii. 7. when the king of Syria made them like the dust by threshing;) others by pretending treaties of peace and amity, in which they extorted abundance of wealth from them, and made them pay dear for that which did them no good; and then, afterward they paid dearer for; as 2 Kings xvi. 9. This Ephraim got by mingling himself with the heathen, and suffering them to mingle with him; they devoured that which he rested upon, and supported himself with. Note, Those that make not God their Strength, (Ps. iii. 7;) make that their strength, which will soon be devoured by strangers. They were thus reduced, partly, by their own mal-administrations among themselves: Yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, (are sprinkled upon him, so the word is;) the sad symptoms of a decaying, declining state, that is wasting old, and readily to vanish away, and effects of trouble and vexation.

Care turns to joy; The almondy-tree does not as yet flourish, but it begins to turn colour, which speaks aloud to him that the evil days are coming, and the years of which he shall say, I have no pleasure in them, Excl. xii. 1. 2. Their regardlessness of these warnings; He knows it not; he is not aware of the hand of God gone out against him; it is lifted up, but he will not see. Isa. vi. 11. He does not know how near his ruin is, and takes no care to prevent it. Note, Stupidity under lesser judgments is a presage of greater coming.

III. They went on frivolously in their wicked ways, and were not reclaimed by the rebukes they were under; (v. 10.) The pride of Israel still testifies to his face, as it had done before; (ch. v. 3;) under humble and providential visits, they were not humbly, their hearts unumbred; and it is through the pride of their countenance that they will not seek after God; (Ps. x. 4;) they do not return to the Lord their God by repentance and reformation, nor do they seek him by faith and prayer for all this; though they suffer for going astray from him, though it can never be well with them till they come back to him, and though they have in vain sought to others for relief, yet they think not of applying to God.

IV. They were infatuated in their counsels, and took very wrong methods when they were in distress; (v. 11, 12,) Ephraim is like a silly dove without heart. To be harmless as a dove without gall, and not to hurt or injure others, is commendable; but to be sottish as a dove without heart, that knows not how to defend herself, and provide for her own safety, is a shame. The silliness of this dove is, 1. That she lament not the loss of her young that are taken from her, but will make her nest again in the same place; so they have their people carried away by the enemy, and are not affected with it, but continue their dealings with those that deal barborously with them. 2. That she is easily enticed by the devil into that which has been forbidden her; she tarries, to discern her danger, as many other fowls do; (Prov. i. 17,) she hasteth to the shame, and knows not that it is for her life; (Prov. vii. 23,) so they were drawn into leagues with neighbouring nations that were their ruin. 3. That, when she is frightened, she has not courage to stay in the dove-house, where she is safe, and under the careful protection of her own, but flutters and hovers, seeking shelter, first in one place, then in another, and thereby exposes herself so much the more: so this people, when they were in distress, sought not to God, did not fly like the doves to their windows, where they might have been secured from all the birds of prey that struck at them, but threw themselves out of God's protection, and then called to Egypt to help them, and when they went in and out with their hearts not understanding in vain, which they might, by repentance and prayer, have found nearer home, in their God. Note, It is a silly, senseless thing for those who have a God in heaven, to trust to creatures for that refuge and relief that are to be had in him only; and they that do so, are a people of no understanding, they are without heart.
pursued by the justice of God. Here, (1.) They are ensnared; "I will spread my net upon them, bring them into straits, that they may see their folly, and think of returning." Note, It is common for those that go away from God, to find snares there where they expected shelters. (2.) They are humbled; they soar upward, proud of their foreign alliances, their inordinate loves, and wickedness, yet let them down, let them fly ever so high, as the fowls of heaven that are shot flying. Note, God can and will bring those down, that exalt themselves as the eagle, Obad. iii. 4. (3.) They are made to smart for their folly; I will chastise them. Note, The disappointments we meet with in the creature, when we put a confidence in it, are a necessary chastisement inflicted upon us, that we may be saved from another time. (4.) In all this, the scripture is fulfilled; it is as their congregation has heard; they have been many a time told by the word of God, read, and preached, and sung, in their religious assemblies, that vain is the help of man, that in the son of man there is no help; they have heard both from the law and from the prophets what judgments God would bring upon them for their wickedness; and as they have heard, now they shall see, they shall feel. Note, It concerns us to take notice of the word of God, which we hear from time to time in the congregation, and to be governed by it, for we must shortly be judged by it; and it will justify God in the condemnation of sinners, and aggravate it to them, that they have had plain public warning given them of it; it is what their congregation has heard many a time, but they would not take warning. "Son, remember thou wast told what would come of it; and now thou seest they were not vain words." Zech. i. 6.

V. They revoluted from God, and rebelled against him, notwithstanding the various methods he took to retain them in their allegiance, v. 13.—15. Where giver is more, Receiver is more. 1. How kindly and tenderly God had dealt with them, as a gracious Sovereign towards a people dear unto him, and whose prosperity he had much at heart. He had redeemed them; (v. 13.) brought them, at first, out of the land of Egypt, and, since, delivered them out of many a distress. He had bound and strengthened their arms; (v. 15.) when they were thus bound, as it were, he had, like an arm bound, out of joint, God set it again, and bound it, as the surgeon does a broken bone, to make it knit. God had given Israel victories over the Syrians, (2 Kings xiii. 16, 17.) had restored their coasts, (2 Kings xiv. 25, 26.) had girded them with strength for battle. Though I have chastened them, (so the margin reads it,) sometimes corrected them for their faults, and thereby taught them, at other times strengthen'd their arms, and relieved them, though I have used both fair means and foul to work upon them, it was all to no purpose, they were mercy-proof and judgment-proof.

2. How impudently their conduct had been toward him, notwithstanding; which is described here for the conviction and humiliation of all those who have gone on in any way of wickedness, that they may see how exceeding sinful their sin is, how heinous, how the God of heaven interprets it, how he resolves it. (1.) He had courted them to him, and taken them into covenant with himself; but they fled from him, as it he had been their dangerous Enemy, who had always approved himself their faithful Friend. They wand'red from him as the silly dove from her nest; for those who forsake God, will find no rest or settlement in the creature, but wander endlessly. They fled from God when they forsake the worship of him, and ran away from his service, and withdrew themselves from their allegiance to him. (2.) He had given them his laws, which were all holy, just, and good, by which he designed to keep them in the right way; but they transgressed against him, they sinned with a high hand, and a stiff neck, wilfully and presumptuously; (so the word signifies;) they broke through the tenes of the divine law, and therein thwarted the design of the divine love. (3.) He had made known his truths to them, and given them his word; they could not but be constrained to hear and Obey him; (as his word then was, so it was to them;) but yet they spake lies against him, and set up false gods in competition with him, they denied his providence and power; thus they belied the Lord, (Jer. v. 12.) they rejected his messages sent them by his prophets, and said that they should have peace, though they went on in sin, directly against what he said. In their hypocritical conduct, and presumption of devotion, and promises of amendment, they lied to the Lord, which he took as lying against him. (4.) He was their righteous Lord and King, and had always ruled in Jacob with equity, and for the public good; and yet they rebelled against him, v. 14. They not only went off from him, but took up arms against him; would have deposed him if they could, and set up another. (5.) He designed well for them, but they imagined mischief against him, v. 15. Sin is a mischievous thing, it is mischief against God, for it is treason against his crown and dignity; not that the sinners can do anything to hurt their Creator, (as one of the ancients observes on these words,) but what they can do; and it is so much the worse when it is not done by surprise, or through inadvertency, but designedly, and with contrivance. The Jews have a saying, which Dr. Pococke quotes here, "The thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression." The designing of mischief is doing it, in God's account; compassing and imagining the death of the king is treason by our law. They that imagine an evil thing, though it prove a vain thing, (Ps. ii. 1.) will be reckoned with for the imagination.

3. How they shall be punished for this; (v. 13.) We unto them! for they have fled from me. Note, Those who fly from God, have woes sent after them, and are, without doubt, in a woeful case. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them, the word of God saith, We to them! And observe what follows immediately, Destruction unto them! The woes of God's word have real effects. The Jews have a saying, which Dr. Pococke quotes here, "The thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression." The designing of mischief is doing it, in God's account; compassing and imagining the death of the king is treason by our law. They that imagine an evil thing, though it prove a vain thing, (Ps. ii. 1.) will be reckoned with for the imagination.

VI. Their shows of devotion and reformation were but shows, and in them they did but mock God.

1. They pretended devotion, but it was not sincere, v. 14. When the hand of God was gone forth against them, they made some sort of application to him. When he slew them, then they sought him. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; but it was all in hypocrisy. (1.) When they were under personal troubles, and called upon God in secret, they were not sincere in that; They have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds. When they were chastened with pain upon their beds, and the multitude of their bones with strong pains, perhaps ill of the wounds they received in war, they cried, and groaned, and complained, in the forms of devotion, and it, may be, they used many good words, proper enough for the circumstances they were in, they cried, God help us, and, Lord, look upon us; but they did not cry with their heart, and therefore God reckons it was no crying to him. Moses is said to cry unto God, when he spake not a word, only his heart prayed, with faith and fervency, Exod. xiv. 15. These made a great noise, and said a deal, and yet did not
cry to God, because their hearts were not right with him, not subjected to his will, devoted to his honour, or employed in his service. To pray is to lift up the soul to God, this is the essence of prayer; if that be not, words, though ever so well worded, are but wind; and if there be that, it is an acceptable prayer, though the grounds cannot be uttered. Note, to God, and not to men, is the true prayer in the spirit. Nay, God is so far from approving it, and accepting of it, that he calls it howling; some think it intimates the noisiness of their prayers, (they cried to God, as they used to cry to Baal when they thought he must be awakened,) or the bruitish, violent passions which they vented in their prayers; they startled at the stone, and howled under the wind, but they would not have the ground of their notes, that their hypocritical prayers were so far from pleasing God, that they were offensive to him; he was angry at their prayers; the songs of the temple shall be howlings, Amos vii. 3. God will be so far from pitying them, that he will justly laugh at their calamity, who have so often laughed at his authority. (2.) When they were under public troubles, and met together to implore God's favour, in that also they were hypocritically; they assembled themselves, for fashion's sake, because it was usual to call a solemn assembly in times of general mourning, Zeph. ii. 1. But it was only to pray for corn and wine that they came together, which was the thing they wanted, and feared being deprived of by the want of rain, the judgment they now laboured under. They pretended repentance, but no favour and grace of God, that God would give them repentance, pardon their sins, and turn away his wrath, but only that he would not take away from them their corn and wine. Note, Carnal hearts, in their prayers to God, covet temporal mercies only, and dread and deprecate no other but temporal judgments, for they have no sense of any other.

(1.) The sin of Israel. They return, they make show as if they would return, they take on them to repent and amend their doings, but they make nothing of it; they do not come home to God, nor turn to their allegiance; whereas God says, (Jer. iv. 1.) If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to me; do not only turn toward me, but return to me. This is dissimulation. This makes them like a deceitful bow, which looks as if it were fit for business, and is bent and drawn accordingly; but when strength comes to be laid to it, either the bow or string breaks, and the arrow, instead of flying to the mark, drops at the archer's foot. Such were their essays toward repentance and reformation. (2.) The sin of the princes of Israel; that which is charged upon them, is the rage of their tongue, quarrelling with God and his providence, and with all about them, when they are crossed. Princes think they may say what they will, and that it is their prerogative to huff and bluster, to curse and rail, and call names at their pleasure, but let them know there is a God above them that will call them to an account for the rage of their tongues, and make their own tongues to fall upon them. (3.) The punishment of Israel and their princes for their sin. As for the princes, they shall fall by the sword, either of their enemies, or of their own people, some by one, and some by the other; and this shall be their derision, this is that for which they shall be derided in the land of Egypt, when they flee to the Egyptians for succour, v. 11. Their sin and punishment shall make them a laughing-stock to all about them. Note, Those that are treacherous and deceitful in their dealings with God, and passionate and outrageous in their carriage towards men, will justly be made a derision to their neighbours, for they make themselves ridiculous.

**CHAP. VIII.**

This chapter, as that before, divides itself into the sins and punishments of the people; every sin has its burden and all to bring them to repentance. When they saw the malignant nature of their sin, in the descriptions of that, they could not but be convinced how much it was their duty to repent of it; and when they saw the miserable consequences of their sin, in the predictions of them, they could not but see how much it was their interest to repent for the preventing of them. 1. The sin of Israel is here set forth, v. 1. In many general expressions, v. 1, 3, 12, 14. 2. In many particular instances; setting up kings without God, (v. 4.) setting up idols against God, (v. 4, 6, 11,) and courting alliances; setting up estates for them, v. 1, 10. 3. In this aggravation of it, that they still kept up a profession of religion, and relation to God, v. 2, 13, 14. II. The punishment of Israel is here set forth as answering the sin. God's blast by setting an enemy upon them, v. 1, 3. All their projects shall be blasted, v. 7. Their conquests both in their idols and in their foreign alliances should disappoint them, v. 6, 8, 10. Their strength at home should fail them, v. 14. Their sacrifices should have no recompence made of them, and their sins should have a reckoning made for them, v. 13.

1. Set the trumpet to thy mouth: he shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. 2. Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. 3. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. 4. They have set up kings, but not by me; they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. 5. Thy call, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them; how long will it be ere they attain to innocency! 6. For from Israel was it also: the workman made it; therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. 7. For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk; the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

The reproaches and threatenings here are introduced with an order to the prophet to set the trumpet to his mouth, (v. 1,) thus to call a solemn assembly, that all might take notice of what he had to deliver, and take warning by it. He must sound an alarm, must in God's name proclaim war with this rebellious nation; an enemy is coming with speed and fury to seize their land, and he must awaken them to expect it. Thus the prophet must do the part of a watchman, that was by sound of trumpet to call the besieged to stand to their arms, when he saw the besiegers making their attack, Ezek. xxxiii. 3. The prophet might lift up his voice like a trumpet, (Isa. lviii. 1.) and the people must hearken to the sound of the trumpet, Jer. vi. 17.

Now, 1. Here is a general charge drawn up against them as sinners, as rebels and traitors against their sovereign Lord. 1. They have transgressed my covenant, v. 1. They have not only transgressed the command, (every sin does that,) but they have transgressed the covenant, they have been guilty of such sins as break the original contract, they have revolted from their allegiance, and violated the marriage-covenant by their spiritual whoredom;
HOSEA, VIII.

they have, in effect, declared that they will be no longer God's people, nor take him for their God, that is transgressing the covenant; they have not only done foolishly, but have dealt deceitfully. 2. They have trespassed against my law, in many particular instances. God's law is the rule by which we are to walk; and this is the malignity of sin, that it trespasses upon the bounds set by that law. 5. They have cast off many of my covenants. They have cast away and rejected God; God himself; so some understand it, and very fitly. He is good, and does good, and is our Goodness. There is none good but one, that is God, the Fountain of all good. They have cast him off, as not desiring to have any thing more to do with him; God was abandoning them to ruin, and here gives the reason for it. Note, God never casts off any of his people: they first cast him off. Or, as we read it, They have cast off the thing that is good, they have cast off the service and worship of God, which is, in effect, casting God off. They have cast off that which denominates men good; they have cast off the fear of God, and the regard of man, and all sense of virtue and honesty. Observe; They have transgressed my covenant, it is here said; they have cast off many of my covenants. The covenants of God's law, breaking the command, and made way for breaking the covenant; and they did that, for they cast off that which was good; there it began first. They left off to be wise, and to do good, and then they went all to naught. Ps. xxxiii. 3. See the method of apostasy; men first cast off that which is good; then those omissions make way for making more and more. Note, God will not be wronged by a long time; he will not be the greater master of the temple, but he will not be left out of any bargain of the temple: but if we make it to point at the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, we must reckon it is the body of that people, which, as Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption, the glory, and the covenants, is here called the house of the Lord. They thought their being so would be their protection; but the prophet is bid to tell them what now they had lost the life and spirit of their religion, though they still retained the name and form of it; they were but as a carcass to which the eagles and other birds of prey should be gathered together. The enemy shall pursue them as an eagle, so swiftly, so strongly, so furiously. Note, Those who break their covenant of friendship with God, expose themselves to the enmity of all about them, to whom they have lost the life and spirit of their religion; and their having been the house of the Lord, and his living temples, will be no excuse or refuge to them.

See Amos iii. 2.

III. Here is the people's hypocritical claim of relation to God, when they were in trouble and distress; (v. 2.) Israel shall cry unto me; when they cried, they were threatened with these judgments, and would plead their past compliance. Those who give themselves to God, and their judgments are inflicted on them, and they apply themselves to God for relief, pouring out a prayer, when God's chastening is upon them, they will plead that among them God is known, and his name is great, (Ps. lxxvi. 1.) and in their distress will pretend to that knowledge of God's ways, which in their prosperity they desired not, but despised. They will then cry unto God, will call him their God, and (as impudent beggars) will tell him they are well acquainted with him, and have known him many years. Note, There are people who walk deny God, and, when they are in trouble, yet, to serve a turn, will profess that they know him, that they know more of him than some of their neighbours do. But what stand will it stand a man in to be able to say, My God, I know thee, when he cannot say, "My God, I love thee, and my God, I serve thee, and cleave to thee only." V. Here is the prophet's expostulation with them, in God's name; (v. 3.) How long will it be ere they attain to innocency? It is not meant of absolute innocency; (that is what the guilty cannot never attain to;) but how long will it be ere they repent and reform; ere they become innocent in this matter, and free from the sin of idolatry? They are wedded to their idols; how long will it be ere they are weaned from them, ere they are able to get clear of them? VII. Here is the prophet's conclusion. This intimated that custom in sin makes it very difficult for men to part with it. It is hard to cleanse from that filthiness either of flesh or spirit, which has been long wallowed in. But God speaks as if he thought the time long till sinners cast away their iniquities, and come to live a new life. He complains of their obstinacy; that is it that keeps his anger against them burning, with which, if they did but attain to innocency from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, How long will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy; but they do not hear him ask, How long will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty? V. Here are some particular sins which they are charged with, are convicted of the folly of, and warned of the fatal consequences of; away if they did but attain to innocency from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, How long will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy; but they do not hear him ask, How long will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty? 1. In their civil affairs; they set up kings without God, and in contempt of him, v. 4. So they did when they rejected Samuel, in whom the Lord was their King, and chose Saul, that they might be like the nations; so they did when they revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, and set up other kings, and despised God, yet they neither aimed at his glory, nor consulted his oracle, nor applied themselves to him by prayer for direction, nor had any regard to his providence, but were led by their own humour, and hurried on by the impetuosity of their own passions; so they did now about the time when Hosea prophesied; when it seems to have grown fashionable to set up kings, and despise them again, as long as the contenders for the crown could make an interest, 2 Kings xvi. 8, &c. Note, We cannot expect comfort and success in our affairs, when we go about them, and go on in them, without consulting God, and acknowledge him in all our ways; "They set up kings, and I knew it not; I did not know it from them, they did not ask counsel at my mouth, whether kings and princes should rise up, or whether at all be best for them to do it, though they had prophets and oracles with whom they might have advised." They look not to the Holy One of Israel, Isa. xxxii. 1. Nor did the princes do as Jephthah, who, before he took upon him the government, uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Judges xi. 11. Note, Those that are entered into with public consciences, and yoked therewith by the election of magistrates, ought to take God along with them therein, by desiring his direction, and designing his honour.

2. In their religious matters they did much worse;
for they set up calves against God, in competition with him, and contradiction to him. Of their silver and their gold which God gave them, and multiplied to them, that they might serve and honour him with it, they have made them idols; they called them gods, I Kings xii. 28. Behold this god, but God calls them idols; the word signifies griefs, or troubles, because they are offensive to God, and will be ruining to those that worship them; Their silver and their gold they have made to them idols; so the words are, referring primarily to the images of their gods, which they made of gold and silver, especially the golden calves at Dede, O Bethel. Idolaters spare no cost in worshipping their idols. But they are very applicable to the spiritual idolatry of the covetous; Their silver and their gold are the gods they place their happiness in, set their hearts upon, to which they pay their homage, and in which they put their confidence.

Now, to show them the folly of their idolatry, he tells them,

(1.) Whence their gods came. Trace them to their original, and you will find the creatures of their own fancies, and the work of their own hands, vi. 6. The calf they worshipped is here called the calf of Samaria, because it is probable that, when Samaria, in Ahaz’s time, became the most famous city, one of the calves was set up in the temple to be near the court, besides those at Dan and Bethel, or perhaps one of those was removed thither; for those that are for new gods, will still be for newer. Now let them consider what this god of theirs owed its rise and being to. [1.] To their own invention and institution; From Israel it was also. Not from the God of Israel, (be expressly forsworn of Israel,) but from them; it was a device of their own, some think, not borrowed from any of their neighbours, no, not from the Egyptians; for though they worshipped Apis in a living cow, they never worshipped a golden calf; that was from Israel, it was their own iniquity. Now could that be worthy of their worship, which was a contrivance of their own? It was from Israel; the gold and silver of which it was made, were collected from the people of Israel by a bribe; it was a poor god that was framed by contribution. [2.] It was owing to skill and labour of the craftsmen, Deut. xxviii. 15. ‘The workmen made it, therefore it is not God.’

This is a very cogent, conclusive argument, and the inference so very plain, that one would think their own conscience would have suggested it to them, so as to make them ashamed of their sin; and there could be more absurd than for men to worship that as a god, giving being and good to them, which they themselves gave being to, (both matter and form,) but could not give life to? A made god is no God. This is a self-evident truth; yet and St. Paul was accused as criminal for preaching that they be no gods, nor any altar, Acts xix. 27. And this which should have turned them from their idols, comes in as a reason why they were insensibly or perspicuously made to them; therefore they could not attain to innocence, because it was from themselves; they were willing to have gods of their own to do what they pleased with, that they themselves might do as they listed.

(2.) What their gods would come to. If they are not gods, they will not last; nay, if they pretend to be gods, they will be reckoned with; The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces, and those that would not yield to the force of the former argument shall be convinced by this, that it is not God, but an unprofitable idol, as the Chaldee calls it. It shall be broken to shivers, like a potter’s vessel, though it be a golden calf. It shall be chibs or saw-dust, it shall be a spider’s web. So St. Jerome. It seems to allude to Moses’s grinding the golden calf to powder that was in his time. This shall be served as that was; Sennacherib boasted what he had done to Samaria and her idols, Isa. x. 11. Note, Defiling any creature makes way for the destruction of it. If they had made vessels of silver and gold, they might have retained; but if they make gods of them, they shall be broken to pieces.

(3.) What their gods would bring to. The breaking of them to pieces would be a disappointment to those who trusted in them. But that was not all; They have made themselves idols, that they may be cut off; (so the Chaldee,) and that their gold and silver, which they so abused, may be cut off, (so some take it,) may, that they may themselves be cut off from God, from their own land, from the land of the living. Their idolatry will as certainly end in their extirpation as if they had purposely designed it. And when this proves to be the effect of their sin, what relief will they have from the gods wherein they trusted? None at all; ‘Thy calf, O Samaria, has cast thee off; it cannot give thee any help in thy distress, and the pleasure thou now takest in it will vanish, and be no pleasure to thee.’ Those that were justly sent to gods whom they had chosen, found them miserable comforters, Judg. x. 14. If men will not quit the love and service of sin, yet they shall certainly lose the delights and pleasure of it. If Samaria had continued firmly and faithfully to the God of Israel, he would have been a present, powerful Help to her; but the calf she preferred before him, was a broken reed. The case will be the same with those that make their silver and their gold their god. It will cast them off, and not profit them in the day of wrath, Ezek. xii. 12. Note, Those that suffer themselves to be engrossed with idols and idolatrous services, will certainly find themselves deceived in them. Cardinal Wesley owned that if he had served his God as faithfully as he had served his prince, he would not have cast him off, as his prince did, in his old age.

Their disappointment in their idols is illustrated (v. 7,) by a similitude which speaks both that, and the destruction which God brought upon them for their idolatry. [1.] They got no good to themselves by worshipping idols; They have sown the wind. They have put themselves to a great deal of trouble and expense, to make and worship their idols, have made a business of it as much as the husbandman does of sowing his corn, in expectation of reaping some mighty advantage from it, and that they should be as prosperous and victorious as the neighbour who sowed his corn was very. But it is all a cheat; it is like sowing the wind, which can yield no increase; they labour in vain, labour for the wind, Eecl. v. 16. They take great pains to no purpose, and weary themselves for very vanity, Hab. ii. 13. They that make an idol of this world, do so; they set their eyes on that which is fair and pleasing, the winds, as if it would make a great noise, but has nothing substantial in it, it will not only be a great contrivance to ruin upon themselves by it; They shall reap the whirlwind, a great whirlwind, (so the word signifies,) which shall hurry them away, and dash them to pieces. They not only have not their false gods for them, but they set the true God against them; their favour will stand in no more stead than the whirlwind’s; but the whirlwind has more mischief than a whirlwind. As a man sows, so shall he reap. ‘If it may be supposed that a man should sow the wind, and cover it with earth, or keep it there for awhile penned up, what could he expect but that it should be enforced by its being shut up, and the accession of what might increase its strength to do further gain in greater quantities with greater violence?’ So Dr. Pocock. They promise themselves plenty, peace, and victory, by
worshipping idols, but their expectations come to nothing; what they sow never comes up; it has no stalk, no blade, or, if it have, the bud shall yield no meal, it shall be as the thin ears in Pharaoh's dream, that were blasted with the east wind; and there was nothing in them; or, if it yield, if they do prosper for a little while, they shall be as the stubble course; the strangers shall swallow it up, it shall be so far from doing them any service, that it shall be as but a bait to invite stringers to invade them, and as a spoil to enrich those strangers, and enable them to do so much the more mischief.

Note, The service of idols is an unprofitable service, and the works of darkness unfruitful; may this be a warning to the perseverance (Rom. vi. 21), the end of those things is death. That they sow iniquity, reap vanity: may the day, that sow to the flesh, reap corruption: the hopes of sinners will be cheats, and their gains will be snares.

3. Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. 9. For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers.

10. Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes. 11. Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. 12. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing. 13. They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the Lord accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt. 14. For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

It was the honour and happiness of Israel, that they had but one God to trust to, and he all-sufficient, in every strait; but one God to serve, and he well worthy of all their devotions; but it was their sin, and folly, and shame, that they knew not when they were well off; that they forsook their own mercies for kings' vanities; for,

I. They multiplied their alliances; (v. 9.) They have hired lovers, or, as the margin reads, They have hired loves. They were at great expense to purchase the friendship of the nations about them, that otherwise had no value or affection at all for them, nor cared for having any thing to do with them, but only upon the Shechemites' principles: Shall not the cattle and their substance be ours? Gen. xxxiv. 23. Had Israel maintained the honour of their peculiarity, the nations about would have continued to admire them as a wise and understanding people; but when they profaned their own crown, their neighbours despised them, and they had no interest in them further than they paid dear for it. But those surely have behaved ill among their neighbours, who have no loves, no lovers, but what they hire. See here,

1. The contempt that Israel lay under among the nations; (v. 8.) Israel is swallowed up, devoured by strangers, their land eaten up, (v. 7.) and themselves too, and being impoverished, they have quite lost their credit and reputation, like a merchant that is become a bankrupt, so that they are among, the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure, a vessel of dishonour, (2 Tim. ii. 20.) a despised, broken vessel, Jer. xxii. 28. None of their neighbours had any value for them, nor care to have any thing to do with them. Note, Those that have professed religion, if they degenerate, and grow profane, are of all men the most contemptible; if the salt have lost its savour, it is fit for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men. Or, it denotes their desision and captivity among the Gentiles; they shall be among them poor and prisoners; and who has pleasure in such?

The time is come that Israel made to the nations notwithstanding; (v. 9.) They are gone to Assuria, to engage the king of Assyria to help them; and herein they are as a wild ass alone by himself; foolish, headstrong, and unrruly, they will have their way, and nothing shall hold them in, no, not the bridle of God's laws, nothing shall turn them back, no, not the sword of God's wrath. They take a course by themselves, and the effect will be that, like a wild ass by himself, they will be the easier and surer prey to the lion. See Job xi. 12. Jer. ii. 24. Note, Man is in nothing more like the wild ass's colt than in seeking for that succour and that satisfaction in the creature that are to be had in God only.

3. The crosses that they were likely to meet with in their alliances with the neighbouring nations; (v. 10.) Though they have hired among the nations, and hoped that it might be to profit them, now will I gather them, as the sheaves in the floor, Mic. iv. 12. So that what they provided for their own safety, shall but make them the easier prey to their enemies. Note, There is no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission; nay, that which men hire for their own preservation, often contributes to their own destruction. Isa. viii. 7. The king of Assyria, whose people they courted, called himself a king of princes, Isa. x. 8. Are not my princes altogether kings? He laid burdens upon Israel, levied taxes upon them. 2 Kings xv. 29. And for these they shall sorrow a little; this shall be but a little burthen to them, in comparison of what they may further expect; or, they will be but little sensible of this grievance, will bear it with patience, and therefore expect heavier judgments. They have begun to be diminished (so some read it) by the burden of the king of princes: but this is only the beginning of sorrows, (Matt. xxiv. 8.) the beginning of revenges, Deut. xxxii. 42. Note, God often comes gradually with his judgments upon a provoking people; that he may show how slow he is to wrath, and may awaken them to repentance; but that they are made to sorrow a little, if they are not thereby brought to sorrow after a godly sort, will another day be made to sorrow a great deal, to sorrow everlasting.

11. They multiplied their altars and temples. Observe, 1. How they denied the power of godliness, and willingly cast that off; (v. 12.) I have written to him the great things of my law; that speaks the privilege they enjoyed, as having God's statutes and judgments made known to them, and being intrusted with the lively oracles. Note, (1.) The things of God's law are magnalia Dei— the great things of God. They are things that speak the greatness of the Law-Maker, and the importance of and great welfare depends upon our observance of them, and obedience to them; they will make us great if we make a right use of them; and they are things which God will magnify and make honourable. (2.) It is a great privilege to have the things of God's law written; thus they are reduced to a greater ce
tahat, spread the further, and last the longer, with much less danger of being embezzled and corrupted than if they were transmitted by word of mouth only. (3.) The things of God's law are of his own writing; for Moses and the prophets were his amanuenses, and holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (4.) It is the advantage of those that are members of the visible church, that these great things are written to them, are intended for their direction, and so they must receive them; what things were written in former ages were written for our learning, and are profitable for us. And if they were happy, who had the great things of God's law written to them, how much happier are we, who have the gospel written to us! But see how this privilege was slighted; these great things of the law were counted as a strange thing, as unintelligible and unreasonable, which might therefore be slighted, because not to be fathomed, not to be accounted for; or, as foreign, and things of no concernment to them; things that they had nothing to do with, nor were to be governed by; they used those things as strangles, which they were shy of, and knew not how to bid welcome; We desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Note, [1.] God having written us the great things of his law, we ought to make them familiar to us, as our nearest relations; (Prov. vii. 3, 4.) for, therefore we have them written, that they may talk with us. [2.] There is a vast difference between the things of God's law, if we make strange of them, as if they did not affect us, and therefore we need not be affected with them.

2. How they kept up the form of godliness, notwithstanding, and to what little purpose they did so.

(1.) They multiplied their altars; (v. 11.) Ephraim made many altars to sin. God appointed that there should be but one altar in Israel, (Deut. xii. 5.) but the ten tribes, having forsaken that, would still be thought very devout, and zealous for the honour of God, and, as if they would make amends for the affront they put on God's altar, they made many altars, dedicated to the God of Israel, whom hereby they intended, or, at least, pretended, to give glory to; but that would not justify their violation of God's righteous law, and affront both to God and to his people. The example of the patriarchs, who before the law of Moses had many altars. No, they made many altars to sin; they did that which turned into sin to them; and therefore these altars shall be into him to sin; God will charge it upon them as a heinous sin, and put that upon the score of their crimes, which they charged upon God. What are their crimes! Or, they shall be to him an occasion of further sin. Their multiplying of altars dedicated to the God of Israel, would introduce altars dedicated to other gods. Note, It is a great sin to corrupt the worship of God, and it will be charged as sin upon them that do it, how plausible soever their pretensions may be. And the way of this, as other sins, is downward; it being an humbleness of heart under the fixed rule of God's commands, will wander endlessly.

(2.) They multiplied their sacrifices, v. 13. Their altars were smoking altars, and they sacrificed flesh for the sacrifices of God's offerings, and they celebrated their feasts upon their sacrifices; they were at a great expense upon their devotions, and (as those commonly are, who set up their own inventions in the room of divine institutions) were very zealous in their way; as if they hoped by their impositions on themselves to atone for the contempt of the great atonement, and by their observing a ceremonial law of their own to excuse themselves from the obligation of all God's moral precepts. But how does it speed? [I.] God makes no reckoning of their services; The Lord accepts them not. How should he, when they did not offer their sacrifice upon that altar which alone sanctified that gift, and when they only sacrificed flesh, but not the spiritual sacrifice of a penitent, believing heart? Note, Those services only are acceptable to God, which are performed according to the rule of his word, and through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 2. [2.] He takes that occasion to reckon with them for their sins, how now will he, instead of pardoning their iniquity, and blotting out their sins, as they expected, remember their iniquity, and visit their sins; such an abomination to the Lord are the sacrifices of the wicked, that they provoke him to call them to an account for all their other abominations; when they think by their sacrifices to bribe the Judge of heaven and earth into a concurrence at their way, they represent that as the highest affront they can put upon him, and it shall be the measure-filling sin. Note, A petition for leave to sin amounts to an impredication of the curse for sin, and so it shall be answered, according to the multitude of the idols, I will punish their sins; for they shall return to Egypt, they shall be carried captive into Assyria, which shall be to them a house of bondage, as Egypt was to their fathers. Or it refers to Deut. xxxii. 68, where returning to Egypt is made to close and complete the miseries of that sinful nation.

(3.) They multiplied their temples; and these also in honour of the true God, as they pretended, but really in contempt of the choice he had made of Jerusalem as his metropolis. In whom has forgotten his Maker, v. 14. They pretended to have forgotten him, and yet forgot him, for they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, when the remembrance of him would give check to their lusts: it was an aggravation of their sin in forgetting God, that he was their Maker, (Deut. xxxiii. 13, 18. Job xxxvi. 10.) as nothing obliges us more to remember him than that we are his children. [1.] He has forgotten his Maker, and builds temples; he seems by the temples he builds to be mindful of his Maker, and to be desirous still to keep him in mind, and yet really he has forgotten him, because he has cast off the fear of him. Some by temples here understand palaces, for so the word sometimes signifies. He has forgotten his Maker, and yet is so secure and easy that he doth not think himself in any danger, as Nebuchadnezzar did, when he said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built? Judah is likewise charged with multiplying fenced cities, and trusting in them for safety, when the judgments of God were abroad. To fortify their cities in subjection and subordination to God, was well enough; but to fortify them in opposition to God, and without any regard to him or his providence, (Isa. xxv. 11.) shows their hearts to be desperately hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. But none ever hardened his heart against God, and prospered; nor shall they; God will send a fire upon his cities, upon the cities both of Judah and Israel, not only the head cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, but all the other cities of these two kingdoms, and it shall devoure the city of Assyria, and all the towns thereof; though ever so strong, the fire shall master them; though ever so stately and sumptuous, the fire shall not spare them. This was fulfilled when all the cities of Israel were laid in ashes by the king of Assyria, and all the cities of Judah. The fires they both kindled, were of his sending; and when he judges, he will overcome.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter, I. God threatens to deprive this degenerate seed of Israel of all their worldly enjoyments, because by sin they have so offended him; so little to them, so that they should have no comfort either from the gifts of nature or themselves, or in offering them to God, v. 1-5. II. He dooms them to utter ruin, for their own sins, and the sins of their prophets, v. 6-8. III. He upbraids them
with the wickedness of their fathers before them, whose steps they trod in, v. 9, 10. IV. He threatens them with the destruction of their children, and the rooting out of their posterity, v. 11, 17.

1. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God; thou hast loved a reward upon every corn-floor. 2. The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. 3. They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. 4. They shall not offer wine-offerings to the Lord; neither shall they please unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord. 5. What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord? 6. For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

Here.

I. The people of Israel are charged with spiritual adultery; O Israel, thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, v. 1. Their covenant with God was a marriage-covenant, by which they were joined to him as their God, renouncing all others. But when they set up idols and worshipped them, when they fled to creatures for succour, and put a confidence in them, they went a whoring from God, as their God, and honoured the pretended and rivals with the affection, adoration, and confidence which were due to God only. Other people were idolaters, but that sin was not in them, going a whoring from God, as it was in Israel that had been married to him. Note, The sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God, are more provoking to him than the sins of others. As a proof of the going a whoring from God, he charges upon them that they loved a reward upon every corn-floor: 1. They loved to give rewards to their idols, in the offerings and first-fruits they presented to them out of every corn-floor. They took a strange pleasure in serving their idols with that which they would have grudged to consecrate to God, and employ in his service. Note, It is common for those that are niggardly in the expenditure of their substance, to be very prodigal in spending upon their lusts. Or, 2. They loved to receive rewards from their idols; and such they reckoned the fruits of the earth to be; These are my rewards, which my lovers have given me, ch. ii. 12. Note, These are directly disposed to spiritual idolatry, that love a reward in the corn-floor better than a reward in the favour of God and eternal life. Note, They are forbidden to rejoice as other people do; Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy. Do not expect to rejoice; What peace, what joy, what hast thou to do with either, while thy whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many? 2 Kings ix. 19, 22. Be not disposed to rejoice, for it does not become thee, but rather to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, Jer. iv. 9. Judah, that keeps close to the true God, may, and other people, that never knew him, nor could ever be charged with revolting from him, may be allowed to rejoice, as not having so much cause to be ashamed as Israel has, that has gone a whoring from him. Some think that they had at this time, particular occasions for joy, upon the account either: of some losses recovered, or some advantages gained, or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had public rejoicings, as other people used to have upon such occasions; but God sends to them now a call to not rejoice, Joah. When they are at peace, they are to be affected, and mourn, and weep.

II. The Lords land.

1. What it was which they rejoiced in, would be no security or advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God, and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have small joy of any of our creature-comforts, if we make not God our chief joy. 2. There is no sense of sin and danger of wrath ought to be a damper upon their joy, and a strong and full their comforts. Note, Those who by departing from God have made work for repentance, have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return, and make their peace with God.

III. They are threatened with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what it was said long before; (Ps. lxviii. 27.) Thou hast destroyed thine ownOTCMKTHE SOWING OF 1899.

To be continued.

The 2d Lesson, John iv. 19, 22. The Lord is mine, says God, xxv. 23. They had used it, or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services, due to God as their Landlord, and therefore God justly enters, and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease; It is my land, (says God,) and I will make it appear, for they shall be turned off, as bad tenants, and be made to know that they had been the worse, the worse, the worse, the better; for theirs. Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness, that those who go a whoring from God, should not be supposed to dwell upon his land; and therefore, sooner or later, the wicked shall be chased out of the world. Or, it is called the Lords land, because it was the holy land, Immanuel's land, the land that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it, and presence in it, where God was known, and his name
was great, where God's prophets and oracles were; it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly paradise. If they had enjoyed it, they might have a lot in such a land as this; it was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go a whoring from him, in such a land as this, to deal unjustly in a land of uprightness, Isa. xxvi. 10. And it was a sad and sore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exit from the presence of God. Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the Lord's land, that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church, that conform not to the rules of it.

3. That, when they are turned out of the Lord's land, they shall have no rest or satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was driven out from the presence of the Lord, he was a fugitive and a vagabond. So here: they shall be turned out of the land of Canaan. Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the Lord's land, that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church, that conform not to the rules of it.

4. That in the land of their enemies, to which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God, or obtaining favour with their enemies, or doing them any good; they shall not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or show of religion among them; "And so (as Dr. Pocock expresses it) "should be as it were quite cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all signs of grace, and means of reconciliation with him, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people."

(1.) They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, or priests to offer them; they shall not so much as offer drink-offerings to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices. (2.) If they should offer them, neither they nor their sacrifices shall be pleasing to him, for they cannot have any legal offerings, nor are their hearts humbled. (3.) Instead of their sacrifices of joy and gladness, they shall eat the bread of mourners; they shall live desolate and disconsolate, mourning for the death of their relations and their own miseries, so that if they had opportunity of sacrificing, they should never be themselves in a frame fit for it; for they were forbidden to eat of the holy things in their mourning, Deut. xxvi. 14. All that eat of the bread of mourners, are polluted, and incapacitated to partake of the altar. (4.) Their bread for their soul, the bread which they must either eat or starve, the bread which they shall have for the support of their lives, shall not come into the house of the Lord; they shall have no house of the Lord to bring it to, or if they had, it is such as is not fit to be brought, nor are they able to bring it.

5. The return of the days of their sacred and solemn feasts would therefore be very melancholy and uncomfortable to them; (v. 5.) What will you do in the solemn day, in the sabbath, the solemn day of every week, in the new moons, the solemn days of every month, at the return of the times for keeping the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, the solemn days of every year, the days of the feasts of the Lord? Note, The feasts of the Lord are solemn days; and when we are invited to these feasts, we ought to consider seriously what we shall do. But the question is here put to those who were to be deprived of the benefit and comfort of those solemn feasts; What will you do then? You will then spend those days in sorrow and lamentation, which, if it had not been your fault, you might have been spending in joy and praise. You will then be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and to prize spiritual bread by being made to feel a famine of it.

Note, When we enjoy the means of grace, we ought to consider what we shall do if ever we should know the want of them; if either they shall be taken from us, or we be disabled to attend upon them.

6. That their land, which they left behind, and to which they hoped to return, should become a desolate and desolate land, when they return to it; it shall be barren, and barren forever; if they should return, they should not return to a land of delights, but to a land of desolation, when they return to their own land, where their relations and their own property shall be turned out of the land of Canaan; and when they return to their own land restored, they shall find it not fruitful nor habitable, it would afford them neither food nor lodging. Note, Those that make the Lord their God, reckon the places of their silver their pleasant places, as those that make the Lord their God, reckon their tabernacles amiable, and his ordinances their pleasant things, Isa. lvii. 11. But while the pleasures of communion with God are out of the reach of change and change, the pleasant places of men's silver, which were purchased with silver, or in which they denied that silver, or which were bought and adorned with silver, are liable to be laid in ruins, in nettles, and with all the pleasure men took in them.

7. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred. 8. The watchman of Ephraim went with my God
but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.

9. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

10. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at her first time: but they went to Baal-peor and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.

For their further awakening, it is here threatened,

11. That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily; they shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not, it is at the doors; (v. 7) The days of visitation are come, and there shall be no more delay; the days of recompense are come, which they have been so often warned to expect; their prophets have told them that destruction would come, and now it is come, and the time of the divine patience is expired. Note, The days of visitation are come, in which men's sins are inquired into, and brought to light, and a day of recompense, in which men's dooms will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work; the strict visitation is in order to a just retribution. 2. This day of visitation and recompense is hastening on apace; it is sure, it is near, as if it were already come.

12. That hereby they should be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes, Israel shall know it, shall be made to know that by sad experience, which they would not by instruction. Israel shall know then what an evil and bitter thing it is to despise from God, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands; when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see. Israel shall know the difference between true prophets and false. 1. They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them that they should have peace, though they went on, however they pretended to be spiritual men, (as Ahab's prophets did, 1 Kings xxii. 24.) were fools and madmen, and not true prophets; they deceived themselves, and those to whom they prophecied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, It is for the multitude of thine iniquity, which, in contempt of the divine law, hath persisted in, and for the great hatred of the true prophets, that reproved thee, in God's name, for it. Note, Because men receive not the love of the truth, but con- cieve a hatred of it, and do not like to have their iniquities defined to, therefore God shall send them strong delusions, to believe a lie, so strong, that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompense comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them, and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them. 2. They shall know then whether the true prophets, that God hath set over Israel (as Ahab's prophets were such as they called and counted them, fools and madmen; and they shall be convinced that they were so far from being so, that they were the wise men of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words fell to the ground, they knew he was established to be a prophet; (1 Sam. iii. 20.) and who, when God fulfils the word of his messen-

gers, by bringing the days of recompense they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought Bedlam the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of the multitude of their iniquities of that kind, and of their great hatred, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

13. That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets thereby should be displayed to their shame; (v. 8.) The watchman of Ephraim was with my God; he had been formerly, they had a set of worthy, good ministers, that kept close to God, and maintained communion with him; but now they have a race of corrupt, malignant, persecuting prophets, that are the ringleaders of all mischief. Or, The watchman of Ephraim now pretends to have been with my God, and preaches his lies with The watch the Lord; but he is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin, and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men, that he is become hatred itself in the house of his God, or against the house of his God. Note, Wicked prophets are of all others the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against the best rulers. They may boast that they are watchmen, speculators, and as far as speculation goes, they may be right, and with my God, may have their heads full of good notions; but look into their lives, and they are the snare of a fowler in all their ways, catching for themselves, and making a prey of others; look into their hearts, and they are hatred in the house of my God; very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Whither unto thee, O land, unto thee, O church, that hast such watchmen, such prophets; that are seers, but not doers! Corruptio optimi est pes sima.—The best things, when corrupted, become the worst.

14. That God would now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers which they trod in the steps of.

15. They were as bad as their fathers; They have deeply corrupted themselves, they are rooted and rivetted in sin, they are far gone in the depths of Sat- an, (Isa. xxxxi. 6.) so that it is next to impossible that they should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out, it is as scarlet and crimson, or as the spots of the leprous; and it is their own fault, they have corrupted themselves, have polluted and stained themselves. Then of the days of Gibeah, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death by the men of Gibeah, and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronized the villany; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days. Lewdness and wickedness were as imputable and daring now as in the days of Gibeah; and therefore what can be expected but such vileness and baseness? Every tribe is now as bad as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

2. They shall therefore be reckoned with for their father's sins; He will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins, the iniquity they have by kind and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood, the sin of the fathers will be visited upon the children; and hence God takes occasion to upbraid them with the degeneracy and apostacy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness and base ingratitude, v. 10. Where observe, (1.) The great honour God put upon Israel, when he first formed them into a people; I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; he took as much delight and pleasure in them as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilder- ness; where he most needed them, and least ex
expected them. Or, when they were in the wilderness, he found them as grapes, not precarious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first-ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were precious in his sight, and honourable; (Isa. xliii. 4.) he planted them a choice vine, a right seed, (Jer. ii. 21.) and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first; I saw them with pleasure, as the first-ripe in the fig-tree at the first time; good people are compared to the good flowers that are first ripe. Jer. xxiv. 2. One thing is worth more than many after. This speaks the delight God took in them, and in doing them good; not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully, as a man does the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard. Now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for promotion, one would think they should have maintained the good excellence; but, (2.) See the great disgrace they put upon themselves. God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghill-deity, (Numb. xxv. 2, 3.) and they separated themselves unto that shame, that shameful idol, so Baal-peor was in a particular manner to make alike of them and the people committed with the daughters of Moab, was a part of the service done to Baal-peor. Note, Whatever those separate themselves to, that forsake God, it will certainly be a shame to them, first or last. Their abominations are here said to be as they loved; their practices which were an abomination to God, were as the best-beloved of their souls. Or, When they had once forsaken God, they multiplied their abominations, their idols and abominable idolatries, at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers; God had done well for them, but they had acted ungratefully toward him, and in the same manner had the present generation deeply corrupted themselves.

11. As for Ephraim, their glory shall flee away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. 12. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, wo also to them when I depart from them! 13. Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. 14. Give them, O Lord! what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal; for there I hated them; for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolters. 16. Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb. 17. My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations. 

In the foregoing verses, we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers; here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it.

We may observe in these verses, 1. The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions are here, which speak that, 1. They did not hearken to God, (v. 17.) they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod. They did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not; all he said to them by his words and by his prophets, was to them as a tale that is told; and then no wonder that we hear, 2. Of the wickedness of their doings, (v. 15.) the downright malice that was in their sins; they were not infirmities, but during present evil came over them. 3. They were so hard hearted to the word of God, that would teach and persuade them to do well? And no wonder that there were wicked doings among them, when, 3. Their worship is corrupt; (v. 15.) All their wickedness is in Gilgal; which was a place infamous for idolatry, as appears, ch. iv. 15.—xii. 11. Amos iv. 4.—v. 5. It is probable that the idolaters chose their head-quarters, because it had been famous in other ages for solemn transactions between God and Israel, as Josh. v. 2, 10. 1 Sam. x. 8.—xi. 15. There, where the source of idolatry was, whence it spread through the kingdom, there it might be said, that all their wickedness was, for all other wickedness owed its original to that; corruptions in worship are the springs of corruptions in conversation, and therefore God, as their head, would not overlook, even in his word, their head-quarters, because it had been famous in other ages for solemn transactions between God and Israel. Hence he mentions Gilgal in particular, because it was a sort of Chíseh, or central place of idolatry, the mother of all her abominations; Rev. xvii. 5. The learned Groton conjectures that there is a mystical sense here. Golgotha in Syria is the same with Gilgal in Hebrew, and therefore he thinks this may have reference to the putting of Christ to death at Golgotha, which was the greatest sin of the Jewish nation, and of which they could not but think; it may be said, All their wickedness was summed up in that. And no wonder that the people did wickedly, both in worship and conversation, when, 4. All their princes were revolters; the whole succession of the kings of the ten tribes did evil in the sight of the Lord; or, all the set of judges and magistrates at this time were wicked; they turned aside to sinful ways, and persisted in these ways.

II. The displeasure of God against Ephraim for sin. This is variously expressed here, to show what a provocation sin is to the pure eyes of his glory, and how cold it makes the sinner to him. 1. He departs from them, v. 12. When they revolt from him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that he should depart from them, and withdraw both his protection and his bounty? And how may his angry people, who in the most bitter distresses are as it is, and made terrible; Wo also unto them when I depart from them! Note, Those are in a woful condition indeed, whom God has forsaken. Our yearly or wo depends upon the gracious presence of God with us; and if he goes, all woal goes with him, and all woes come upon us. God has forsaken him; persecution and take him. Some knew this when he said such an accent upon the part of his command, and the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me. Nay, he does not only depart from them, but, 2. He hates them; in Gilgal, where all their wickedness is, there I hated them. There where the abominations of sin are committed, there God abominates the sinners. In Gilgal he had bestowed many tokens of his favour upon their ancestors, but there is the place where he hates them for their base ingratitude. Nay, he not only hates them, but, 3. He will love them no more, will never take them into his favour again; the breach between God and Israel is wide as the sea, which cannot be healed. This agrees with what he had said, (ch. i. 6, 7.) I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, because of all the abominations which they have done, and have no more to do with them; For the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house. He will no longer own them as his, or as belonging to his family in the world; he will turn them out of
doors as unfaithful tenants that pay him no rent, as unprofitable servants that do him neither credit nor work. Note, Those that profane God's house, can expect no other than to be expelled his house, and no longer suffered to be either lodgers in it, or retainers to it. Nay, he will not only drive them out of his house, but, 3. He will drive them to enough (v. 17.) My God will cast them away, not only out of his house, but out of his sight: he will quite abandon and reject them, they shall be cast-aways. God said that he would drive them out of his house, and here the prophet seconds it, as one that knew his Master's mind very well; My God will cast them away. See with what comfort and pleasure he calls God's name (v. 11.) In fulfillment of this promise, and are disowned by him, it is a very great satisfaction to good people that they can call God their God, can cheerfully own him, and see themselves owned by him; all revolters, all ruined, yet God is my God.

III. The fruit of this displeasure, in the cutting off and abandoning of their posterity, which is the judgment here threatened again and again. Observe here,

1. How numerous Ephraim was likely to be; the name Ephraim is derived from fruitful, Gen. xii. 52. Joseph is a fruitful bough, Gen. xlix. 22. And Moses's blessing foretold the ten thousands of Ephraim, Deut. xxxiii. 17. This was his glory, (v. 11.) for this he seemed designed by him that appoints the bounds of men's habitations, for Ephraim, as I now Ephraim, is planted in a pleasant place, to encourage his increase; which one may expect as from a tree planted by the river's side. Ephraim is as strong and rich as ever Tyre was, and as proud and secure. The Chaldee Paraphrase gives this sense of it, The congregation of Israel, while they observed the law, was like to Tyreus in prosperity and security.

2. How few Ephraim should be; (v. 11.) Their glory shall fly away, like a bird; their children shall be taken away, and the hopes of their families cut off. All their glory shall fly as an eagle toward heaven, swiftly and irrecoverably. Note, Worldly glory is glory that will fly away; but they that have their God's glory, have in him an unchanging, everlasting glory. Ephraim has been as a fruitful tree; but now Ephraim is smitten, is blasted, the root is to be dried up, they shall bear no fruit. v. 16. If the root be dried, the branch must wither of course.

Observe, (1.) God's threatening this judgment, of the destroying of their children. [1.] They shall perish of themselves by the immediate hand of God; (v. 11.) They shall fly away, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. Some of their children shall die as soon as they are born, the cradle shall be presently turned into a coffin; others of them shall be still-born, or the womb shall be their grave, and their death there, their mother's death too; of others, their mothers shall miscarry almost as soon as they have conceived, and they shall be as unfruitful see. How easily God can, and how justly we are sure he might, root out the whole race of mankind, that degenerate, guilty, obnoxious race, and blot out the name of it from under heaven; it is but doing as he does by Ephraim here, writing them all childless, making all their glory to fly away from the birth, the womb, and the conception, driving up their root, that they bear no fruit, and their business is done in a few years. [2.] They shall perish by the hand of their enemies; they shall die violent deaths; (v. 12.) Though they bring up their children to some maturity, though they escape the diseases and deaths which the infant age is liable to, and are thought to be reared past danger, yet will I bereave them, (v. 12.) by one judgment or other, so that there shall not be a man left, to build up their families, and bear up their name. Again, (v. 13.) Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer; the mother shall travail with pain, to bear her children, and a deal of care and pains and cost shall be bestowed upon the nursing of them. And when a cruel enemy comes, and puts all to the sword, young and old, without mercy, then they seem but as lambs that were all this while fed for the slaughter. Note, It is a great allay to the comfort parents have in their children, that they know not what they have brought them forth, and brought them up, for, perhaps, for the murderer, or, which is worse, to be themselves the plagues of their generation. It is threatened against them, (v. 16.) Though they bring forth, I will slay all of the fruit of their womb, those children that they are most fond of. Note, The parents' love is no security to the children's lives; nay, sometimes death is commissioned to take the darlings of the family, and leave the burdens of it. When sentence was passed upon Israel in the wilderness, that they should all perish there, this mercy was mixed with the wrath, that their children should nevertheless enter into that rest, which they through unbelief could not enter into; but this here is a total and final rejection; even their children shall all be cut off, and the land shall eschew to the crown, ob defectum sanguinis—shall be lost for want of heirs. The Chaldee Paraphrase, and many of the rabins, by the murderers to which the children were brought forth, understand those that sacrificed the children of Ephraim, a number of the young and poor parent, which shewed the parents void of bowels, and justly left them void of blessings. [3.] Those few that escape, and remain, shall be despised; (v. 17.) They shall be wanderers among the nations; so the remains of the Jews are at this day, and there is no place in the world where they are a distinct nation.

(2.) The prophet's prayer relating to it; (v. 14.) Give them, O Lord; what shall I give? What shall I ask for a people thus doomed to destruction? It is this; since the decree is gone forth, that they must either die from the womb, or be brought forth for the murderer; of the two let them rather die from the womb. Rather let them have no children than have them to be made miserable; for the same reason when a total ruin was coming on the Jewish nation, Christ said, Blessed is the womb that never bare, and the laps that never gave suck, Luke xxi. 29. Give therefore a miscarrying womb and dry breasts: for it is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, than into the hands of man. Note, Those that are childless, may with this reconcile themselves to the will of God herein, that the time may come, when, if they were not so, they would wish they had been so.

CHAP. X.

In this chapter, I. The people of Israel are charged with gross corruptions in the worship of God, and are threatened with the destruction of their images and altars, v. 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10. They are charged with the abuse of the administration of the civil government, and are threatened with the ruin of that, v. 3, 4, 7. III. They are charged with imitating the sins of their fathers, and with security in their own sins, and are threatened with smarting humiliation, and with a repetition of judgments, v. 9, 11. IV. They are earnestly invited to repent and reform, and are threatened with ruin if they did not, v. 12, 13.

I. ISRAEL is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made good images. 2. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their
HOSEA, X. 919

altars, he shall spoil their images. 3. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the Lord; what then should a king do to us? 4. They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. 5. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. 6. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. 7. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. 8. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the throne and the thistle shall come up on their altars, and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

Observe,

1. What the sins are which are here laid to Israel's charge, as national sins which bring down national judgments. The prophet deals plainly with them; for what good would it do them to be flattened?
2. They were not fruitful in the fruits of righteousness, to the glory of God. Here all their other wickedness began: (v. 1.) Israel is an empty vine. The church of God is fitly compared to a vine, weak, and of an unpromising outside, yet spreading and fruitful; believers are branches of that vine, and partake of its root and fitness. But this was the character of Israel, they were as an empty vine, a vine that had no sap or virtue in it, and therefore none of those good fruits produced by it, that were expected from it, with which God and man should be honoured. Note, There are many who, though they are not become degenerate vines, are yet empty ones, and may be said to have no spirit or life in them. As an empty vine is of all trees least serviceable, if it do not bear fruit. It is thenceforth good for nothing, Ezek. xx. 3, 5. And they that bring forth no grapes, will soon come to bring forth wild grapes; they do that do good, will do hurt. He is an empty vine, for he brings forth fruit to himself: What good there is in him, is not directed to the glory of God, but he takes the praise of it to himself, and prides himself in it. Christians live not to themselves, (Rom. xiv. 6.) but hypocrites make self their centre; they eat and drink to themselves, Zech. vii. 5, 6. Or, Israel is by the judgments of God emptied and spoilt of all his wealth, because he made use of it in the service of his lusts, and not to the honour of God who gave it him. Note, What we do not rightly employ we may not consider as fruit for ourselves, (v. 3.) and that they multiplied their altars and images, and the more beautiful God's providence was to them, the more prodigal they were in serving their idols: According to the multitude of his fruit which his land brought forth, he has increased the altars, and according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images. Note, It is a great affront to God, and an abuse of his goodness, when the more mercies we receive from him, the more sins we commit against him: and when the more wealth men have, the more mischief they do. Should not we therefore be thus abundant in the service of our God, as they were in the service of their idols? As we find our estates increasing, we should proportionably abound in more works of piety and charity.
3. Their hearts were divided, v. 2. (1.) They were divided among themselves; they were at variance about their idols, some for one, some for another, at variance about their kings, whose separate interests were in opposition, yet the hearts of Israel were divided, for their very hearts were divided, and alienated one from another, and there was no such thing as cordial friendship to be found among them; it follows therefore, Now shall they be found faulty. Note, The divisions and animosities of a people are the causes of national ruin, and the presages of ruin. (2.) They were divided between God and their idols. They had been divided off from God, but a reigning affection for their idols; They hated between God and Baal, that was the dividing of their heart. But God is the Sovereign of the heart, and he will by no means endure a rival; he will either have all, or none. Satan, like the pretended mother, says, Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it; but if that be yielded to, God says, Nay, thou shalt not divide me. A heart divided will be found faulty, and be rejected as treacherous in covenanting with God. Note, A heart divided between God and Mammon, though it may trim the matter so as to appear plausible, will, in the day of discovery, be found faulty.
4. They made no conscience of what they said, and what they did, in the most solemn manner, v. 4. (1.) Not of what they said in swearing, which is the most solemn of all oaths: They said, 1. False words, and words only, for they meant not as they said; they did verba dare—give words; they swore falsely in making a covenant, they were deceitful in their covenanting with God, the covenant of circumcision, the fair promises they made of reforming, when they were in distress; and no marvel if those that were false to their God, were false to all mankind; they contracted such a habit of treachery, that they broke through the most sacred bonds, and made nothing of them; subjects violated their oaths of allegiance, and their kings their coronation oaths; they broke the leagues with the nations they were in alliance with, nor was any conscience made of contracts between private persons. (2.) Nor of what they did in judgment, which is the most solemn of all actions; they did, 1. What they said they did; for it was said and done, for nothing of forsaking themselves for this judge, which is a man's soul, Zech. ix. 14. So much of their lives was occupied with nothing but the right judgment, which should have been a healing, medicinal plant, and of a sweet smell, strang ut hemlock, which is both nauseous and noxious, in the furrows of the field, in the field that was ploughed and furrowed for good corn. Note, God is greatly offended with corruptions, not only in his own worship, but in the administration of justice between man and man, and the dishonesty of a people shall be the ground of his controversy with them as well as their idolatry and impiety; for God's laws are intended for man's benefit and the good of the community, as well as for God's honour. And the profanation of courts of justice shall be avenged as surely as the profanation of temples.
5. Their judgments are, with which Israel should be punished for these sins; they sinned both in civil and religious matters, and in both they shall be punished.
1. They shall have no joy of their kings, and of their government. Because justice is turned into oppression, therefore those who are intrusted with the administration of it, and should be blessings to the state, shall be consigned to the just damnation of all sinners. (v. 3.) and they that would not rule their people well, should not be able to protect them: Now they shall say, We have no king; we are as if we had none, we have none to do us any good, or stand us in
any stead, none to keep us from destroying ourselves, or being drugged by our enemies, none to preserve the public peace, or to fight our battles; and justly is this come to us, for we have grieved not the Lord, when we were safe under the protection of our kings, therefore we are rejected by him; and then what shall a king do for us? What good can we expect from a king, when we have forfeited the favour of our God?" Note, Those that cast off the fear of God, are not likely to have joy of any of their creature-comforts; nor will men's loyalty to their prince befriend them without religion, for their present prosperity is no evidence that they will be secure in the good will that do them, if God be against them. Those that keep themselves in the fear and favour of God, may say, with triumph, "What can the greatest of men do against us?" But those that throw themselves out of his protection, must say, with despair, "What can the greatest of men do for us?" He was a king that said, If the Lord do not help thee, whom shall I help thee in? Yet he is a fool that says, If a king cannot help us, we must perish; (as these intimate here,) for God can do that for us which kings cannot. Time was, when they voted upon having a king; but now what can a king do for them, a being who, they thought, could do any thing? God can make people sick of those creature-confidences which they were most fond of. This is their complaint, when their king is disabled to help them: But the true reason why their civil government shall not only be weakened, but quite destroyed; (v. 7.) As for Samaria, the royal city, which is now almost all that is left, her king is cut off as the foam from the water. The foam swims uppermost, and makes a great show upon the face of the water, yet it is but a heap of bubbles raised by the troubling of the water; such were the kings of Israel, after their removal from the Ark of God, a mere scum, their government had no foundation; no better are the greatest of kings when they set up in opposition to God; when God comes to contend with them by his judgments, he can as easily disperse and dissolve them, and bring them to nothing, as the froth upon the water.

2. They shall have no joy of their idols, and of their worship of them. And miserable is the case of such people, whose gods fall them when their kings do.

(1.) The idols they had made, and the altars they set up in honour of them, should be broken down, and spoiled, and carried away, as common plunder, by the victorious enemy; He shall break down their altars. God shall do it by the hand of the Assyrian, the Assyrian shall do it by order from God; he shall destroy their images. v. 2. Note, What men make idols of, it is just with God to break down and spoil. But the calf at Bethel was the sovereign idol, that was it which the inhabitants of Samaria doted most upon; now it is here foretold that that should be destroyed; The glory of it is departed from it, (v. 5.) when it is thrown down and defaced, no more to be worshipped; but that is not all, It shall also be carried to Assyria, (some think the calf at Dan was some time delivered to Assyria, for 1 Kings xii. 30, it was carried to him as a rich booty, for it was a golden calf, and, probably, adorned with the gifts and offerings of its worshippers,) and as a trophy of victory over their enemies; and what more glorious trophy could they bring than this, or more incontestable proof of an absolute conquest; Thus it is said, The sin of Israel shall be destroyed, (v. 8.) the idols, which they made the matter of their sin: it is said of them, They became a sin to all Israel, 1 Kings xii. 30. Note, If the grace of God prevail not to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols, the high places shall be destroyed, high places of Aven, of Bethaven, (v. 5.) or Bethel; it was called the house of God, (so Bethel signifies,) but now it is called the house of idols by men, iniquity itself. The kings did not, as they ought to have done, take away the high places, by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war. So that the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; they shall lie in ruins. Their altars, while they stood, were as thorns and thistles, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse, justly therefore are they buried in thorns and thistles.

(2.) The destruction of their idols, their altars, and their high places, shall be the occasion of sorrow and shame and terror to them. [1.] It shall be an occasion of sorrow to them. When the calf at Bethel is broken, the people thereof shall mourn over it. They looked upon the calf to be the protector of their nation, and, when that was gone, thought they must all be undone, which made the poor ignorant people, that were deluded into the love of it, take on bitterly as Micah did; (Judg. xviii. 24.) Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more? The priests that had rejoiced in it, shall now mourn for it with the people. Note, Whatever men make a god of, they will mourn for the loss of; and inordinate sorrow for the loss of anything good is a sign of a made idol of it. They used to be very merry in the worship of their idols, but now they shall mourn over them; for sinful mirth shall sooner or later be turned into mourning. [2.] It shall be an occasion of shame to them; (v. 6.) Ephraim shall receive shame, when he sees the gods he trusted to carried into captivity in putting such confidence in them, and paying such adoration to them, God's ark, and the other gods were thrown down, when the people were doting on them, which shows that the contempt of the former, and the veneration for the latter, were the sins for which God visited them. [3.] It shall be an occasion of fear to them; (v. 5.) The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear; they shall be in pain for their gods, and afraid of losing them; or, they shall be in fear, for they shall have no fear of their children and families, when they see the judgments of God breaking in upon them, and beginning with their idols, as he executed judgment against the gods of Egypt, Exod. xii. Thus idolaters are brought in trembling, when God arises to shake terribly the earth, Isa. ii. 21. And here, (v. 8.) They shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us. The supporters of idolatry (Rev. vi. 13, 16.) are brought in, calling thus in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from God's wrath.

9. O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah; there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. 10. It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. 11. And Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plough, and Jacob shall break his yokes. 12. Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain
13. You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped iniquity: you have eaten the fruit of lies: because you did trust in your way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. 14. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children. 15. So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel be utterly cut off.

Here,

I. They are put in mind of the sins of their fathers and predecessors, for which God would now reckon with them. It was told them, (ch. ix. 9.) that they had corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah, and here (v. 9.) Q Israel thou hast sinned since the days of Gibeah. Not only the wickedness that was committed in that age, is revived in this, and acted, a copy from that original, but the wickedness that was committed in that age, has been continued in a constant series and succession through all the intervening ages down to this; so that the measure of iniquity had been long in filling; and still there had been a dealing in that which had been sinned more than in the days of Gibeah; (so it may be read;) the signs of this age exceed those of the worst of former ages. The case was bad then, for them they stood, the criminals stood in their own defence, and the tribes of Israel, who undertook to chastise them for their wickedness, were at a stand, when both in the first and in the second battle the murderers were the victors; and the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them till the third engagement, and then did not overtake them all, for 600 made their escape. But they sin is worse than theirs, and therefore thou canst not expect but that the battle against the children of iniquity should overtake thee, and overcome thee.

II. They have warning given them, fair warning of the judgments of God, that were coming upon them, v. 10. God had hitherto pitied and spared them; though they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience and forbearance; but now, It is in my desire that I should chastise them; it is what I have a purpose of, and will take pleasure in. He will rejoice over them to do them hurt, Deut. xxviii. 63. Which is a pointed way of expressing the pleasure that God hath to take in the ruin of the wicked; for it is a natural consequence of his justice and righteousness, that he should delight in their going down to destruction, and that he should rejoice in their miseries; for sin is as an iniquity against the original of the creature, against the goodness of God, and against the principles of the soul's nature; and therefore it is that God should delight in it, and should rejoice in it, and should have pleasure in it. So the apostle speaks, Gal. vi. 7, 8. Every action is seed sown; Let them sow to themselves in righteousness; let them sow to righteousness, that they may reap in righteousness, for the fruit of the spirit is in all virtue and prudence, 1 Cor. x. 8. For they are not sown to the flesh; for they are not sown to bring forth fruit of the flesh, for they are sown to death, and they are sown to resurrection again, v. 10. Or, When I shall bind them for their two transgressions; so the margin reads it, meaning their corporal and spiritual whoredom, which they so often changed the person of God into Baal, and Baal-berith; or those two great evils mentioned, Jer. ii. 13. Or, When I shall bind them to their two favours; bring them into servitude to the Assyrians, who shall keep them under the yoke as oxcen in the plough, who are bound to the two favours up the field and down it, and dare not for fear of the goad, stir a step out of them. The Chaldee says, Those that are gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them, in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows. Thus they that would not be God's freemen, shall be their enemies' slaves, and shall be made to know the difference between God's service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries. 2 Chron. xvi. 11.

III. They are made to know that their unaccounted with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, v. 11. See how nice, and tender, and delicate, Ephraim is; he is as an heifer that is taught to tread out the corn, and loves that work, because being not so brawny, she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and work it with dry and easy, and both its diversion and its own water, and is more tender. But, says God, I have a yoke to put upon her fair neck, fair as it is. I will make Ephraim to ride; I will take them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon; (Ps. lxxvi. 12.) and Judah too shall be made to plough, and Jacob to break the clods; they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly as Ephraim. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardships mean, that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure. The learned Dr. Pocock inclines to another sense of these words, as speaking the tender, gentle methods God took with his people, to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should receive that correction; for he should remember what he had sinned more than in the days of Gibeah; for he should remember that as a heifer loves that work, because being not so brawny, she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and work it with dry and easy, and both its diversion and its own water, and is more tender, so Jacob and Judah are made to plough the clods, and are employed in the observance of precepts proper for them; and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

IV. They are invited and encouraged to return to God by prayer, repentance, and reformation, v. 12, 13. See here,

1. The duties they are called to. They are God's husbandry; (1 Cor. iii. 9.) and the duties are expressed in language borrowed from the husbandman's calling. If they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service. (1.) Let them break up the fallow ground; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as seeds and thorns, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit, in the sense of them; let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is ploughed is to receive the seed, that it may take root. See Jer. iv. 5. (2.) Let them sow to themselves in righteousness; let them set their hearts on righteousness, and then themselves in righteousness, and do all their works, according to the law of God, which is the rule of righteousness; let them abound in works of piety toward God, and of justice and charity toward one another, and herein let them sow to the Spirit, as the apostle speaks, Gal. vi. 7, 8. Every action is seed sown; Let them sow to righteousness; let them sow what they should sow, do what they should do, and then they are made to have the benefit of it.

2. The arguments used for the pressing of these duties. Consider, (1.) It is time to do it; it is high
time. The husbandman sows in seed-time, and, if that time be far spent, he applies himself to it with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God, when it is, in a particular manner, time to seek him. (2.) If we do our part, God will do his. If we sow to ourselves in righteousness, if we be careful and diligent to do our duty, in a dependence upon his grace, he will shower down his grace upon us, will rain righteousness, the very thing that they need most, who are to sow in righteousness; for by the grace of God, he provides a grace of God, to Christ, who should come in the fulness of time, and for whose coming they must prepare themselves; he shall come as the Lord our righteousness, and shall rain righteousness upon us, that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in, he will grant us of it abundantly. It is fortold, (Ps. lxxxii. 5.) that he shall come down like rain. (3.) If we sow in righteousness we shall reap in mercy; which agrees with that promise, If we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We shall reap according to the measure of mercy; (so the word is;) it shall be a great reward, according to the riches of mercy; such a reward, not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give, a reward of mercy, not of justice, not of righteousness, but of mercy. It is what is sown; God gives a body as it has pleased him. (4.) We have ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity; and the time past of our life may suffice that we have done so, v. 13. "You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire, and will you grudge to bear the burden and heat of the day in God's service, and do in doing that which will be for your own advantage? You have done much to damn your souls; will you not undo it again, and do something to save them?" (5.) We never got any thing in the service of sin. They have ploughed wickedness, they have done the drudgery of sin; and they have reaped iniquity, they have got all that is to be got by it, they have carried it on to the harvest, and got the better. It is a cheat; They have eaten the fruit of lies, trust that is but a lie, which looks fair, but is rotten within; the works of darkness are unfruitful works, Eph. v. 11. Rom. vi. 21. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. (6.) As our comforts, so our confidences, in the service of sin will certainly fail us; "Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men; thou hast staid thyself upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and therefore hast ventured to plough wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee; come, therefore, and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee." v. 5. They are threatened with utter destruction, both for their carnal practices, and for their carnal confidences, v. 14, 15. The promises and assurances have been so much disbelieved and trusted in thy own way, a tumult shall arise among thy people; either by insurrections at home, or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion, and make a noise, much more both together. 1. Their cities and strong holds shall be a prey to the enemy; The fortresses which they confided in, and in which they trusted, are taken; they are set on fire, and an army is sent to rumble, as Shalman spoilt Beth-arbel in the day of battle. This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded; and, probably, Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who had lately put some town, or castle, or house, (Beth-arbel is the house of Arbel,) under military execution, which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons; God tells them that thus Samaria should be spoiled. 2. The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at Beth-arbel, when it was taken. The mother was dashed in pieces upon her children, that is, they were both dashed in pieces together by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes. Justus datum sceleri—Wickedness has free course. It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman; but see what comes of sin. Homo homini lupus—Man is a wolf to man; and then, Homo homini agnus—Man is a lamb to man. 

XI.

1. WHEN Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. 2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. 3. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. 4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love; and I was to them as they that take off the voke on their jaws, and laid meat unto them. 5. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. 6. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. 7. And my people are bent
to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him.

Here we find,
1. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more mercy than others are. I. He gave them liberty, (for God gives, and upbraid not,) but put in mind of, as an aggravation of their sin, and an encouragement to repentance.

2. He had a kindness for them when they were young; (v. 1.) When Israel was a child, then he loved him; when they first began to multiply into a nation, and then he took them up, and chose them because he loved them; because he would love them, Deut. vii. 7, 8. When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and frivolous as children, when they were outcasts, and children exposed, then God loved them; he pitied them, and testified his good will to them, he bore them as the nurse does the sucking child, nourished them, and suffered their miseries. Note, Those that are grown up, nay, those that are grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

3. He delivered them out of the house of bondage; I called my son out of Egypt, because a son, because a beloved son; when God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh, he called them his son, as he had done of old. Note, The former was, when he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when, upon the death of Herod, he and his parents were called out of Egypt, (Math. ii. 15.) so that the words have a double aspect, speaking historically of the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and prophetically of the bringing in of the true Son. Those whom God chose was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his Son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel, when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his, through him, out of spiritual slavery.

4. He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but, such is the condescension of divine grace, as a mother, or nurse; (v. 3.) I taught Ephraim also to go, as a child in leading-strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness, God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, showed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, taking them by the arms; he taught them to go in the way of his commandments, by the institutions of the ceremonial law, which were as tutors and governors to that people under age. He took them by the arms, to guide them, that they might not stumble and fall. God's spiritual Israel are thus supported; Thou hast holden me by my right hand, Ps. lxxxiii. 23.

5. When any thing was amiss with them, or they were ever so little out of order, he was their Physician; "I healed them; I not only took a tender care of them, a friend may do that, but wrought an effectual cure, it is a God only that can do that; I am the Lord that healeth thee, (Exod. xv. 26.) that redressed all the grievances."

6. He brought them into his service by mild and gentle methods; (v. 4.) I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love. Note, It is God's work to draw poor souls to himself; and none can come to him except he draw them, John vi. 44. He draws, (1.) With the cords of a man, with such cords as men draw with, that have a principle of humanity; or, such cords as men are drawn with; he dealt with them as men, in an equitable, rational way, in an easy, gentle way, with the cords of Adam. He dealt with them as with Adam in innocence, bringing them at one instant, in a paradise, and taught them: (2.) With bands of love, or cart-rope of love; this word signifies stronger cords than the former. He did not drive them by force into his service, whether they would or no, nor rule them with rigour, or detest them by violence, but his attractive powers were all loving and endearing, all sweet and gentle, that he might overcome them with kindness. More than any other, Moses was marked with the meekest man in the world. Kindnesses among men we commonly call obligations, or bonds; bonds of love. Thus God draws with the savour of his good ointments, (Cant. i. 4.) draws with loving-kindness, Jer. xxxii. 3. Thus God deals with us, and we must deal in like manner with those that are under our instruction and government, deal rationally and mildly with them.

6. He eased them of the burthens they had been long groaning under; I was to them as they took off the yoke on their jaws, alluding to the care of the good husbandman, who is merciful to his beast, and will not tire him with hard and constant labour. Probably, in those times, the yoke on the neck of the oxen was fastened with some bridle, or head halter, over the jaws, which muzzle the mouth of the ox. Israel in Egypt were thus restrained from the enjoyment of their comforts, and constrained to hard labour; but God eased them, removed their shoulder from the burden, Ps. lxxxiii. 6. Note, Liberty is a great mercy, especially out of bondage.

7. He supplied them with food convenient; in Egypt they fared hard, but when God brought them out, he laid meat unto them, as the husbandman, when he has unyoked his cattle, fodder them. God rained mannah about their camp, bread from heaven, angels' food; other creatures seek their meat, but God laid meat to his own people, as we do to our children; was himself their Caterer and Carver; prevented them with the blessings of goodness.

II. Here is Israel very ungrateful to God.

1. Then they are full of the lust of his voice; he spake to them by his messengers, Moses, and his other prophets, called them from their sins, called them to himself, to their work and duty; but as they called them, so they went from them; they rebelled in those particular instances wherein they were admonished; the more pressing and importunate the prophets were with them, to persuade them that what was good, the more refractory they were, and the more resolute in their evil ways; disobeying for disobedience sake. This foolishness is bound in the hearts of children, who, as soon as they are taught to go, will go from those that call them.

2. They were fond of idols, and worshipped them; They sacrificed to Baalim, first one Baal, and then another, and burntense to gods of their own temporal advantage. They were called to be to the prophets of the Lord again and again not to do this abominable thing which he hated. Idolatry was the sin which, from the beginning, and all along, had most easily beset them.

3. They were regardless of God, and of his favours to them; They knew not that I healed them. They looked only at Muses and Aaron, the instruments of their relief, and, when any thing was amiss, quarrelled with them, but looked not through them to God who employed them. Or, When God corrected them, and kept them under a severe discipline, they understood not that it was for their good, and that God thereby healed them; and it was ne
4. They were strongly inclined to apostasy. This is the blackest article in the charge; (v. 7.) My people are bent to backsliding from me. Every word here is aggravating. (1.) They backslid, and they are given to sin, they seem to come forward toward God, but immediately they slide back again, and are as a deceitful bow. (2.) They backslide from me, from God, the chief Good, the Fountain of life and living waters, from their God, their Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor, from God who never turned from them, nor was as a wilderness to them. (3.) They are bent to backsides, and they are given to sin, there is in their nature a propensity to that which is evil; at the best, they hang in suspense between God and the world, so that a little thing serves to draw them the wrong way; they are forward to close with every temptation. It also intimates that they are resolved in sin; their hearts are fully set in them to do evil; the bias is strong that way; and they persist in their backslidings, whatever is said or done to them. (4.) They are, in profession, my people; They are called by my name, and profess relation to me; they are mine whom I have done much for, and expect much from, whom I have nourished, and brought up as children, and yet they backslide from me.” Note, In our repentance, we ought to lament not only our backslidings, but our bent to backslide, not only our actual transgressions, but our original corruption; the sin that dwells in us, the carnal mind. 5. They were strangely averse to repentance and reformation. Here are two expressions for that, (1.) They refused to return, v. 5. So much were they bent to backslide, that though they could not but find, upon trial, the folly of their backslidings, and that when they forsook God, they changed for the worse, yet they went on fraudulently; I have loved strangers, and after them I will go. They were commanded to return, were courted and entreated to return, were promised that if they would, they should be kindly received; but they refused. (2.) Though they called them to the Most High; God’s prophets and ministers called them to return to the God from whom they had revolted, to the Most High God, from whom they had turned into other ways; they called them from the worship of the idols, which were so much below them, and the worship of whom was therefore their disdains, to the true God, who was so much above them, and the worship of whom was therefore their preference; they called them from this earth to high and heavenly things; but they called in vain, none at all would exalt him. Though he be the Most High God, he would not, in the praise of those, who with backsliding children, have called them to the Most High; but none would stir, none at all would exalt him.

III. Here is God very angry, and justly so, with Israel; see what are the tokens of God’s displeasure, with which they are here threatened. 1. God, who brought them out of Egypt, to take them for a people to himself, since they would not be faithful to him, shall bring them into a worse condition than he at first found them in; (v. 5.) He shall not return into the land of Egypt, though that was a house of bondage grievous enough; but he shall go into a harder service, for the Assyrian shall be his king, who will use them worse than ever Pharaoh did. They shall not return into Egypt, which lies near, where they may hear often from their own country, and whence they may hope shortly to return to it again; but they shall be carried into Assyria, which lies much more remote, and where they shall be cut off from all correspondence with their own land, and from all hopes of returning to it, and justly, because they refused to return. Note, Those that will not return to the duties they have left, cannot expect to return to the comforts they have lost. 2. God, who gave them Canaan, that good land, and a very safe and comfortable settlement in it, shall bring his judgments upon them there, which shall make their habitation unsafe and uncomfortable; (v. 6.) The sword shall come upon him, the sword of war, the sword of a foreign enemy, prevailing against them, and triumphing over them. (1.) This judgment shall spread far; the sword shall lasten upon his cities, those nests of people and storehouses of wealth; it shall likewise reach to his borders, and his small country-villages, (so some,) the citizens themselves, (so others,) or, the bars (so the word signifies) and gates of their city, or, all the branches of their revenue and wealth, or, their children, the branches of their families. (2.) It shall last long; It shall abide on their cities. David thought three months flying before his enemies, was the only judgment of the three that was to be expected against them, but this sword here shall abide much longer than so on the cities of Israel. They continued their rebellions against God, and therefore God continued his judgments on them. (3.) It shall make a full end; it shall consume his branches, and devour them, and lay all waste, and this because of their own counsels, because they would have their own way, both in worship and conversation, would do as they listed, and pursue their own projects, which God therefore, in a way of righteous judgment, gave them up to. Note, The confusion of sinners is owing to their contrivance. God’s counsels would have saved them, but their own counsels ruined them.

8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. 9. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not enter into the city. 10. They shall walk after the Lord; he shall roar as a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. 11. They shall tumble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord. 12. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

In these verses we have, I. God’s wonderful backwardness to destroy Israel; (v. 8, 9.) How shall I give thee up? Here
observe. 1. God's gracious debate within himself concerning Israel's case, a debate between justice and mercy, in which victory plainly inclines to mercy's side. Be astonished, 0 heavens, at this, and wonder, 0 earth, at the glory of God's goodness! Not that there are any such struggles in God as there are in us, or that he is ever fluctuating or unresolved; no, he is in one mind, and knows it; but they are expressions after the manner of men, designed to show what severity the sin of Israel had deserved, and yet how divine grace would be glorified in sparing them notwithstanding. The connection of this with what goes before is very surprising; it was said of Israel, (v. 7.) that they were being approved, being called, and called to him, yet they would not exult him; upon which, one would think, it should have followed, "Now I am determined to destroy them, and never show them mercy more:" no, such is the sovereignty of mercy, such the freeness, the fulness, of divine grace, that it follows immediately, How shall I agree thee up? See here, (1.) The proposals that justice makes concerning Israel, the suggestion of which is here implied; Let Ephraim be given up, as an incorrigible son is given up to be disinherited, as an inanimate patient is given over by his physician. Let him be given up to ruin, let Israel be delivered into the enemy's hand, as a lamb to the lion, to be torn in pieces; let them be made as Admah, and yet be saved, Gen. xlii. 31. Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone ruined from heaven upon them; let them be utterly and irreparably ruined, and be made as like these cities in desolation as they have been in sin. Let that curse which is written in the law, be executed upon them, that the whole land shall be brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. (2.) The answer shows how far God, and Israel, deserved to be thus abandoned, and God does them no wrong if he deal thus with them. The opposition that mercy makes to these proposals; How shall I do it? As the tender father reasons with himself, "How can I cast off my unfruitful son? For he is my son, though he be inwardly; how can I find in my heart to do it?" Thus, "Ephraim has provoked me like a pleasant child: How can I do it?" He is ripe for ruin, judgments stand ready to seize him, there wants nothing but giving him up, but I cannot do it. They have been a people near unto me, there are yet some good among them, theirs are the children of the covenant, if they be ruined, the enemy will triumph; it may be, they will yet repent and reform, and therefore how can I do it?" Note, The God of heaven is slow to anger, and is especially loth to abandon a people to utter ruin, that has been in special relation to him. See how mercy works upon the mention of those severe proceedings; My heart is turned within me; as we say, Our hearts fail us, when we come to do a thing that is against the grain with us. God speaks as if he were copious to himself of a strange thing, and then he leaves us, Lam. i. 20. My bowels are troubled, my heart is turned within me. As it follows here, My repentings are kindled together; his bowels yearned toward them, and his soul was grieved for their sin and misery, Judg. x. 16. Compare Jer. xxxxi. 20. Since I spake against him, my bowels are troubled for him; when God gives up a Saviour for sin, and a Saviour for sin; and for sinners, for sinners, he did not say, How shall I give him up? No, he spared not his own Son; it pleased the Lord to bruise him; and therefore God spared not him, that he might spare us; but this is only the language of the day of his patience, but when men have sinned that away, and the great day of his wrath comes, then no difficulty is made of it, may, I will laugh at their calamity. 2. His gracious determination of this debate. After a long contest, mercy in the issue rejoice against judgment, has the last word, and carries the day, v. 9. It is decreed that the reprobate shall be lengthened out yet longer, and I will not now execute the fierceness of mine anger though I am angry; though they shall not go altogether unpunished, yet I will mitigate their sentence, and abate the rigor of it. He will show himself to be justly angry, but not implacably so; they shall be corrected, but not consumed. I will not return to destroy Ephraim; the judgments that have been inflicted shall not be repeated, shall not go so deep as they have deserved. He will not return to destroy, as soldiers, when they have in their passion a second time, to take more, as when what the Palmer-vorm has left, the Locust has eaten. It is added in the close of the verse, I will not enter into the city, into Sum rii, or any other of their cities; I will not enter into them as an enemy, utterly to destroy them, and lay them waste, as Admah and Zeboim were. 3. The ground and reason of this determination; For I am God and not man, the Holy One of Israel. To encourage them to hope that they shall find mercy, consider, (1.) What he is in himself; he is God, and not man, as in other things, so in pardoning sin, and sparing sinners; if they had offended a man like themselves, he would not, he could not, have borne it. (2.) That he has an enemy's passion to the contrary, but that passion would have evaporated under his compassion, and he would have executed the fierceness of his anger; but I am God, and not man; he is Lord of his anger, whereas man's anger commonly lords it over them. If an earthly prince were in such a strait between justice and mercy, he would be at a loss how to compromise the matter between them; but he who is God, and not man, would hesitate no more, but claim the honour of his justice, and yet advance the honour of his mercy. Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of God, whose thoughts and ways, in receiving returning sinners, are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth, Isa. Iv. 9. Note, It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies, to remember that he is God, and not man. (3.) One would think this were a reason why he should reject such a provoking people; no, God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to his holiness, but very much to the honour of it; as he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and therein declares his righteousness, now Christ has purchased the pardon, and he has promised it. (2.) What he is to them; he is the Holy One in the midst of thee; his holiness is engaged for the good of his church, and even in this corrupt, degenerate land and age, there were some that gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, and he required of them all to be holy as he is, Lev. xvi. 2. As long as we have the Holy One in the midst of us, we are safe and well; but when he is not with us, we are exposed to great danger. (2.) Those who submit to the influence, may take the comfort of God's holiness. II. Here is his wonderful forwardness to do good for Israel; which appears in this, that he will qualify them to receive the good he designs for them; (v. 10, 11.) They shall walk after the Lord. They shall return, and say, the Lord is true; it is spoken of the ten tribes, and had its accomplishment, in part, in the return of some of them, with those of the two tribes in Exod.'s time; but it had its more full accomplishment in God's spiritual Israel, the church-gospel, brought together and incorporated by the gospel of Christ. The ancient Jews referred it to the time of the Messiah; the
learned Dr. Pocock looks upon it as a prophecy of Christ's coming to preach the gospel to the dispersed remnant of Israel, the children of God that were scattered abroad. And then observe,

1. How they were to be called and brought together; The Lord shall roar like a lion. The word of the Lord to the children of Israel was like an lion roaring. Christ is called, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and his gospel, in the beginning of it, was the voice of one crying in the wilderness. When Christ cried with a loud voice, it was as when a lion roared, Rev. x. 3. The voice of the gospel was heard far, as the roaring of a lion, and it was a mighty voice. See Joel iii. 16.

2. What impression this charm should make upon them; as the roaring of a lion makes upon all the beasts of the forest. When he shall roar, then the children shall tremble; see Amos iii. 8. The lion has roared, the Lord God has spoken; and then who will not fear? When they whose hearts the gospel reached, trembled, and were astonished, and cried out, What shall we do? When they were by it put upon working out the salvation, and worshipping God with fear and trembling, then this promise was fulfilled. The children shall tremble from the west. The dispersed Jews were carried eastward, to Assyria and Babylon, and those that returned, came from the east; therefore this seems to have reference to the calling of the Gentiles that lay westward from Canaan, for that way especially the gospel spread. They shall tremble, shall move, and come with trembling, with care and haste, from the west, from the nations that lay that way, to the mountain of the Lord, (Isa. ii. 3.) to the gospel-Jerusalem, upon hearing the alarm of the gospel. The apostle speaks of mighty signs and wonders that were wrought by the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, Rom. xv. 19. Then the children of Israel were called out of Babylon, and the rest of the Jews after the flesh was dispersed in Egypt and Assyria, it is promised that they shall be effectually summoned from thence; (v. 11.) They shall tremble; they shall come trembling, and with all haste, as a bird upon the wing out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria; a dove is noted for swift and constant flight, especially when she flies to her windows, which the flocking of Jews and Gentiles to the Messiah is; and as the dove, so as the children are to be induced to fly, with the wind, and be awakened by it; they of Egypt and Assyria shall come together, those that lay most remote from each other shall meet in Christ, and be incorporated in the church. Of the uniting of Egypt and Assyria, it was prophesied, 1. xl. 28.

3. What effect these impressions should have upon them; being moved with fear, they shall flee to the ark; They shall walk after the Lord; after the service of the Lord; (so the Chaldee;) they shall take the Lord Christ for their Leader and Commander, they shall list themselves under him as the Captain of their salvation, and give up themselves to the direction of the Spirit as their Guide by the word; they shall leave all to follow Christ, as becomes disciples. Note, Our holy trembling at the word of Christ will draw us to him, not drive us from him. When he roars like a lion, the slaves tremble, and flee from him, the children tremble, and fly to him.

What entertainment they shall meet with at their return; (v. 11.) I will place them in their houses; all those that come at the gospel-call, shall have a place and a name in the gospel-church, in the particular churches which are their houses, to which they pertain; they shall dwell in God, and be at home in him; both easy and safe, as a man in his own house. They shall have mansions, for there are many in our Father's house, in his tabernacle on earth, and his temple in heaven, in everlasting habitations, which may be called their houses, for they are the lot they shall stand in at the end of the days.

III. Here is a sad complaint of the treachery of Ephraim and Israel, which may be an intimation that it is not Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual Israel, to whom the foregoing promises belong, for as for this Ephraim, this Israel, they compass God about with lies and deceit; all their services of him, when they pretended to compass his altar, were rigged and hypocritical; when they surrounded him, with their prayers and praises, every one having a petition to present to him, they lied to him with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue, their pretensions were so fair, and yet their intentions so foul, that they would, if possible, have imposed upon God himself. Their professions and promises were all a cheat, and yet with these they thought to compass God about, to enclose him as it were, to keep him among them, and prevent his leaving them.

IV. Here is a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, which they yet held fast, and which comes in as an aggravation of the perfidiousness of the ten tribes, and a reason why God had that mercy in store for Judah, which he had not for Israel; (ch. i. 6, 7.) for Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints, or serving God, in Most Holy. 1. Judah rules with God; he serves God, and the service of God is not only true liberty and freedom, but it is dignity and dominion. Judah rules; the princes and governors of Judah rule with God, they use their power for him, for his honour, and the support of his interest; those rule with God, that rule in the fear of God; (2 Sam. xxiii. 3.) and it is a lawful, and is honourable to do so, and their praise shall be God, as Judah's here is. Judah is Israel—istine with God. 2. He is faithful with the Holy God, keeps close to his worship, and to his saints—his priests, to his people; faithful with the saints—with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose steps they faithfully tread in. They walk in the way of good men; and those that do so, rule with God, they have a mighty interest in Heaven. Judah yet rules with God, and sees his interest; and every one be aware when Judah also would revolt and degenerate. Note, When we see how many there are that compass God about with lies and deceit, it may be a comfort to us to think that God has his remnant that cleave to him with purpose of heart, and are faithful to his saints, and for those who are thus faithful unto death, is reserved a crown of life, when hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion without.

CHAP. XII.

In this chapter, we have, I. A high charge drawn up both against Israel and Judah for their sins, which were the ground of God's controversy with them, v. 1, 2. Particularly the sin of fraud and injustice, which Ephraim is charged with, (v. 7.) and justifies himself in, v. 8. And the sin of idolatry, (v. 11.) by which God is provoked to contend with them, v. 14. II. The aggravations of the sins they are charged with, taken from the honour God put upon them. (v. 9. 13.) the advancement of them into a people from low and mean beginnings; (v. 12, 13.) and the provision he had made them of help for their souls by the prophets he sent them, v. 10. III. A call to the poor uprooted to turn to God, v. 16. An intimation of mercy that God had in store for them, v. 9.

1. Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and
oil is carried into Egypt. 2. The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. 3. He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: 4. Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he was wraith, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us: 5. Even the Lord God of hosts; The Lord is his memorial. 6. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

In these verses,

1. Ephraim is convicted of folly, in staying himself upon Egypt and Assyria, when he was in straits; (v. 1.) Ephraim feeds on wind, feeds himself with vain hopes of assistance from man, when he is at variance with God; and when he meets with disappointments, he still pursues the same game, and greedily pants and follows after the east wind, which he cannot catch hold of; nor, if he could, would it be nourishing, nay, it would be nutsious; we say of the wind in the east, It is a fit wind for nothing. (2.) Those that make creatures their confidence, make fools of themselves, and take a great deal of pains to put a cheat upon their own souls, and to prepare vexation for themselves; He daily increaseth lies, multiplies his corruptions and fallings in with his neighbours, which will all prove deceitful to him; nay, they will prove desolation to him; those very nations that he makes his refuge, will prove his ruin. Those that stay themselves upon lies, will be still coveting to increase them, that they may build their hopes firm upon them; as if many lies twisted together would make one truth, or may broken reeds and rankling thorns and thistles, which grow in de- lusion, and will prove to them a great desolation; for they that observe lying vanities, the more they increase them, the more disappointments they prepare for themselves, and the farther they run from their own mercies. The men of Ephraim did so when they thought to secure the Assyrians in their interests by a solemn league, signed, sealed, and sworn to; they make a covenant with the Assyrian, but they will find there is no hold of them; that potent prince will be a slave to his word no longer than he pleases. They thought to secure the Egyptians for their confederates by a rich present of the commodities of their country, not only to purchase their favour, but to show that their friendship was worth having; Oil is carried into Egypt. But the Egyptians, when they had got the bribe, dropped the cause, and Ephraim was never the better for them. Oleum perditit et oferam—He has lost both his money and his labour. This was feeding on wind; this was increasing lies and desolation.

II. Judah is contended with too, and Jacob, which includes both Ephraim and Judah; (v. 2.) The Lord has also a controversy with Judah: for though he had awhile ago ruled with God, and been faithful with the saints, yet now he begins to degenerate: or, though in keeping close to the house of David, and the house of Aaron, and in them to the covetous of royalty and priesthood, they were so far in the right, in the former they ruled with God, and in the latter were faithful to the saints, yet, upon other accounts, God had a controversy with them, and would punish them. Note, Men's being in the right in some things, in the main things, shall not exempt them from correction, and therefore should not exempt them from reproof, for those things wherein they are in the wrong. There are some of those other churches of Asia, which Christ approved of and commended, and yet he adds, "Nevertheless I have something against thee." So here; though Jacob is a people near to God, yet God will punish him according to the evil ways he was found in, and the evil doings he was found guilty of; for God sees sin even in his own people, and will take them with it. III. Both Ephraim and Judah are put in mind of their father Jacob, whose seed they were, and whose name they bore, and it was their honour; they are put in mind of the extraordinary things he did, and God did for him; that they might be the more ashamed of themselves for degenerating from so illustrious a progenitor, and staining the lustre of so great a name, and yet that they might be engaged and encouraged to return to God, the God of their father Jacob, in hopes for his sake to find favour with him. He had called this people Jacob, (v. 2.) threatening to punish them; but how shall I give them up? How shall that dear name be forgotten?

Three glorious things concerning Jacob the person, Jacob the people are here put in mind of; but by brief hint only, for it is presumed that they know the story.

1. His struggling with Esau in the womb. There he took his brother by the heel, v. 3. We have the story, Gen. xxvi. 26. It was an early act of bravery, and an effort for the best precedence, a fious ambition of that birthright in the covenant, which Esau is justly branded as profane for desiring. But he degenerates, and forgets his former hisnings, and making leagues with them, profaned that crown, and laid that honour in the dust, which he so gloriously put in for. Then it was that the dominion was given him; The elder shall serve the younger; then he was owned of God as his beloved; Jacobs have I loved, but Esau have I hated; but they had by their sin forfeited both the love of God, and dominion over their neighbour.

2. His wrestling with the angel; "Remember how your father Jacob had power with God by his own strength, the strength he had by the gift of God, who pleaded not against him by his great power, but put strength into him," Heb. xxii. 6. The angel he wrestled with, is called God, and therefore is supposed to be the Son of God, the Angel of the Covenant. "God was both a Covenant with Jacob, and an Assistant of him, showing, in the latter regard, greater strength than in the former, fighting, as it were, against him with his left hand, and for him with his right, and to that putting greater force." So Dr. Pocock. The providence of God fought against him, when he met with one danger after another, in his return from Egypt. There he grew in strength under God on cheerfully in his way, and when his faith acted upon the divine promise that was for him, prevailed above his fears that arose from the divine providences that were against him, then by his strength he had power with God. But it refers especially to his prayer for deliverance from Esau, and for a blessing; He had power over the angel, and prevailed, for he went, and more strongly. There was a mixture of the greatest courage and the greatest tenderness; Jacob wrestling like a champion, and yet weeping like a child. Note, Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the saints have obtained the most glorious victories. Thus Jacob convinced Israel, a prince with God; his posterity was called Israel, but they were unworthy
the name, for they had forfeited and lost their communion with God, and their interest in him, by revolting from their duty to him. 3. His meeting with God at Bethel; God found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. God found him the first time in Bethel, as he went to Padan-aram, (Gen. xxviii. 10.) and a second time after he had returned thither from Padan-aram. This is probably that which refers to both; for in both God spake to Jacob, and renewed the covenant with him, and the prophet might very well say, There he spake with us who are the seed of Jacob, for both times that God spake with Jacob at Bethel, he spake with him concerning his seed; (Gen. xxviii. 14.) Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and, (Gen. xxxv. 12.) I will give thee the land which I gave to thy father. Thus God then covenanted with him, and his seed after him. Now justly are they upbraided with this; for in that very place which their father Jacob called Bethel—the house of God, in remembrance of the communion he there had with God, did they set up one of the calves, and worship it; so thus they turned that Bethel into a Beth-aven—a house of iniquity. Thus God spake with them exceeding great and precious promises, which they had despised and lost the benefit of.

Two inferences are here drawn from these stories concerning Jacob, for instruction to his seed.

(1.) Here is a use of information; from what passed between God and Jacob, we may learn that Jehovah, the Lord God of hosts, is the God of Israel; he was the God of Jacob, and this is his memorial throughout all the generations of the seed of Jacob; (v. 5.) the more shame for them who forgot the memorial of their church, deserted the God of their fathers, and exchanged a Lord of hosts for Baalim. Note, Those only are accounted the people of God, that keep up a memorial of God, such memorials of him as he himself has instituted, by which he makes himself known, and will have us to remember him. Here are two memorials of him, by which he is distinguished from all others, and is to be acknowledged and adored by us. [1.] The former speaks his existence of himself. He is Jehovah, much the same with I AM, the same that was, and is, and is to come, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Jehovah is his memorial, his peculiar name. The latter speaks his dominion over all. He is the God of hosts: the Lord is all the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and makes what use he pleases of them. Jacob saw Mahanaim, God's two hosts, about the time that he wrestled with the angel, (Gen. xxxii. 1, 2.) and so learned to call God the God of hosts, and transmitted it to us as his memorial. God's names, titles, and attributes, are the memorials of him; there is no need for images to be such. And that which was a revelation of God to one, is his memorial to many, to all generations.

(2.) Here is a use of exhortation; (v. 6.) Is this so, that Jacob thy father had this communion with the Lord God of hosts, and is this still his memorial? [1.] Then let those that have gone astray from God be converted to him; Therefore turn the way of your goings, that ye may turn to the Lord; (Isa. xli. 26.) that was the God of Jacob, is the God of Israel, is thy God, from whom thou hast unceasingly and unkindly revolted; therefore turn thou to him by repentance and faith, turn to him as thou, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him. [2.] Then let those that are converted to him, walk with him in all holy conversation and godliness; "Keep mercy and judgment, mercy in relieving and supporting the poor and distressed, judgment, in rendering to all their due; be kind to all, do wrong to none. Keep pity and judgment," (so it may be read), "live righteously and godly in this present world; be devout, and be honest. Do not only prac-

tise these occasionally, but be careful and conscionable in the practice of them." [3.] Let those that walk with God, be encouraged to live a life of dependence upon him; "Wait on thy God continually, with a believing expectation to receive from him all the succours and supplies thou standest in need of." Those that live a life of dependence upon God, will find God a great God in the presence of them, and a God of comfort to him, if it be not their own fault. Let our eyes be ever toward the Lord, and let us preserve a holy security and serenity of mind under the protection of the divine power, and the influence of the divine favour, looking, without anxiety, for a dubious event, and by faith keeping our spirits sedate and even; that is waiting on God as our God in covenant, and not in our own strength or might.

7. He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. 8. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin. 9. And I, that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. 10. I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. 11. Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal: yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields. 12. And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep. 13. And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. 14. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Here are intermixed, in these verses, Reproof for sin. When God is coming forth to contend with a people, that he may demonstrate his own righteousness, he will demonstrate their unrighteousness. Ephraim was called to turn to his God and keep judgment; (v. 6.) now, to show that he had need of that call, he is charged with turning from his God by idolatry, and breaking the laws of justice and judgment.

He is here charged with injustice against the precepts of the second table, v. 7, 8. Where observe,

(1.) What the sin is, wherewith he is charged; He is a merchant. The margin reads it as a proper name, He is Canaan, or a Canaanite, unworthy to be denominated from Jacob and Israel, and worthy to be cast out with a curse from this good land, as the Canaanites were. See Amos ix. 7. But Canaan sometimes signifies a merchant, and therefore most likely to do so here, where Ephraim is charged with deceit in trade. Though God had given his people a land flowing with milk and honey, yet he did not forbid them to enrich themselves by merchandise, and they succeeded the Canaanites in that as well as in their husbandry; they sucked the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand, Deut. xxxiii. 19. And if they had been fair merchants, it had been no reproach at all to them, but an honour and blessing; but he is such a merchant as the Canaanites were, who were honest
only with good looking to, and, if they could, cheat each other in their deal with. Ephraim does so; he deceives and affrights. Note, There is oppression by fraud as well as oppression by force. It is not only princes, lords, and masters, that oppress their subjects, tenants, and servants, but merchants and traders are often guilty of oppressing those they deal with, when they impose upon their ignorance, or take advantage of their necessity, to make them buy dearer than they would, and charge them with their debts. Ephraim cheated, [1.] With a great deal of art and cunning: The balances of deceit are in his hand; he uses balances, and delivers his goods by weight and measure, as if he would be very exact; but they are balances of deceit, false weights and false measures, and thus, under colour of doing right, he does the greatest wrong. Note, God has his eye upon merchants and traders when they are weighing their goods and paying their money, whether they do honestly or deceitfully; he observes what balances they have in their hand, and how they hold them; and though those they deal with may not be aware of that slight of hand with which they make them balances of deceit, God sees it, and knows it. Trades by the zeal of man are to be feared, but they are cheatings, and they man they should ever be made mysteries of iniquity. [2.] With a great deal of pleasure and pride; He loves to affrights. To affrights is bad enough, but to love it is much worse; his conscience does not check and reprove him for it, as it ought to do; if it did, though he committed the sin, he could not delight in it; but his corruptions growing, he triumphed over his convictions, that he not only loves the gain of oppression, but he loves to affrights; he loves for sinning sake, and takes a pleasure in out-witting and over-reaching those that suspect him not. 

(2.) How he justifies himself in this sin, v. 8. Wicked men will have something to say for themselves now when they are told of their faults, some frivolous turn-off or other, whereby to evade the convictions of the word. Ephraim stands indicted for a common cheat; now see what he pleads to the indictment; he does not deny the charge, or plead, Not guilty, yet does not make a penitent confession of it, and ask pardon, but insists upon his own justification. Suppose it were so that he did use balances of deceit, yet, 

First, It is folly to call the riches of this world substance, for they are thing that are not, Prov. xviii. 3. Secondly, It is folly to think that we have them of ourselves, to say, as some read it, I have made my riches with my own wisdom and industry, The word is, I have found it, My might and power of my hand have gotten me this wealth. Thirdly, It is folly to think that what we have, is for ourselves, I have found me out substance, as if we had it for our own proper use and behoof, whereas we hold in trust, only as his stewards. Fourthly, It is folly to think that they will so be glorified in, and to say with exultation, I am become rich. Riches are not the honours of the soul, are not peculiar to the best men, nor sure to us; and therefore let not the rich man glory in his riches, Jan. i. 9, 10. Fifthly, It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way either does make us innocent, or will make us safe, or make us easy, in that way; for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them. See Isa. lxi. 10. Prov. i. 32. [2.] He pleads that he had kept a good reputation. It is common for sinners when they are justly reproved by their neighbours, and, because they know no ill of them, or will say none, or think well of what the prophets have said, to make an appeal to their reputation. But the appeal will not succeed. In all my labours (says Ephraim) they shall find no iniquity in me, that were sin. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to build a good opinion of themselves upon the fair character they have among their neighbours. Ephraim was very secure, for, First, All his neighbours knew him to be diligent in his business; they had an eye upon all his labours, and concluded him for them; nor will they praise thee when thou dost well for thyself. Secondly, None of them knew him to be deceitful in his business. He acted so well, that nobody could say to the contrary but that he played fair. For either, 1. He concealed the fraud, so that none discovered it. Whatever iniquity there is, they shall find none nor will they think that which is open and scandalous before men. What will it avail us that men shall find no iniquity in us, in. When God finds a great deal, and will bring every secret work, even secret frauds, into judgment. Or, 2. He excuses the fraud, so that none condemned it. They shall find no iniquity in me, that were sin, nothing very wicked, nothing upon which they can justly fix upon the iniquity, sins not worth speaking of, which they think God will make nothing of, because they do not. It is a fashionable iniquity, it is customary, it is what every body does, it is pleasant, it is gainful, and this, they think, is no iniquity that is sin, nobody will think the worse of them for it; but God seeth not as men seeth, he judges not as man judges. He is here charged with idolatry against some of the precepts of the first table; with that iniquity which is in a special manner vanity, the making and worshipping of images, which are vanities, (v. 11.) Surely they are vanity; they do not profit, but deceive. Now the prophet mentions two places notorious for idolatry. (1.) Gilgal on the other side Jordan, which had been branded for it before, (ch. vii. 1.) Is there iniquity in Gilgal? Yea, (2.) And in Gilgal too; there they sacrifice bullocks, (ch. ix. 15.) and there their altars which they have set up, either to strange gods, in opposition to God himself, or to the God of Israel, in opposition to his own appointed altar, are as thick as heaps in the furrows of the field that is to be sown, ch. viii. 11. Is there iniquity in Gilgal only? So some. Is it only in those remote parts of the nation, that people are so superstitious, where they border upon other nations? No, they are as bad at Gilgal. In Gilgal God protected Jacob their father (of whom he had been speaking) from the rage of Liban; and will you there commit iniquity? Here are threatenings of wrath for sin. Some make that to be so; (v. 9.) I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles as in the days of the appointed time; I will bring thee into such a condition as Israel was in, when they dwelt in tents, and wandered for forty years; that was the time appointed in the wilder-
HOSEA, XII.

ness. Ephraim forgot that God brought him out of Egypt, and brought him up to be what he was, and was proud of his wealth, and took sinful courses to increase it; and therefore God threatens to bring him to a tabernacle-state again, to a poor, mean, desolate, unsettled condition. Note, It is just with God, when men have by their sins turned their tents into houses, by his judgments to turn their houses into tents again. However, that is certainly a heart which God had condemned, a heart which Ephraim provoked to anger most bitterly. See how men are deceived in their opinion of themselves, and how they will one day be undeceived. Ephraim thought that there was no iniquity in him, that deserved to be called sin; (v. 8.) but God tells him that there was that in him, which was sin, and would be found so, if he did not repent and reform; for, 1. It was extremely against his God; 2. (v. 9.) Ephraim provoked him more bitter to him than many to God; and he was therefore certain to be visited with his anger, and the fire of his wrath. Therefore, (1.) He shall take away his forfeited life; He shall leave his blood upon him: he shall not hold him guiltless, but bring upon him that death which is the wages of sin; his blood shall be upon his own head, (2 Sam. i. 16.) for his own iniquity has testified against him, and he alone shall bear it. Note, When sinners perish, their blood is left upon them. (2.) He shall take away his forfeited honour; His reproach shall his Lord return upon him. God is his Lord; he had by idolatry and other sins reproached the Lord, and done dishonour to him, and to his name and family, and had given occasion to others to reproach him; and now God will return the reproach upon him, according to the word he has spoken, that these who despise him, shall be lightly esteemed. Note, Shameful sins shall have shameful punishments. If Ephraim put contempt on his God, he shall be so reduced, that all his neighbours shall look with contempt upon him.

III. Here are memorials of former mercy, which come in to convict them of base ingratitude in revolting from God. Let them blush to remember, 1. What God had preserved them in, when they were in the wilderness. When Ephraim was become rich, and was proud of that, he forgot that which God (that he might not forget it) obliged them every year to acknowledge, (Deut. xxvi. 5.) A Syrian ready to perish was my father. But God here puts them in mind of it, v. 12. Let them remember, not only the honours of their father Jacob, what a mighty prince he was with God, v. 3. (an honor which they had shared with him, while they were in rebellion against God,) but what a poor servant he was to Laban, which was sufficient to mortify them that were puffed up with the estates they had raised. Jacob fled into Syria from a malicious brother, and there served a covetous uncle for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheeps, because he had no estate to endow a wife with. Jacob was poor, and low, and a fugitive; these, to be remembered. He was a plain man, dwelling in tents, and keeping sheeps, therefore balances of deceit ill became them; he served for a wife that was not a Canaanitess, as Esau's wives were, therefore it was a shame for them to degenerate into Canaanites, and mingle themselves with the nations. God wonderfully preserved him in his flight, of God preserved him in his service, so that he multiplied exceedingly, and from that spot in a dry ground sprang an illustrious nation, that bare his name which magnifies the goodness of God both to him and them, and leaves them under the stain of base ingratitude to that God who was their Founder and Benefactor.

2. That God had rescued them from misery; had raised them to what they were, not only out of poverty, but out of slavery, (v. 13.) which laid them under much stronger obligations to serve him, and under a yet deeper guilt in serving other gods. (1.) God brought Israel out of Egypt on purpose that they might know and love him; as they lived in Egypt, they were under the gross bondage of servitude, and the service of a master; and that servitude acquired a special title to them and to their service. (2.) He preserved them, as sheep are kept by the shepherd's care. He preserved them from Pharaoh's rage at the sea, even at the Red sea, protected them from all the perils of the wilderness, and provided for them. (3.) He did this by a prophet, Moses, who, though he is called king in Deuteronomy, (xxxiii. 8.) yet did that for Israel, as a prophet, by direction from God, and by the power of his word. The enmity of his authority was not a royal sceptre, but the rod of God; with that he summoned both Egypt's plagues and Israel's blessings. Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ, (Acts iii. 22.) and it is by Christ as a Prophet that we are brought out of Egypt, and led through the wilderness, (Num. xiii. 1.) to the land of promise. Now this shows how very unworthy and ungrateful these people were. [1.] In rejecting their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, which, in the preface to the commandments, is particularly a reason for the first, why they should have no other gods before him. [2.] In despising and persecuting his prophets, whom they should have loved and valued, and have stood fast as God's end in sending them, for the sake of that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt, and preserved them in the wilderness. Note, The benefit we have had by the word of God, greatly aggravates our sin and folly, if we put any slight upon the word of God.

3. That God had taken care of their education as they grew up. This instance of God's goodness we have, v. 10. As by a prophet he delivered them, so by prophets he still continued to speak to them. Man, who is formed out of the earth, is fed out of the earth; so that nation that was formed by prophecy, by prophecy was fed and taught; beginning at Moses and so going on to all the prophets through the several ages of that church, we find that divine revelation was, all along, their tuition. (1.) They were not only formed, but fed, from Moses, and the other prophets, to the days of Christ, (Isa. xi. 1.) a succession of them scarcely ever without a Spirit of prophecy among them more or less, from Moses to Malachi. (2.) These prophets were seen; they had visions and dreams, in which God discovered his mind to them immediately, with a full assurance that it was his mind, Num. xiii. 6. (3.) These visions were multiplied; God spake not by one, yea, but by many times, so that if one vision was not understood, he sent another. These had variety of visions, and frequent repetitions of the same. (4.) God spake to them by the prophets; what the prophets received from the Lord they plainly and faithfully delivered to them. The people at mount Sinai begged that God would speak to them by men like themselves; and he did so. (5.) In speaking to them by the prophets, he used similitudes, to make the messages he sent by them intelligible, more affecting, and more likely to be remembered. The visions they saw, were often similitudes, and their discourses were embellished with very apt comparisons. And as God by his prophets, so by his Son, he used similitudes, for he opened his mouth in parables. Note, God keeps an account; he has kept an account of all his dealings with his people, those that have long enjoyed the means of grace in purity, plenty, and power, that have been frequently, faithfully, and familiarly told the mind of God,
will have a great deal to answer for another day, if they persist in this course of sin.

IV. hose are intimations of further mercy, and this remembered too in the midst of sin and wrath, as some understand; (v. 9.) "I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophecies and by his providences. (2.) He gave them a law forbidding them to worship any other; "Thou shalt know no god but me; not only shall not own and worship any other, but shall not even consult the ends and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee." Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those praised, who have not known the depths of Satan. (3.) He gave them a good reason for it; There is no saviour beside me. Whatever we take for our God, we expect to have for our saviour, to make us happy here and hereafter; as, where we have protection, we owe allegiance, so, where we have salvation, and hope for it, we owe adoration.

2. The honour that Ephraim had while he kept himself clear from idolatry; (v. 1.) While Ephraim spake trembling, or with trembling, that is, (as Dr. Pocock understands it,) while he behaved himself toward God as his father Jacob did, with weeping and supplications, and spake not proudly and lamentingly against God and his prophets, while he kept up a holy fear of God and worshipped him in that fear, so long he exalted himself in Israel, he was very considerable among the tribes, and made a figure. Jeroboam, who was of that tribe, exalted himself and his family; when he spake, there was trembling, all about him stood in awe of him, and some understood it. Note, Those that humble themselves, especially that humble themselves before God, shall be exalted. When people speak with modesty and jealousy of themselves, with a diffidence of their own judgment, and a deference to others, they exalt themselves, they gain a reputation. But as for Ephraim, he soon lost himself; when he offended in Baal, he died, he lost his reputation, his honour soon dwindled and sunk, and was laid in the dust. Baal is here put for all idolatry; when Ephraim forsook God, and took to worship images, the state received its death's wound, and was never good for any thing after. Note, Deserting God is the death of any person or persons.

3. The lamentable growth of idolatry among them; (v. 2.) When they sin more and more, to make the breaches thereof wider, as justice.] the ice was broken, and he grew worse and worse; coveted more idols, docted more upon those he had, and grew more ridiculous in the worship of them. Note, The way of idolatry, as of other sins, is down-hill, and men cannot easily stop themselves. It is the sad case of all those who have forsaken God, that they sin yet more and more. Let us then endeavor to keep our passions under.

1. WHEN Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died.

2. And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them. Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. 3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away; as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. 4. Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no saviour besides me.

Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation, till after the captivity; the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab; and this is the sin which, in these verses, they are charged with. Observe,

1. The provision that God made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have, v. 4. God did what was fit to be done, to keep them as he had forewarned them. (1.) He made himself known to them as the Lord their God, and took them to be his people in a peculiar manner; both by his word and by his works all along from the land of Egypt, he declared, I am the Lord thy God; and this he did both before the mount Sinai, that he was the Lord, and their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophecies and by his providences. (2.) He gave them a law forbidding them to worship any other; "Thou shalt know no god but me; not only shall not own and worship any other, but shall not even consult the ends and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee." Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those praised, who have not known the depths of Satan. (3.) He gave them a good reason for it; There is no saviour beside me. Whatever we take for our God, we expect to have for our saviour, to make us happy here and hereafter; as, where we have protection, we owe allegiance, so, where we have salvation, and hope for it, we owe adoration.

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Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation, till after the captivity; the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab; and this is the sin which, in these verses, they are charged with. Observe,

1. The provision that God made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have, v. 4. God did what was fit to be done, to keep them as he had forewarned them. (1.) He made himself known to them as the Lord their God, and took them to be his people in a peculiar man-
ness, in the form of a man. And when they made their idols men like themselves, in shape, they made themselves to be as stones like them, in reality; for they that make them, are like unto them, and so is every one that trusts in them. (4.) It was all the work of the craftsmen. Their images do not pretend, like that of Diana, to have come down from Jupiter, Acts xix. 35. no, perhaps the workmen stamped their names upon them, such an idol was such a man's work. See ch. viii. 6. Isa. xlv. 9. and (5.) They used thus the work of their hands, yet they were the beloved of their souls; for they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves. Neither the priests called upon the people thus to pay their homage, or the people who were not allowed to come so near themselves, called upon the men that sacrificed, the priests that attended for them, to kiss the calves in their name and stead, because they could not reach to do it, so very fond were they of paying their utmost respects to such an idol as they were taught to have a veneration for. Though they were calves, yet, if they were gods, the worshippers by themselves, or their proxies, thus made their honours to them. They kissed the calves, in token of the adoration of them, affection for them, and allegiance to them, as theirs. Thus we are told to kiss the Son, to take him for our Lord and our God.

4. The threatenings of wrath for their idolatry. The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another; and therefore all they that worship images shall be confounded, especially if Ephraim do it, Ps. cxxvii. 7. Because they are so fond of kissing their calves, therefore God will give them sensible convictions of their folly, v. 3. They promise themselves a great deal of safety and satisfaction in the worship of their idols, and that their prosperity will thereby be established; but God tells them that they shall be disappointed, and driven away in their wickedness. This is illustrated by four similitudes; They shall be, (1.) As the morning cloud, which promises showers of rain to the parched ground. (2.) As the early dew, which seems to be an earnest of such showers; but both pass away, and the day proves as dry and hot as ever; so fleet and transitory their profession of piety was, (ch. vi. 4.) and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them; and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed, and shall fail theirs be, not make an idol of this world. (3.) They are as the chaff, light and worthless; and they shall be driven as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, Ps. i. 6. XXXV. 5. Job xxii. 18. Nay, (4.) They are as the smoke, noisome and offensive; (see Isa. lxv. 5.) and they shall be driven away as the smoke out of the chimney's, that is soon dissipated and disappears, Ps. lxxxviii. 2. Note, No solid, lasting comfort is to be expected any where but in God.

5. I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. 6. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. 7. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them. 8. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

We may observe here, 1. The plentiful provision God had made for Israeb, and the seasonal supplies he had blessed them with; (v. 5.) "I did know thee in the wilderness, to be thy guide in all thy ways; and as a mothercourteously provided for thee, even in a land of great drought, when thou wast in extreme distress, and when no relief was to be had in an ordinary way."

See a description of this wilderness, Deut. viii. 13. Jer. ii. 6. and say, The God that knew them, and owned them, and fed them there, was a Friend indeed, for he was a Friend at need, and an all-sufficient Friend, that could provide for all the wants of his people. And necessary provisions were cut off, and where, if miracles had not been their daily bread, they must all have perished. Note, Help at an exigency lays under peculiar obligations, and must never be forgotten.

2. Their unworthy, ungrateful abuse of God's favour to them. God not only took care of them in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture. And (v. 6) according to their pasturage, so were they filled. God gave them both plenty and riches, and they did not spare it, but, having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan, they fed themselves to the full. And this was no hopeful presage, it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and more careful to provide for themselves; but what was the effect of it? They were filled, and their heart was exalted. Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent, and secure. The best comment upon this is that of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 13-15. But Jeeshurun waxed fat and kicked. When the body was stuffed up with plenty, the soul was puffed up with pride. Then they began to think their religion a thing below them, and they could not persuade themselves to stoop to the services of it. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. When they were poor and lame in the wilderness, they thought it was necessary for them to keep in with God, but when they were replenished and established in Canaan, they began to think they had no further need of him; Their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me. Note, Worldly prosperity, when it feeds men's pride, makes them forgetful of God: for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled, what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said to him, Depart from us, Job xxii. 17. It is said that those favours which might have made an army, an idol, are those which were to render him, should make us unmindful of him, and regard less what we do against him. We ought to know that we live upon God, when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles.

3. God's just resentment of their base ingratitude, v. 7, 8. The judgments threatened upon them, (v. 3.) intimated the departure of God from them. The threatenings here go further, and intimate the breaking in of all evils upon them; for God, who had so much befriended them, now turns to be their Enemy, and fights against them, which is expressed here very terribly: I will be unto them as a lion, and as a leopard. The lion is strong, and there is no resisting him. The leopard is swift to catch the prey. It is a most active and vigilant; As a leopard by the way will I observe them. As that beast of prey lives in wait by the road side to catch travellers, and devour them, so will God by his judgments watch over them to do them hurt, as he had watched over them to do them good, Jer. xxxiv. 27. No opportunity shall be slipped, that may accelerate or aggravate their ruin, Jer. xlii. 6. A field shall watch their cities. A lynx, or spotted beast, (and such the leopard is,) is noted for quick-sightfulness above any creatures; (Lynx vivus—The eyes of a Lynx;
The first of these verses is the summary, or contents, of all the rest, v. 9. Where we have, 1. The blame of the blundering sinners: O Israel, thy hereditary is thou; it is of and from thyself; or, “It has destroyed thee, O Israel; all that sin and folly of thine which thou art before charged with. As thy own wickedness has many a time corrected thee, so that has now at length destroyed thee.” Note, Wilful sinners are self-destroyers; obstinate inpenitence is the grossest self- destruction. They that go in and seek and find the lions, have their blood upon their own heads: they have destroyed themselves. 2. All the glory of Israel’s relief ascribed to God; But in me is thy help. That is, (1.) It might have been; “I would have helped thee, and healed thee, but then wouldest not be not healed and helped, but wast resolutely set upon thine own destruction.” This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, not only that they did which tended to their own ruin, but that they opposed the offers God made them, and the methods he took with them to have prevented it; I would have gathered them, and they would not. They might have been easily and effectually helped, but they put the help away from them. Nay, (2.) It may yet be; Thy case is bad, but it is not desperate. The hour has not yet rung, and I will help thee.” This is a planked throw out after shipwreck, and greatly magnifies not only the power of God, that he can help when things are at the worst, can help those that cannot help themselves, but the riches of his grace, that he will help those that have destroyed themselves, and therefore might judiciously be left to perish, that he will help those that had long refused his help. Dr. Peacock gives a different reading and sense of this verse; O Israel, this has destroyed thee, that in me is thy help. Presuming upon God and his favour has imbodied thee in those wicked ways which have been thy ruin.

Now, in the rest of these verses, we may see,

1. How Israel destroyed themselves. It is said, (v. 16.) They rebelled against their God, revolted from their allegiance to him, entered into a confederacy with his enemies, and took up arms against him; and this was the thing that ruined them, for never any hardened themselves against God, and prospered. Note, Those that rebel against their God, destroy themselves, for they make him their Enemy, for whom they are an unquenchable fire. 2. They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so they destroy themselves; they are doing that every day, which will be remembered against them another day: (v. 12.) The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin hid; God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him, and reckon with him for it afterward. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and given to the birds of prey, and it will be a sign against them; a trial of the people; and from it this Colossians, that is, Ephraim, was to be understood, the name of the border. This verse is thus delivered: “The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin hid; God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him, and reckon with him for it afterward. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and given to the birds of prey, and it will be a sign against them; a trial of the people; and from it this Colossians, that is, Ephraim, was to be understood; and on this account, they that live as Ephraim live, and are not converted, shall be smote by the sword of the Lord.” 3. The state of the nation is described; it is compared to the state of the vineyard: (v. 15.) The vineyard of the Lord is a very choice land; he has planted it, and it is his possession, and it is given to his people for a portion. It is compared to a vineyard, for it is the land where the golden honey flows, and it is a land where wine is made. The vineyard of the Lord is a very choice land; 4. The state of the nation is described; it is compared to the state of the vineyard: (v. 15.) The vineyard of the Lord is a very choice land; he has planted it, and it is his possession, and it is given to his people for a portion. It is compared to a vineyard, for it is the land where the golden honey flows, and it is a land where wine is made. The vineyard of the Lord is a very choice land; 16. Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.
yet, like the pains of a woman in labour, hopeful and promising, and in order to deliverance; and by these, though God corrects him, yet he designs his good. He is chastened, that he may not be destroyed. But (2.) They are not by these forwarded as they ought to be toward repentance and reformation, which would cause their sorrow to issue in true joy; He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long, as he does, in the place of the breaking forth of children; but he should take that time which God has given him, in order to get forth, lest he stiffen and still-born at last. Were the child which the mother is in travail of, capable of understanding its own case, we should reckon it an unwise child that would choose to stay long in the birth; for the captive exile hasteth to be loose, lest he die in the pit, Isa. li. 14. Note, Those may justly be reckoned their own destroyers, who defer and put off their repentance, by which alone they might help themselves. There are in danger of miscarrying in conversation, who delay it, and will not put forth themselves to spend the work, and bring it to an issue. 3. Therefore he is destroyed, because he has done that which would be his certain ruin, and neglected that which would be his only relief. Here is a sad description of a son that are to be lamented. He is a son of sorrow and desolation; Jer. xi. 15, 16. It is here foretold for granted that Ephraim is fruitful among his children; his name signifies, fruitfulness. He is fruitful in respect of the plentiful products of his country, and the great numbers of its inhabitants; it was both a rich and a populous tribe, as was foretold concerning it; but sin turns this fruitful tribe into barrenness. Joseph was a fruitful bough. But sin was his blight. The instrument is a east wind, representing a foreign enemy that should invade it. It is called the wind of the Lord, not only because it shall be a very great and strong wind, but because it shall be sent by divine direction; it shall come from the Lord, and do whatever he appoints; and see what effect it shall have upon that flourishing tribe, what desolations war shall make. (1.) Was it a rich tribe? The foreign enemy shall make it poor enough. This wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, a freezing, blasting wind, and shall dry up the springs and fountains with which this tree is watered, shall exhaust the sources of its wealth; the in vader shall waste the country, and so impoverish the husbandman; shall intercept trade and commerce, and so impoverish the merchant; and let not the people take their goods, or their furniture, think that they shall be exempted from the judgment; for he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. See the folly of those that lay up their treasure on earth, that lay it up in pleasant vessels, (vessels of desire, so the word is,) on which they set their affections, and in which they place their comfort and satisfaction. This is treasure that may be taken away; so that they are deprived of what they built up themselves. This is what either moth or rust may corrupt, or what thieves and soldiers may steal and carry away; but wise and happy they who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and in the pleasant things of that world which cannot be spoiled, which they cannot be stripped of; ever happy are they, and therefore truly wise. (2.) Was it a fruitful tribe, and numerous? Their enemy shall go over it, and make it men few; Samaria shall become desolate, without inhabitants. [1.] Those shall be cut off, who are the guard and joy of the present generation; the men who bear arms, shall bear them to no purpose, for they shall fall by the sword, so that there shall be none to make head against the fury of the conquering foe; and one of the sons of God, or public, or of private families. [2.] Those shall be cut off, who are the seed and hope of the next generation, who should rise up in the places of those who fell by the sword; the whole nation must be rooted out, and therefore the fields shall be dashed to pieces, in the most cruel and barbarous manner, and, which is, if possible, yet more inhuman, the women with child shall be ripped up. Thus shall the glory of Samaria flee away from the birth, and from the womb, ch. ix. 11.—x. 14. See instances of this cruelty, 2 Kings viii. 12.—xxv. 16. Amos i. 11. Let us now see how God was the helper of this son against his enemies; and, for that end, he will be his king. v. 16. I will be thy king, to rule and save thee. Though they had refused to be his subjects, and had rebelled against him, yet he would still be his king, and would not abandon them. The business and care of a good king is, to keep his people, not only from being ruined by foreign enemies, but from ruining themselves and one another. Thus will God yet be Israel's king, as in the days of old. Note, Our case would be sad indeed, if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves. 1. God will be their king, when they have no other king; he will protect and save them, when those are cut off and gone, who should have been their protectors and saviors; I will be He, (so v. 10. may be read,) He that shall help thee. There is the king that may save thee, and the cities that may be fortified for thee, and fight thy battles, when thy cities are invaded by a foreign power, and suppress the more dangerous quarrels of thy citizens among themselves? Where are thy judges, who by administering public justice should preserve the public peace? (For they are righteousness and peace, that kiss each other.) Where are thy judges that thou hast such a desire of, and such a dependence upon, of whom they say, Give us a king and judges? This refers to the foolish, wicked desire, (1.) Which the whole nation had of a kingly government, being weary of the theocracy, or divine government, which they had been under during the time of the Judges, because it looked too mean for them; they rejected Samuel, and in him the Lord, when they said, Give us a king like the nations, whereas the Lord was their King. (2.) To the desire which the ten tribes had of a kingly government different from that of the house of David, because they thought that was too absolute, and bore too hard upon them, and they hoped to mend themselves by setting up Jeroboam. Both these are instances, [1.] Of men's improvidence for themselves; when they are uneasy with their present lot, they think, if they were raised to another, or their condition was changed, it would be better; but they are commonly disappointed, and do not find that advantage in the alteration, which they promised themselves. [2.] Of men's impiety toward God, in thinking to refine upon his appointments, and amend them. God gave Israel judges and prophets for their conduct; but they were weary of them, and cried, Give us a king and judges. But God, who is not weary of them, has established it by a covenant of royalty; but they were soon weary of that too, and cried, We have no part in David. These destroy themselves, who are not pleased with what God does for them, but think they can do better for themselves. Well, in both these requests, Providence humoured them; gave them Saul first, and after Saul, Jeroboam, and when they rebelled against him, gave them in anger, (given in thunder, 1 Sam. xii. 18, 19.) and so soon after was taken away in wrath, upon Mount Gibbon. The kingly government of the ten tribes was given in anger, not only against Solomon for his defection, but against the ten tribes that desired it, for their discontent and disaffection to the house of David, and God was now precisely what they desired, and yet that away in wrath, by the power of the king of Assyria. And then, where is thy king? He is gone, and thou shalt abide many days without a king.
and without a prince, (ch. iii. 4.) shall have none to save thee, none to rule thee. Note, First, God often gives in such cases no signal or extraordinary design; if he gives it with a curse, and with it gives us up to our own hearts' lusts. Thus he gave Israel quails. Secondly, What we inordinately desire we are commonly disappointed in, and it cannot save us, as we expected it should. Thirdly, What God gives in anger, he takes away in wrath; what he gives because we did not desire it we may take away because we did not desire it as well. It is the happiness of the saints, that, whether God gives or takes, it is all in love, and furnishes them with matter for praise. To the pure all things are pure. It is the misery of the wicked, that whether God gives or takes, it is all in wrath; to them nothing is pure, nothing is comfortable.

2. God will do this for them, which no other King could do if they had one; (v. 14.) I will ransom them from the power of the grave. Though Israel, according to the flesh, be abandoned to destruction, God has mercy in store for his spiritual Israel, in whom all the promises were to have their accomplishment, and this among the rest, for to them the apocalypse it, (I Cor. xv. 53.,) and particularly, to the blessed resurrection of the righteous, and breaking of their chains, including their spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life. It is promised, (1.) That the captives shall be delivered, shall be ransomed from the power of the grave. Their deliverance shall be by ransom; and we know it was that paid their ransom, and what the ransom was, for it was the Son of man, that gave his life a ransom for many. (Matt. xx. 28.) It is he that thus redeemed them. Those who, upon their repenting and believing, are, for the sake of Christ's righteousness, acquitted from the guilt of sin, and saved from death, and hell, which are the wages of sin, are those ransomed of the Lord, that shall, in the great day, be brought out of the grave in triumph, and it shall be as impossible for the bands of death to hold them as it was to hold their Master. (2.) That the conqueror shall be destroyed; O death, I will be thy plague. Jesus Christ was the Plague and Destruction of death and the grave, when by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, and when in his own resurrection he triumphed over the grave; but the complete destruction of them will be in the resurrection of them, and the deliverance of them. Those who have been delivered shall for ever be swallowed up in victory, and it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But the word which we translate, I will, may as well be rendered, Ubi nun—Where now are thy plagues? And so the apostle took it; "O death, where is thy plague, or sting, with which thou hast so long resisted the world? O grave, where is thy victory, or thy destruction, wherewith thou hast destroyed mankind?" Christ has abolished death, has broken the power of it, and altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it. This promise he has made, and it shall be made good to all that are his; for repentance shall be hid from his eyes, he will never recall this sentence passed on death and the grave, for he is not a man that he should repent. Thou art to God therefore who gives us the victory.

CHAP. XIV.

The strain of this chapter differs from that of the foregoing chapters. Those were generally made up of reproves for sin, and threatenings of wrath and destruction, was made up of promises, assurance, and promises of mercy, and with these the prophet closes; for all the foregoing convictions and terrors he had spoken, were designed to prepare and make way for these; he wounds, that he may heal; the Spirit convinces, that he may comfort. This chapter is a lesson for penitents; and some such there were in Israel at this day, as bad as things were. We have here, 1. Directions in repenting, what to do, and what to say, v. 1., 3. II. Encouragement to repent, taken from God's readiness to receive returning sinners, (v. 4, 8,) and the comforts he had prepared for them, v. 2., -7. III. A solemn recommendation of these things to our serious thoughts, v. 9.

1. O ISRAEL, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. 3. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Here we have,

I. A kind invitation given to sinners to repent, v. 1. It is directed to Israel, God's professing people; they are called to return. Note, Conversion must be preached even to those that are within the pale of the church, as well as to the proselytes of Israel, and therefore art bound to thy God in duty, gratitude, and interest; thy revolt from him is so much the more heinous, and thy return to him so much the more necessary. Let Israel see, 1. What work he has made for repentance; "Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Thou hast stumbled; so some read it. Their idols were their stumbling-blocks; "Thou art fallen from God, into sin, far off from all good, fallen down under the load of guilt and the curse." Note, Sin is a fall; and it concerns those that are fallen by sin, to get up again by repentance. 2. What work he has to do in his repentance; "Return to the Lord thy God; return to him as the Lord whom thou hast a dependence upon, as thy God, thine in covenant, whom thou hast an interest in." Note, It is the great concern of those that have revolted from God, to return to God, and so to do their first works; Return to him from whom thou hast fallen, and who alone is able to raise thee up. Return even to the Lord; or quite home to the Lord; do not only look to him, but take some steps toward him, but make thorough work of it. The ancient Jews had a saying, grounded on this, Returneth a little, he brings men quite up to the throne of glory.

II. Necessary instructions given them how to repent. 1. They must bethink themselves what to say to God, when they come to him; Take with you words. They are required to bring, not sacrifices and offerings, but penitent prayers and supplications; the fruit of thy lips; yet not of the lips only, but of the heart, else words are but wind. One of the rabbins says, They must be such words as proceed from what is spoken first in the inner man; the heart must dictate to the tongue. We must take good words with us, by taking good thoughts and good affections with us. Verbaque praevias rem non unius sequuntur—Those who master a subject, are selective of words; he learns to speak as he speaks. They must not only take with them words, but must turn to the Lord; inwardly in their hearts, outwardly in their lives.

Now, for their assistance herein, and encourage
ment, God is pleased to put words into their mouths, to teach them what they shall say; surely we may hope to speed with God, when he has so ordered our address to be drawn up ready to our hands, and his own Spirit has endued it for us; and we doubt we shall speed, if the workings of our souls agree with the words here recommended to us.

They are,

(1.) Petitioning words. Two things we are here directed to petition for. [1.] To be acquitted from guilt. When we return to the Lord, we must say the same, Isa. xli. 31. And the sense is, now smiting for sin, under the load of affliction, but are taught to pray, not as Pharaoh, Take away this death, but take away this sin. Note, When we are in affliction, we should be more concerned for the forgiveness of our sins than for the removal of our trouble. "Take away iniquity, lift it off as a burden we are ready to sink under, or as the stumbling-block which we have often fallen over. Lord, take it away, that it may not appear against us, to our confusion and condemnation. "Take it all away by a free and full remission, for we cannot pretend to strike any of it off by a satisfaction of our own." When God pardons sin, he pardons all that great debt; and when we pray against sin, we must pray against it all; and not except any. [2.] To be accepted as righteous in sight; "Return to the Lord, let us have thy favour and love, and have thou respect to us and to our performances. Receive our prayer graciously; be well pleased with that good which by thy grace we are enabled to do. "Take good, so the word is; Take it to bestowed upon us, so the margin reads it; Give good. This follows upon the petition for the taking away of iniquity; for till iniquity is taken away, we have no reason to expect any good from God; but the taking away of iniquity makes way for the conferring of good, removing probitions—by taking that out of the way which hindered. Give good. They do not say what good, but refer themselves to God; it is not good of the world's showing, (Ps. iv. 6.) but good of God's giving. "Give good, that good which we have forfeited, and which thou hast promised to us, as a fountain of life. Note, God's gracious acceptance, and the blessed fruits and tokens of that acceptance, are to be earnestly desired and prayed for by us, in our returning to God. "Give good, that good which will make us good, and keep us from returning to iniquity again." (2.) Promising words. These also are put into their mouths, not to move God, or to oblige him to show them mercy, but to move themselves, and oblige themselves to returns of duty. Note. Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience. Two things they are to promise and vow.

[1.] Thanksgiving; Pardon our sins, and accept of us, so will we render the calves of our life. The fruit of our lips shall be thanksgiving; Ps. lix. 15. And the sense is, for burnt-offerings, and so it agrees with the Hebrew. The Apostle quotes this phrase, (Heb. xiii. 15.) and by the fruit of our life understands the sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to his name. Note, Praise and thanksgiving are our spiritual sacrifice, and if they come from an upright heart, shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock, Ps. xlv. 8. And the sense of our own acceptance with God will enlarge our hearts in praise and thankfulness. Those that are received graciously, may and must render the calves of their lives. Poor returns for rich retributions, yet, if sincere, more acceptable than the calves of the stall.

[2.] Amendment of life. They are taught to promise, not only verbal acknowledgments, but a real reformation. And we are taught here, First, in our returns to God to covenant against sin. We cannot get at God, much less have fellowship with him, if we are giving it, if we do not put it away by forsaking it. Secondly, To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sins, as we ought to be in our confessions; because deceit lies in generals. Thirdly, To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by. We must keep covenant with God and ourselves against, our own iniquity, Ps. xlii. 25.

The sin they here covenant against, owning thereby that they had been guilty of it, is, giving that glory to another, which is due to God only; this they promise they will never do. 1. By putting that confidence in creatures, which should be put in God only. They will not trust to their alliances abroad: As for Assyria, shall not save us. "We will not court the help of the Assyrians when we are in distress, as we have done; (ch. v. 13.—vi. 11.—viii. 9.) we will not contract for it, nor will we confide in it, or depend upon it. Having a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to trust to, we scorn to be held to the Assyrians for help." They will not trust to their warlike preparations at home, especially not to the horse and chariots of war, which is, as it were, the moving part of the army; "We will not make court to Egypt." (For thence they fetched their horses, Deut. xvii. 16. Isa. xxx. 16.—xxxii. 1.) "When our enemies invade us, we will depend upon our God to succour our infantry, and will be in no case to remount our cavalry." Or, "We will not post on horseback, for haste, from one creature to another, to seek relief, but will take the necessity of our case to our God, and make it clear to ourselves, if he be good, we must turn to him, and not to the world's goods, Isa. xx. 5. Note, True repentance takes us off from trusting to an arm of flesh, and brings us to rely on God only for all the good we stand in need of. 2. Nor will they do it by paying that homage to creatures, which is due to God only. We will not say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods. They must promise never to worship idols again, and for a good reason, because it is the most absurd and senseless thing in the world to pray to that as a god, which is the work of our hands. We must promise that we will not set our hearts upon the gains of this world, nor pride ourselves in our external performances in religion, for that is, in effect, to say to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods."

(3.) Pleading words are here put into their mouths; For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. We must take our encouragement in prayer, not from any merit God finds in us, but purely from the mercy we hope to find in God. This contains in itself a great truth, that God takes special care of fatherless children, Ps. lxvii. 4. 5. So he did in his law, Exod. xxii. 22. So he does in his providence, Ps. xxxvi. 16. It is God's prerogative to be a Father to the fatherless. They are objects of mercy, for they are proper objects of mercy; in him they find it, there it is laid up for them, and there they must seek it; seek and ye shall find. It comes in here as a good plea for mercy and grace, and an encouraging one to their faith. [1.] They plead the distress of their state and condition; We are fatherless orphans, destitute of help. These may expect to find help of the Lord, as they were fatherless, the helpless ones in themselves, and are willing to acknowledge it. This is a good step toward comfort. If we have not yet boldness to call God Father, yet we lock upon ourselves as fatherless without him, and therefore lay ourselves at his feet, to be looked upon by him with compassion. [2.] They plead God's wonted loving-kindness to such as were in
that condition: With thee the fatherless only
may find, but doth find, and shall find, mercy. It
is a great encouragement to our faith and hope, in
returning to God, that it is his glory to father the
fatherless, and help the helpless.

4. I will heal their backsliding, I will
love them freely; for mine anger is turned
away from him. 5. I will be as the dew
unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and
cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6. His
branches shall spread, and his beauty shall
be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Leba-
non. 7. They that dwell under his shadow
shall return; they shall revive as the corn,
and grow as the vine: the scent thereof
shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers
of returning Israel; they seek God's face, and they
shall not seek in vain; God will be sure to meet
them in a way of mercy, who return to him in a
way of repentance. He will now speak to God's people
in good promises; as he an-
swered the angel with good words, and comfortable
words, Zech. i. 13. If we take with us the forego-
ing words, in our coming to God, we may take
home with us these following words for our faith
to feast upon; and see how these answer those.

I. Do they dread and deprecate God's displea-
sure, and therefore do not come to him? God assures them
that, upon their submission, his anger is turned
away from them. This is laid as the ground of all
the other favours here promised. I will do so and
so, for mine anger is turned away, and thereby a
door is opened for all good to flow to them, Isa. xii.
1. Note, Though God is justly and greatly angry
with sinners, yet he is not impenetrable in his anger;
it may be turned away, it shall be turned away,
from those that turn away from their iniquity. God
will be reconciled to those that are reconciled to
him and to his whole will.

II. Do they pray for the taking away of iniquity?
He assures them that he will heal their backslidings;
so he promised, Jer. iii. 22. Note, Though back-
slidings from God are the dangerous diseases and
weaknesses of his people, yet they are not incurable, for
God has graciously promised, that if backsliding
sinners will apply themselves to him as their Physi-
cian, and comply with his methods, he will heal
their backslidings. He will heal the guilt of their
backslidings by pardoning mercy, and their best to
backslide by renewing grace. Their iniquity shall
not be their ruin.

III. Do they pray that God will receive them
graciously? In answer to that, behold, it is pro-
mised, I will love them freely. God had hated them
while they went on in sin; (ch. ix. 15.) but now
that they return and repent, he loves them; not
only ceases to be angry with them, but takes com-
placency in them, and designs their good. He loves
them freely; with an absolute, entire love, so some;
so the love is not only not cured of the former displease-
ure; with a liberal, beautiful love, so others; he
will be open-handed in his love to them, and will
think nothing too much to bestow upon them, or to
do for them. Or, with a cheerful, willing love; he
will love them without reluctancy or penitency.
He will not say in the day of thy repentance, How
shalt thou repent thee again? as he said in the day of
thine apostacy, Hosea xiv. 6. But, O with an unmerci-
ed, preventing love. Whom God
loves he loves freely, not because they deserve it,
but of his own good pleasure. He loves because he
will love, Deut. vii. 7, 8.

IV. Do they pray that God will give good,
will make them good? In answer to that, behold, it is
promised, I will be as the dew unto Israel, v. 5.
Observe,
1. What shall be the favour God will bestow
upon them. It is the blessing of their father Jacob.
God give thee the dew of heaven, Gen. xxvii. 28.
Nay, what they need God will not only give, but
he will last give. He will be the dew to them, all that
they need; I will be as the dew unto Israel. This
speaks spiritual blessings in heavenly things; and it
follows upon the healing of their backslidings; for
pardoning mercy is always accompanied with re-
newing grace. Note, To Israelites indeed God
himself will be as the dew. He will instruc-
t them, his doctrine shall drop upon them as the dew,
Deut. xxxii. 2. They shall know more and more of
his love for he will come to them as the rain, Hos. vi. 3.
He will refresh them with his comforts, that their
souls shall be as a watered garden, Isa. lvi. 11.
He will be to true penitents as the dew to Israel,
when they were in the wilderness, dew that had
manna in it, Exod. xvi. 14. Num. xi. 9. The
graces of the Spirit are the hidden manna, hidden
in the dew; God will give them bread from heaven,
as he did to Israel in the dew, in abundance, John
i. 16.

2. What shall be the fruit of that favour which
shall be produced in them; the grace thus freely
bestowed on them shall not be in vain. Those souls,
these Israelites, to whom God is as the dew, on
whom his grace distils;

[4.] The trees growing. The bad being
by the grace of God made good, shall by the same
grace be made better; for grace, wherever it is,
there is growing. [1.] They shall grow upward, and be
more flourishing, shall grow as the lily; or, as some
read it, shall blossom as the rose. The growth of
the lily, as that of all bulbous roots, is very quick
and speedy; the root of the lily seems lost in the
ground all winter, but, when it is refreshed with
the dews of the spring, it starts up in a little time; so
the grace of God improves young converts some-
times very fast. The lily, when it is come to its
height, is a lovely flower; (Matth. vi. 29.) so grace
is the comeliness of the soul, Ezek. xvi. 14. It
is the beauty of holiness that is produced by the
dew of the morning, Ps. cx. 3. [2.] They shall grow
forward, shall grow as the willow-tree, vii. 8.
They shall grow fast, and grows fine, but it soon fades, and is easily
plucked up; and therefore it is here promised to
Israel, that with the flower of the lily he shall have
the root of the cedar; he shall cast forth his roots as
Lebanon; as the trees of Lebanon, which, having
taken deep root, cannot be plucked up, Amos ix.
15. Note, Spiritual growth consists most in the
root of the root, which is out of sight, which
more we depend upon Christ, and draw sap and
virtue from him, the more we act in religion from a
principle; and the more steadfast and resolved we
are in it, the more we cast forth our roots.
[3.] They shall grow round about; (v. 6.) His branches
shall spread on all sides. And (v. 7.) he shall
grow as the vine, whose branches extend furthest
beyond the growth of the root, was to be brought
beneath, Gen. xlix. 22. When many are added to the church
from without, when a hopeful generation rises up,
than Israel's branches spread. When particular
believers abound in good works, and increase in
the knowledge of God, and in every good gift, then
their branches may be said to spread. The inward
man is renewed day by day.

[5.] The trees shall be fruitful and accepta-
ble both to God and man. Grace is an admirable thing, and
makes those that have it truly amiable. They are
here compared to such trees as are pleasant, [1.]
To the sight; his beauty shall be as the olive-tree,
which is always green; The Lord called thy name a green olive-tree, Jer. xi. 16. Ordinances are the beauty of the church, and in them it is, and shall be, ever green. Holiness is the beauty of a soul; when these that believe with the heart, make profession with the mouth, and justify and adorn that profession with an agreeable conversation, then their beauty is as the olive-tree, Ps. iii. 8. It is a promise to the trees of righteousness, that their leaf shall not wither, (2) To the smell His smell shall be Lebanon, (v. 6.) and his scent as the vine of Lebanon, v. 7. This was the praise of their father Jacob; The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed, Gen. xxvii. 27. The church is compared to a garden of spices, (Cant. iv. 12, 14.) which all her garments smell of. True believers are acceptable to God, and approved of men; God smells a sweet savour from their spiritual sacrifices, (Gen. viii. 21.) and they are acceptable of the multitude of their brethren. Grace is the perfume of the soul, the perfume of the name; makes it like precious ointment, Eccl. vii. 1. The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon; (so the margin reads it,) not only their reviving comforts now, but their surviving honours when they are gone, shall be as the wine of Lebanon, that has a deep and durable savour. Flourishing churches have their faith spoken of throughout the world, (Rom. i. 8.) and leave their name to be remembered; (Ps. xlv. 17.) and the memory of flourishing saints is blessed, and shall be so; as theirs by faith obtained a good report.

(3.) They shall be fruitful and useful. The church is compared here to the vine and the olive, with those bring forth useful fruits, to the homestead God and man. Nay, the very shadow of the church shall be acceptable; (v. 7.) They that dwell under his shadow, shall return. Under God's shadow, so some; under the shadow of the Messias, so the Chaldee. Believers dwell under God's shadow, (Ps. xci. 1.) and there they are, and may be, safe and easy; but it is rather, under the shadow of Israel, under the shadow of the church. Note, God's promises pertain to those, and those only, that dwell under the church's shadow, that attend on God's ordinances, and adhere to his people; not that flee to that shadow only for shelter in a hot gleam, but that dwell under it, Ps. xxvii. 4. We may apply it to particular believers; when a man is effectually brought home to God, all that dwell under his shadow, shall return, as for the church, the servants, subjects, friends, This day is salvation come to this house. They that dwell under the shadow of this church shall return, their drooping spirits shall return, and they shall be refreshed and comforted; he restores my soul, Ps. xxiii. 3. They shall revive as the corn, which, when it is sown, dies first, and then revives, and brings forth much fruit, John xii. 24. It is promised that God's people shall be blest as the green olive-tree. And a very great and valuable mercy it is to be serviceable to our generation. Comfort and honour attend it.

3. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him; I am like a green fir-tree. From me is thy fruit found. 9. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

1. Concurring Ephraim; he is spoken of, and spoken to, v. 8.

1. Here is his repentance and reformation; Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? As some read it, God here reasons and argues with him, why he should renounce idolatry; "O Ephraim, what to me and idols? What concord or agreement can there be between me and idols? What communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial?" (Cer. vi. 14, 15.) Therefore then more than enough of God's grace to him, if thou wilt come into covenant with me." As we read it, God promised to bring Ephraim and keep him to this, Ephraim shall say, God will put it into his heart to say it, What have I to do any more with idols? He had promised (v. 3.) not to say any more to the works of his hands, Ye are my gods. But God's promises to us are much more our security and our strength for the meriting of sin, than our promises to God; and therefore God himself is here Surety for his servant to good, will put it into his heart, and into his mouth. And whatever good we say or do at any time, it is he that works it in us. Ephraim had sedulously engaged not to call his idols his gods; but God here engages farther for him, that he shall resolve to have no more to do with them, that he shall take a decisive stand against them, and that with the utmost detestation; for it is necessary not only that in our lives we be turned from sin, but that in our hearts we be turned against sin. See here, (1.) The power of divine grace; Ephraim had 0 joined to idols, (ch. iv. 17.) was so fond of them, that one would have thought he could never have fallen out with them; and yet God will work with him a change in him, that he shall loathe them as much as ever he loved them. (2.) See the benefit of sanctified affections. Ephraim had hardened for his idolatry, it had brought one judgment after another upon him, and this at length is the fruit, even the taking away of his sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. (3.) See the nature of repentance; it is a firm and fixed resolution to have no more to do with sin; this is the language of a penitent; "I am ashamed that ever I had to do with sin; but I have had enough of it, I hate it, and by the grace of God I will never have any thing to do with it again; no, not with the occasions of it." Then shall say to thine idol, Get thee hence, (Isa. xxx. 22.) shall say to the tempter, Get thee behind me, Satan.

2. Here is the gracious notice God is pleased to give of his coming to Ephraim, to bless him, and observe him; I have heard, and will look upon him; so some read it.

Note, The God of heaven takes cognizance of the penitent reflections and resolutions of returning sinners. He expects and desires the repentance of sinners, because he has no pleasure in their ruin. He looks upon men, (Job xxxii. 27.) hearkens and hears, Jer. vii. 6. And if there be any disposition to repent, he is well pleased with it; when Ephraim comes to man himself before God, he is enriched, and he is a pleasant child, Jer. xxxi. 20. He meets penitents with mercy, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. God observed Ephraim, to see whether he would bring forth fruits meet for this profession of repentance that he made, and whether he would continue in this good mind. He observed him, to do him good, and comfort him, according to the exigencies of his case.

3. Here is the mercy God designed for him, in order to his comfort, and perseverance in his resolutions; still God will be all in all to him. Before, Israel was compared to a tree, now, God compares himself to one. He will be to his people, (1.) As the branches of a tree; "I am like a green fir-tree, and will be so to thee." The fir-trees, in the desert countries, were exceeding large and thick, and a shelter against sun and rain. God will be to all true converts both a Delight and a Defence; under his
HOSEA, XIV.

939

The protection and influence they shall both dwell in safety and dwell at ease. He will be either a Sun and a Shield, or a Shade and a Shield, according as their case requires. They shall sit down under his shadow with delight, Cant. ii. 3. He will be so all weathers, Isa. iv. 6. (2.) As the root of a tree; From me is thy fruit found. Which may be understood either of the fruit brought forth to us—to him we owe all our comforts; or of the fruit brought forth by us—from him we receive grace and strength to enable us to do our duty. Whatever fruits of righteousness we bring forth, all the praise of them is owing to God; for he works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

II. Concerning every one that hears and reads the words of the prophecy of this book; (v. 9.) Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Perhaps the prophet was wont to conclude the sermons he preached with these words, and now he closes the whole book with them, in which he had committed to writing some fragments of the many sermons he had preached. Observe,

1. The character of those that do profit by the truths he delivered. Who is wise and prudent? He shall understand these things, he shall know them; those that set themselves to understand and know these things, thereby make it to appear that they are truly wise and prudent, and will thereby be made more so; and if any do not understand and know them, it is because they are foolish and unwise. Those that are wise in the doing of their duty, that are prudent in practical religion, are most likely to know and understand both the truths and providences of God, which are a mystery to others. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, Ps. xxv. 14. Who is wise? This intimates a desire that those who read and hear these things, would understand them; O that they were wise! And a complaint that few were so, Who has believed our report?

2. The excellency of the things concerning which we are here instructed; The ways of the Lord are right; and therefore it is our wisdom and duty to know and understand them. The way of God's precepts, in which he requires us to walk, is right, agreeing with the rules of eternal reason and equity, and having a direct tendency to our eternal felicity. The ways of God's providence, in which he walks towards us, are all right; no fault is to be found with any thing that God does, for it is all well done. His judgments upon the impenitent, his favours to the penitent, they are all right; however they may be perverted and misinterpreted, God will at last be justified and glorified in them all; his ways are equal.

3. The different use which men make of them.

(1.) The right ways of God to those that are good, are, and will be, a savour of life unto life; The just shall walk in them; they shall conform to the will of God both in his precepts and in his providences, and shall have the comfort of so doing. They shall well understand the mind of God, both in his words and in his works, they shall be well reconciled to both, and shall accommodate themselves to God's intention in both. The just shall walk in those ways toward their great end, and shall not come short of it.

(2.) The right ways of God to those that are wicked, will be a savour of death unto death; The transgressors shall fall, not only in their own wrong ways, but even in the right ways of the Lord. Christ, that is a Foundation Stone to some, is to others a Stone of stumbling, and a Rock of offence. That which was ordained to life, becomes, through their abuse of it, death to them. God's providences, being not duly improved by them, harden them in sin, and contribute to their ruin. God's discovery of himself both in the judgments of his mouth and in the judgments of his hand, is to us according as we are affected under it. Recipit tur ad modum recipientis—What is received influences according to the qualities of the receiver. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But of all transgressors those certainly have the most dangerous, fatal falls, that fall in the ways of God, that split on the Rock of ages, and suck poison out of the balm of Gilead. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid of this.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

JOEL.

We are altogether uncertain concerning the time when this prophet prophesied; it is probable that it was about the same time that Amos prophesied, not for the reason that the rabbins give, because Amos begins his prophecy with that wherewith Joel concludes his; The Lord shall roar out of Zion but for the reason Dr. Lightfoot gives, because he speaks of the same judgments of locusts, and drought, and fire, that Amos laments, which is an intimation that they appeared about the same time, Amos in Israel, and Joel in Judah. Hosea and Obadiah prophesied about the same time; and it appears that Amos prophesied in the days of Jeroboam, the second king of Israel, Amos vii. 10. God sent a variety of prophets, that they might strengthen the hands one of another, and that out of the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established. In this prophecy,

I. The desolation made by hosts of noxious insects is described, ch. i. and part of ch. ii.

II. The people are hereupon called to repentance, ch. ii.

III. Promises are made of the return of mercy upon their repentance, (ch. ii.) and promises of the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days.

IV. The cause of God's people is pleaded against their enemies, whom God would in due time reckon with; (ch. iii.) and glorious things are spoken of the gospel-Jerusalem, and of the prosperity and perpetuity of it.

JOEL, I.

CHAP. I.

This chapter is the description of a lamentable devastation made of the country of Judah by locusts and caterpillars; some think that the prophet speaks of it as a thing to come, and gives warning of it beforehand, as usually the prophets did of judgments coming. Others think that it was now present, and that his business is to affect the people with it, and awaken them by it to repentance. I. It is spoken of as a judgment which was no precedent of in former ages, v. 1. 2. II. All sorts of people sharing in the calamity are called upon to lament it, v. 8. 13. III. They are directed to look up to God in their lamentations, and to humble themselves before him, v. 14. 20.

1. THE word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel. 2. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? 3. Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation; 4. That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten. 5. Awake, ye drunkards and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. 6. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion. 7. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree; he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

It is a foolish fancy which some of the Jews have, that this Joel the prophet was the same with that Joel who was the son of Samuel; (1 Sam. viii. 2.) yet one of their rabbins very gravely undertakes to
show why Samuel is here called _Pethuel_. This Joel was long after that. He here speaks of a sad and sore judgment which was now brought, or to be brought, upon Judah, for their sins. Observe, 1. The greatness of the judgment, expressed here in two things. (1.) It was such as could not be paralleled in the ages that were past; in history, or in the memory of any living. v. 2. The old men are appealed to, who could remember what had happened long ago; nay, and all the inhabitants of the land are called on to testify, if they could any of them remember the like. Let them go further than any man's memory, and prepare themselves for the search of their fathers, (Job viii. 8.) and they would not find an account of the like. Thus it appears that out of their predecessors in sin, may justly expect to fall under greater and sorrier judgments than any of their predecessors knew. (2.) It was such as would not be forgotten in the ages to come; (v. 3.) "Tell ye your children of it, let them know what dismal tokens of the wrath of God you have been under, that they may take warning, and may learn obedience by the things which you have suffered, for it is designed for warning to them also. Yet, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation; let them tell it not only as a strange thing, which may serve for matter of talk," (as such uncommon accidents are recorded in our almanacks)—It is so long since the plague, and fire—so long since the great frost, and the great judgment of God on Sennacherib, took all the defenceless cities of Judah, and then, no doubt, made havoc of the country, and destroyed the products of it; nay, some make the four sorts of animals here named, (v. 4.) to signify the four monarchical, which, in their turns, were oppressive to the people of the Jews, one destroying what had escaped the fury of the other. Many of the fathers, with the expositor, think the expression of the coming of enemies, and their multitude, to lay all waste. So the Chaldee Paraphrast mentions these animals here; (v. 4.) but afterward, (ch. ii. 25.) puts instead of them, Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, potentates, and revenging kindred. But it seems much rather to be understood literally of armies of insects coming upon the land, and eating up the fruits of it. Locusts are one of the plagues of Egypt; of them it is said, There never were any like them, nor should be, Exod. x. 14. None such as those in Egypt, none such as these in Judah; none like these locusts for bigness, none like these for multitude, and the mischief they did: that lasted but for a few days, this here seems to have continued for four years successively, and to have been the destruction of the country by a foreign enemy invading it, because if the people were not humbled and reformed by that lesser judgment which devoured the land, God would send this greater upon them, which would devour the inhabitants; and by the description of that they are bid to take it for a warning. If this nation of worms does not reduce them, another nation shall come to ruin them.

Observe, (1.) What these animals are, that are sent against them—locusts and caterpillars, Palmer-worms andanker-worms, v. 4. We cannot now describe how these differed one from another; they were all little insects, any of them despicable, and which a man might, with his foot or with his finger; but when they came in vast swarms, or shoals, they were very formidable, and ate up all before them. Note, God is Lord of hosts, has all creatures at his command, and, when he pleases, can humble and mortify a proud and rebellious people by the weakest and most contemptible creatures. Man is bids, to be humble and to obey, for he appears that is less than a worm, for, when God pleases, worms are too hard for him, plunders his country, eat up that for which he laboured, destroys the forage, and cut off the subsistence of a potent nation. The weaker the instrument is that God employs, the more is his power magnified. (2.) What force and fury they came with. They are here called a nation, (v. 5.) because they are embodied, and act by consent, and as it were with a common design; for though the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands, (Prov. xxx. 27.) and it is there mentioned as an instance of his wisdom. It is prudence for those that are weak severally, to unite and act jointly. They are strong, for they are without number. The small dust of the earth, (as Job viii. 7.) may be, at first, but a heap of dust is weighty; so a worm can do little, (yet one worm served to wither Jonah's gourd,) but numbers of them can do wonders. They are said to have the teeth of a lion, of a great lion, because of the great and terrible execution they do. Note, Locusts become as lions, when they come armed with a divine commission. We read of the poxes, out of the bottom of the sea, Rev. xv. 4. as the teeth of lions, Rev. x. 8. (3.) What mischief they do. They eat up all before them; (v. 4.) what one leaves, the other devours; they destroy not only the grass and corn, but the trees; (v. 7.) The vine is laid waste. These vermin eat the leaves which should be a shelter to the fruit while it ripens, and so that also perishes, and comes to nothing. They eat the very bark of the fig-tree, and so kill it. Then the fig-tree does not blossom, nor is there fruit in the vine.

3. A call to the drunkards to lament this judgment; (v. 5.) Awake and weep, all ye drinkers of wine. This intimates, (1.) That they should suffer very sensibly by this calamity; it should touch them in a tender part, the new wine which they loved so well, should be cut off from their mouths. Note, It is just with God to take away those comforts which are abused to luxury and excess, to recover the corn and wine which are prepared for Baal, which are made the food and fuel of a base lust. And to them judgments of that kind are most grievous. The more men place their happiness in the gratifications of sense, the more pressing temporal afflictions are upon them. (2.) It intimates, that they were not to care when the vine was laid waste, they could live as well without it as they had done, it was no trouble to the Nazarites; but the drinkers of wine will weep and howl. The more delights we make necessary to our satisfaction, the more we expose ourselves to trouble and disappointment. The more we need not to care when the vine was laid waste, they that will not be roused out of their security by the word of God, shall be roused by his rod; those that will not be startled by judgments at a distance, shall be themselves arrested by them; and when they are going to take of the for
bitten fruit, a prohibition of another nature shall come between the cup and the lift, and cut off the wine from their mouth.

3. Lament like a virgin girded with sack-cloth for the husband of her youth. 9. The meat-offering and the drink-offering is cut off from the house of the Lord: the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn. 10. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted; the new wine is dryed up, the oil languisheth. 11. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. 12. The vine is dryed up, and the fig-tree languisheth; the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered; because joy is withered away from the sons of men. 13. Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests; howl, ye ministers of the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat-offering and the drink-offering is withholden from the house of your God.

The judgment is here described as very lamentable, and such as all sorts of people should share in; it shall not only fill the drunkards of their pleasure, (if that were the worst of it, it might be the better borne,) but it shall deprive others of their necessary subsistence, who are therefore called to lament, (v. 8.) as a virgin laments the death of her lover, to whom she was espoused, but not completely married, yet so that he was in effect her husband; or, as a young woman lately married, from whom the husband of her youth, her young husband, or the husband to whom she was married when she was young, is suddenly taken away by death. Betwixt a new-married couple that are young, that married for love, and that are every way amiable and agreeable to each other, there is great kindness, and consequently, great grief if either be taken away. Such lamentation shall there be for the loss of all comforts and conveniences. Those who are most esteemed to our creature-comforts, the harder it is to part with them. See that parallel place, Isa. xxxiii. 10.-12.

Two sorts of people are here brought in, as concerned to lament this devastation, countrymen and clergymen.

1. Let the husbandmen and vine-dressers lament, v. 11. Let them be ashamed of the care and pains they have taken about their vineyards, for it will be all labour lost, and they shall gain no advantage by it; they shall see the fruit of their labour eaten up before their eyes, and shall not be able to save any of it. Note, Those who labour only for the meat that perisheth, will, sooner or later, be ashamed of their labour. The vine-dressers will then express their extreme grief by howling, when they see their work for what they have lost, are in tears for what they have lost, are in tears of unceasing lamentation. This is particularly described here; The field is laid waste, (v. 10.) all is consumed that it produced, the land mourns, the ground has a melancholy aspect, and looks ghastly; all the inhabitants of the land are in tears for what they have lost, and are in tears of perpetual mourning for want, Isa. xxiv. 4.-Jer. iv. 28. The corn, the bread-corn, which is the staff of life, is wasted; the new wine, which should be brought into the cellars for recruits, when the old is drunk, is dried up, is ashamed of having promised so fair what it is not now able to perform; the oil languishes, or is diminished, because (as the Chaldee renders it) the olives are fallen off. The people were not thankful to God as they should have been for the bread that strengthened man's heart, the wine that made glad the heart, and the oil that made the face to shine; so that the priests and Levites, the worship of the Lord and of the temple, were brought to lament the loss and want of them, of all the products of the earth, which God had given them either for necessity or for delight. This is repeated, v. 11, 12. The wheat and barley, the two principal grains bread was then made of, wheat for the rich, and barley for the poor; so that rich and poor meet together in the calamity. The trees are denuded not only of the vine and the fig-tree, as before, (v. 7.) which were more useful and necessary, but other trees also that were for delight; the pomegranate, palm-tree, and apple-tree, yea all the trees of the field, as well as those of the orchard, timber-trees as well as fruit-trees. In short, all the harvest of the field is perished, v. 11. And by this means joy is withered away from the children of men; (v. 11.) the joy of harvest, which is used to fill the breasts of the children of God, when the harvest is come to nothing, is turned into shame, is turned into lamentation. Note, The perishing of the harvest is the withering of the joy of the children of men. Those that place their happiness in the delights of sense, when they are deprived of them, or any way disturbed in the enjoyment of them, lose all their joy; whereas the children of God, who lock upon the pleasures of sense with holy indifference and contempt, and know what it is to make God their heart's delight, can even when the fig-tree does not blossom; spiritual joy is so far from withering then, that it flourishes more than ever, Hab. iii. 17, 18.

Let us see here, (1.) What perishing, uncertain things all our creature-comforts are. We can never be sure of the continuance of them. Here the heavens had given their rains in due season, the earth had yielded her strength, and when the appointed weeks of harvest were at hand, they saw no reason to doubt but that they should have a very plentiful crop; yet then they are invaded by these unthought-of enemies, that lay all waste, and not by fire and sword. It is our wisdom not to lay up our corn in the barn, which is destined to supply many ill accidents. (2.) See what need we have to live in a continual dependence upon God and his providence, for our own hands are not sufficient for us. When we see the full corn in the ear, and think we are sure of it; nay, when we have brought it home, if he blow upon it, nay, if he do not bless it, we are not likely to have any good of it. (3.) Note, whatever mischiefs work sin makes. A paradise is turned into a wilderness, a fruitful land, the most fruitful land upon earth, into barrenness, for the ingratitude of them that dwelt therein.

2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, lament, for they share deeply in the calamity; Gird yourselves with sackcloth; (v. 13.) nay, do mourn, v. 9. Observe, The priests are called by the metaphor of the altar that was attended, and the ministers of the Lord, of my God, says the prophet; for in attending on the altar they served him, did his work, and did him honour. Note, They that are employed in holy things, are therein God's ministers, and on him they attend. The ministers of the altar used to rejoice before the Lord, and to spend their time very much in the service of God; now they lament and howl; for the meat-offering and drink-offering were cut off from the house of the Lord; (v. 9.) and the same again, (v. 13.) from the house of your God. "He is your God in a-
ticular manner, you are in a nearer relation to him than other Israelites are; and therefore it is expected that you should be more concerned than others for that which is a hinderance to the service of his sanctuary." It is intimated, (1.) That the people, as long as they had the fruits of the earth brought in in their season, presented to the Lord his dues out of them, and brought the offerings to the altar, and titles to them that served at the altar. Note, A people may be filling up the measure of their iniquity, and yet may keep up a course of external performances in religion. (2.) That, while the meat and drink failed, the no offerings and drink-offering failed of course; and this was the sorest instance of the calamity. Note, As far as any public trouble is an obstruction to the course of religion, it is to be upon that account, more than any other, sadly lamented, especially by the priests, the Lord's ministers. As far as poverty occasions the decay of piety, and the neglect of divine offices, and starves the cause of religion among a people, it is indeed a sore judgment. When the famine prevailed, God could not have his sacrifices, nor could the priests have their maintenance; and therefore let the Lord's ministers mourn.

14. Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land, into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord. 15. Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. 16. Is not the meat cut off before your eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? 17. The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. 18. How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. 19. O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burnt all the trees of the field. 20. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee; for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

We have observed abundance of tears shed for the destruction of the fruits of the earth by the locusts; now here we have those tears turned into the right channel, that of repentance and humiliation before God; for, (1) You are directed to own the hand of God in this, his mighty hand, and to humble yourselves under it. Here is,

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JOEL, II.

2. They saw themselves already under the tokens of his displeasure. It is time to fast and pray; for their distress was very great, v. 16. (1.) Let them look into their own houses, and there was no plenty there, as used to be. Those who kept a good table, were now obliged to starve; the common corn withered, (2.) or caterpillars and other insects devoured the pastures of the wilderness; which seems to be meant of some parching, scorching heat of the sun, which was as fire to the fruits of the earth, it consumed them all. Note, When God calls to contend by fire, it concerns those that have any interest in Heaven, to cry mightily to him for relief. See Numb. xi. 2. Amos vii. 4, 5. The example of the inferior creatures; The beasts of the field do not only groan, but they cry unto thee, v. 20. They appeal to thy pity, according to their capacity, and as if, though they are not capable of a rational and revealed religion, yet they had something of dependence upon God by natural instinct. At least, when they groan by reason of their calamity, he is pleased to interpret it as if they did appeal to him. The rash destruction put on by the groanings of his own children, though sometimes so feeble, that they cannot be uttered, Rom. viii. 26. The beasts are here said to cry unto God, as from him the lions seek their meat, (Ps. civ. 21.) and the young ravens, Job xxxviii. 34. The complaints of the brute creatures here are for want of water. The rivers are dried up, through the excessive heat, and the want of grace, for God has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. And what better are they than beasts, who never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of nothing but the want of the delights of sense? Yet their crying to God in these cases shames the stupidity of those who cry not to God in any case.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, I. A further description of that terrible desolation which should be made in the land of Judah by the locusts and caterpillars, v. 1. We have a serious call to the people, when they are under this sore judgment, to return and repent, to fast and pray, and to seek unto God for mercy, with directions how to do this aright, v. 12. - 17. II. A promise that, upon their repentance, God would repair the breaches made upon them by it, and restore unto them plentiful of all good things, v. 18. - 27. IV. A prediction of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days, v. 28. - 32. Thus the beginning of this chapter is made terrible with the tokens of God's wrath, but the latter end of it made comfortable with the assurances of his pity, and a hope of a day when all the blessed change is made; so that, though it is only the last paragraph of the chapter that points directly at gospel-times, yet the whole may be improved as a type and figure of the great things which pertain to the church, and to the comfort of the gospel flowing in to them upon their repentance.

1. Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh for it is nigh at hand: 2. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. 3. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them. 4. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run. 5. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that de-
vour eth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. 6. Before their face the people shall be much pained; all faces shall gather blackness. 7. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: 8. Neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. 9. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall; they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 10. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; 11. And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army; his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Here we have God contending with his own professing people for their sins, and executing upon them the judgment written in the law; (Deut. xxviii. 42.) *The fruit of thy land shall be consumed, which was one of those diseases of Egypt that God would bring upon them, v. 60.*

1. Here is the war proclaimed; (v. 1.) *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion; either to call the invading army together, and then the trumpet sounds a charge, or, rather, to give notice to Judah and Jerusalem of the approach of the judgment, that they might prepare to meet their God in the way of his judgments, and might endeavour by prayers and tears, the church's best artillery, to put by the stroke. It was the priests' business to sound the trumpet, (Num. x. 8.) both as an appeal to God in the day of their distress, and a summons to the people to come together to seek his face. Note, It is the work of ministers to give warning from the word of God to his people concerning the judgments that are to fall upon the land; a warning to take heed of the wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And though it is not the privilege of Zion and Jerusalem to be exempted from the judgments of God, if they provoke him, yet it is their privilege to be warned of them, that they may make their peace with him. Even in the holy mountain the alarm must be sounded, (and then it sounds most dreadful, Amos iii. 6.) Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; they shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself; let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

2. Here is a general idea given of the day of battle, which cometh, which is nigh, and there is none to meet it. (v. 2.) *Now, shall a trumpet be blown in the city, in the holy city, and the people not be afraid? Surely they will, Amos iii. 6.* Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; they shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself; let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

3. Here is the army drawn up in array; (v. 2.) *They are a great people, and a strong. Any one that sees the vast numbers that there shall be of these locusts and caterpillars, the least heartless will, will say, (as we all are apt to be most affected with what is present,) ‘Surely, never was the like before, nor ever will be the like again.’ Note, Extraordinary judgments are rare things, and seldom happen, which is an instance of God's patience; when God had drowned the world once, he promised never to do it again. But it is by his mere grace that it is done. (v. 3.) Very bold and daring; They are as horses, as chari- horses, that rush into the battle, and are not affrighted; (Job xxxix. 22.) and as horsemen carried on with martial fire and fury, so they shall run, v. 4. Some of the ancients have observed that the head of a locust is very like, in shape, to the head of a horse. (v. 4.) Very loud and noisy; like the noise of chariots, of many chariots, when driven hastily over rough ground, on the tops of the mountains, v. 5. Hence is borrowed part of the description of the locusts which St. John saw rise out of the bottomless pit; (Rev. ix. 7, 9.) *The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared to the battle; and the sound of their wings were as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to the battle. Historians tell us that there are made by some nations of locusts in those countries that are infested with them, has sometimes been heard six miles off. The noise is likewise compared to that of a roaring fire; it is like the noise of a flame that devours the stubble; which noise is the more terrible, because that which it is the indication of, is devouring. Note, When God's judgments are abroad, they make a great noise; and it is necessary for the awakening and terrify the poor, and for warning the proud and presumptuous, that they may be brought to a sense of their danger. (v. 5.) They are very regular, and keep ranks, in their march; though numerous and greedy of spoil, yet they are as a strong people set in battle array; (v. 6.) *They shall march every one on his ways, straight forward, as if they had been trained up by the discipline of war to keep their post, and observe their right-hand man; They shall not break their ranks, nor one thrust another, v. 7.* Their number and swiftness shall breed no confusion. See how God can make creatures to act by rule that have no reason to act by, when he designs to serve his own purposes by them. And see how necessary it is that those who are employed in any service for God, should observe order; and keep ranks, should not be confused in their con-duct, and run not in one another's way. (v. 8.) They are very swift; they run like horsemen, (v. 4.) *run like mighty men, (v. 7.) they run to and fro in the city, and run upon the wall, v. 9.* When God sends forth his command on earth, his word runs very swiftly, Ps. cxlvii. 15. Angels have wings, and so have locusts, when God makes use of them as instruments of destruction.

4. Here is the terrible execution done by this formidable army. (v. 1.) *In the country, v. 3.* View the army in the front, and you will see a fire devouring before them, they consume all as if they breathed fire; view it in the rear, and you will see those that come behind as furious as the foremost, behind them a flame burns. When they are gone, then it will appear what destruction they have made. Look upon the fields that they have not yet invaded, and they are as the garden of Eden, pleasant to the eye, and full of good fruits, they are the pride and glory of the country; but look upon the fields that they have eaten up, and they are as a desolate wilderness. One would not think that these had ever been like the former, and yet so they were perhaps but the day before; or that those should ever be made like these, and yet so they shall be perhaps by to-morrow night; yea, and nothing shall escape them, that can possibly be made food for them. Let none be proud of the beauty of
Thus must the settled, exactly shall the merchants are in pain for their trading ships, when they hear they are just in the mouth of a squadron of the enemies. One was in pain for his field, another for his vineyard, and all faces gather blackness, which denotes the utmost consternation imaginable. Men in fear look pale, but men in despair look black; the whiteness of a sudden fright, when it is settled, turns into blackness. With this the multitude of our impressions and pleasure, God can soon make the matter of our pain. The terror that the country should be in, is described (v. 10.) by figurative expressions; The earth shall quake, and the heavens tremble; even the hearts that seemed undaunted, so firm that nothing would frighten them, as immovable as heaven or earth, shall be seized with astonishment. Or, when the inhabitants of the land are made to quake, it seems to them as if all about them trembled too. Through the prevalence of their fear, or, for want of the support of life which they used to have, their eye shall wax dim, and their sight fail them, so that to them the sun and moon shall seem to be dark, and the stars to withdraw their shining. Note, When God frowns upon men, the lights of heaven will be small joy to them. For man, by rebellion against his Creator, has forfeited the benefit of all the creatures. But though this here is to be understood figuratively, there is a day coming when it will be accomplished in the letter, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Particular judgments should awaken us to think of the general judgments. 6. We are here directed to look up to him who is the Commander in chief of this formidable army, and that is God himself, v. 11. It is his army, it is his camp; he raised it, he gives it commission; he utters his voice before it, as the general gives orders to his army what to do, and makes a speech to animate the soldiers; it is the Lord that gives the word of command to all these animals, which they exactly observe. Some think that with this cloud of Locusts God sent terrible thunder, for that is called, The voice of the Lord, and was another of the plagues of Egypt, and this made the heavens and the earth tremble. It is the day of the Lord, as it was called, (v. 1.) for in this war we are sure he carries the day; it must needs be his, for his camp is greater than the camp of Pharaoh. Lord, make the cloud; and whatever he employs to execute his word, as the minister of his justice, is sure to be made strong and powerful—equal to what he undertakes; whom God gives commission to, he girds with strength for the executing of that commission. And this makes the ground of the Lord very terrible to all those who in that day are to be made: the monuments of his justice: for who can abide it? None can escape the arrest of God's wrath, can make head against the force of it, or bear up under the weight of it, 1 Sam. vi. 20. Ps. lxxvi. 7.

12. Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; 13. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. 14. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering, and a drink-offering, unto the Lord your God! 15. Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: 16. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet: 17. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

We have here an earnest exhortation to repentance, inferred from that desolating judgment described and threatened in the foregoing verses; Therefore now turn ye to the Lord. 1. Thus you must answer the end and intention of the judgment; for it was sent for this end, to convince you of your sins, to humble you for them, to reduce you to your right minds, and to your allegiance. God brings us into straits, that he may bring us to repentance, and so bring us to himself. 2. Thus you may stay the progress of the judgment. Things are bad with you, but thus you may prevent their growing worse; nay, if you take this course, they will soon grow better.

Here is a gracious invitation,

1. To a personal repentance, exercised in the soul; but that family affection, and their wives apart, Zechar. xii. 12. When the judgments of God are abroad, each person is concerned to contribute his quota to the common supplications, having contributed to the common guilt. Every one must mend one, and mourn for one, and then we should all be mended, and all found among God's mourners.

Observe, 1. What we are here called to; which will teach us what it is to repent; for it is the same that the Lord our God still requires of us, we having all made work for repentance. (1.) We must be truly humbled for our sins, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments, and wronged our interest. There must be outward expressions of sorrow, as well as inward. There must be outward expressions of sorrow; there must be expressions of shame, fasting, mourning; tears for the trouble must be turned into tears for the sin that occasioned it. But what will the outward expressions of sorrow avail, if the inward impressions be not agreeable, and not only accompany them, but be the root and spring of them, and give rise to them? And therefore it follows, Read your heart, and not your garments; not but that, according to the custom of that age, it was proper for them to read their garments, in token
of great grief for their sins, and a holy indignation against themselves for their folly; but, "Rest not in the doing of that, as if that were sufficient, but be more in care to accommodate your spirits, than to accommodate your dress, to a day of fasting and humiliation; nay, rend not your garments at all, unless withal you rend your hearts, for the sign without the thing signified is but a jest and a mockery, and an affront to God." Rending the heart is that which God looks for and requires, that is the broken and contrite heart which he will not despise, Ps. li. 17. When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even cuts us to the heart to think how we have dishonoured God, and disparaged ourselves by it, when we conceive an access of sorrow and weeping, and thus to get clear of the principles of it, and never to return to the practice of it, then we rend our hearts for it; and then will God rend the heavens, and come down to us with mercy.

(2.) We must be thoroughly converted to our God, and come home to him when we fell out with sin. Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord, (v. 12.) and again, (v. 13.) Turn unto the Lord your God. Our fasting and weeping are worth nothing, if we do not with it turn to God as our God. When we are fully convinced that it is our duty and interest to keep in with him, and are heartily sorry we have ever turned back upon him, and, therefore, by a firm and fixed resolution make his glory our end, his will our rule, and his favour our felicity, then we return to the Lord our God. We must be commanded and invited to do, and to do it quickly.

2. What arguments are here used to persuade this people thus to turn to the Lord, and to turn to him with all their hearts. When the heart is rent for sin, and rent from it, then it is prepared to turn entirely to God, and to be devoted entirely to him, and he will leave it all or none. Now to bring ourselves into a fit condition to be heard.

(1.) We are sure that he is, in general, a good God. Therefore we must turn to the Lord our God, not only because he has been just and righteous in punishing us for our sins, the fear of which should drive us to him, but because he is gracious and merciful in receiving us upon repentance, the hope of which should attract us to him. But he will not accept of our service, but of the heart. God and merciful delights not in the death of sinners, but desires they may turn and live. He is slow to anger against them that offend him, but of great kindness toward these that desire to please him. These very expressions are used in God's proclamations of his name, when he caused his goodness, and with it all his glory, to pass before them. Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. He repeats him of the evil; not that he changes his mind, but, when the sinner's mind is changed, God's way toward him is changed; the sentence is reversed, and the curse of the law is taken off. Note, That is genuine, ingenuous, and evangelical repentance, which arises from a firm belief of the mercy of God, which we have sinned against, and yet are not utterly destitute of that kindness which is at hand. The goodness of God, if it be rightly understood, instead of imbidding us to go on in sin, will be the most powerful inducement to repentance, Ps. cxxx. 4. The act of indemnity brings these to God, whom the act of attainder frightened from him.

(2.) We have reason to hope that he will, upon our repentance, give us that good which by sin we have forfeited, and deprived ourselves of; (v. 14.) that he will return and repent, that he will not proceed against us as he has done, but will act in favour of us. Therefore let us repent of our sins against him, and return to him in a way of duty, because then we may hope that he will repent of his judgments against us, and return to us in a way of mercy. Now observe, [1.] The manner of the expectation is very humble and modest; Who knows if he will? Some think it is expressed thus doubtfully, to check the presumption and security of the people, and to quicken them to a holy carefulness and liveliness in their repentance, as Josh. xxiv. 19. Or, rather, it is expressed doubtfully, because it is the removal of a temporal judgment that they here promise themselves, of which we cannot be so confident as we can that, in general, God is gracious and merciful. There is no question at all to be made, but that if we truly repent of our sins, God will forgive them, and be reconciled to us; but whether he will remove this or the other affliction which we are under, may well be questioned, and yet the probability of its removal is to be drawn from other evidences of the goodness of God. Further, the promises of temporal good things are often made with a proviso; it may be, you shall be hid, Zeph. ii. 3. David's sin is pardoned, and yet the child shall die, and when David prayed for its life, he said, as here, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me in this matter likewise? 2 Sam. xii. 22. The Ninevites repented and reformed, upon such a consideration as this, Jonah iii. 3. The matter of the expectation is very pious; they hope God will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, not as if he were about to go from them, and they could be content with any blessing in lieu of his presence, but behind him; that is, "After he has ceased his controversy with us, he will bestow a blessing after his return; and it will be a meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God. The fruits of the earth are called a blessing, (Isa. lv. 8.) because they depend upon God's blessing, and are necessary blessings to us. They had been deprived of these, and that which grieved them most while they were so, was, that God's altar wanted its offerings, and God's priests their maintenance; this was a capital evil, which God's return, with the prospect of in their return of plenty, is, that there shall be meat-offerings and drink-offerings in abundance brought to God's altar, which they more desired than to see the wanted abundance of meat and drink brought to their own tables. Thus when Hezekiah was in hopes that he should recover of his sickness, he asked, What is the sign that I shall recover from this sickness? and judgment, or to the council-board, but to the house of the Lord? Isa. xxxix. 22. Note, The plentiful enjoyment of God's ordinances in their power and purity, is the most valuable instance of a nation's prosperity, and the greatest blessing that can be desired. If God give the blessing of the meat-offering and the drink-offering, that will bring along with it other blessings, will sanctify them, sweeten them, and secure them.

II. They are here called to a public, national repentance, to be exercised in the solemn assembly, as a national act, for the glory of God, and the excitement of one another, and that the neighbouring nations might know and observe what it was that God did to Israel for his gracious returns in mercy to them, which they would be the admiring witnesses of. Let us see here,

1. How the congregation must be called together, v. 15, 16. The trumpet was blown, (v. 1.) to sound an alarm of war; but now it must be blown in order to a treaty of peace; God is willing to show mercy to his people, if he do but find them in a proper frame for it; and therefore, Call them together to sanctify a fast. By the law many annual feasts were appointed, but only one day in the year was to be observed as a fast, the day of atonement; a day to afflict the soul, and if they had kept close to God and their duty, there would have been no occasion to observe any more; but now that they had by sin brought the judgments of God upon them, they are often called to fasting. What was said, ch. 14, is
JOEL, II.

18. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people. 19. Yea, the Lord will answer, and say unto his people, 

Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith, and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen. 20. But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea; and his hinder part toward the utmost sea: and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. 21. Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things. 22. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. 23. Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25. And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palm-worm, my great army, which I sent among you. 26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he waiteth to be gracious; as soon as ever they humble themselves under his hand, and pray, and seek his face, he immediately meets them with his favours; they prayed that God would spare them, and see here with what good words and comfortable words he answered them: for God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

I. Whence this mercy promised shall take rise; (v. 18.) God will be jealous for his land, and pity his people. He will have an eye, 1. To his own honour, and the reputation of his covenant with

God: that God who has promised to help them, whom they have boasted so much of, and put such a confidence in. If God's heritage be destroyed, the neighbours will say, "God was either weak, and could not relieve them, or unkind, and would not." If God thus triumphs over the pretended deities; (Deut. xxxiii. 37.) Where are now their gods in whom they trusted? And Sennacherib thus triumphs over them, Where are now the gods of Damascus and Arphad? But it must by no means be suffered, that any should say of Israel, Where is their God? For we are sure that our God is in the heavens, (Ps. cxv. 2, 3.) is in his temple, Ps. xi. 4.
Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land, and had given in the value of it very high; now he will not suffer it to be despised or disregarded, but will by plagues for the destruction of his land and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a happy people, and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people. 2. To their distress; He will pity his people, and, in pity to them, he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents and as petitioners. 

1. The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated; (v. 20.) "I will remove far off from you the northern army, that army of locusts and caterpillars, that invaded you from the north; brought in upon the wings of a north wind, an army which you could put no stop to the progress of; but when you have made your peace with God, he will cause you of these soldiers that are quartered upon you, and will drive them into a land barren and desolate, into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where, after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance; those that have their face to the east sea, (the Dead sea, which lay east of Judea,) shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the great sea, (as is expressed by his own words,) which was made barren and desolate, and now God will cast them into a land barren and desolate. Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people, come afterward to be themselves reckoned with, and the rod thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these swarms of insects, but the ill savour of them. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts, they were carried away to the Red Sea; Exod. x. 19. Note, When an affliction has done its work, it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a tenacious people, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed, in wrath, from an inimical prince, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters, by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed, when God by it had accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem, Isa. x. 12. This enemy shall be driven away, because he has done great things, has done a great deal of mischief; and has magnified to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart; therefore it follows, (v. 21.) The Lord will do great things for his people, as the enemy has done great things against them. He will make up for their loss, as he is; for he is, and will be, above them; that great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as when he said to them, Go, they went, so when he said to them, Come, they came, to show that they were soldiers under him. The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised (v. 22.) that the pastures of the wilderness, the pastures which the locusts had left as bare as the wilderness, shall again spring, and the trees shall again bear their fruit, particularly the fig-tree and the vine. But when we thought never to see them again, it is God's way, as he says, to say, Can these dry bones live? If the Lord should make windows in heaven, it cannot be; but it shall be, for (v. 23.) The Lord has given; and will give you the former rain and the latter rain, and if he give them in mercy, he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment, and he will give them in due season; the latter rain in the first month, when it was wanted and expected. It would make it comfortable to them, to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. He has given you a teacher of righteousness; so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies the rain, signifies a teacher, and what which this is his task, his office is, according to righteousness; and this teacher of righteousness, says one of the rabbins, is the King Messiah; and of him many others understand this; for he is a Teacher come from God, and he shows us the way of righteousness. But others understand it of any prophet that instructs unto righteousness; and some of Hezekiah particularly, others of Isaiah. Note, It is a great sustenance to a people, when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

3. All their losses shall be repaired; (v. 25.) I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten; you shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine. Thus does it repent the Lord concerning his servants, when they repent, and, to show how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and, like the Fuller, washes their stripes. Though, in justice, he disdained upon them, and did them no wrong, yet, in compassion, he makes restitution, as the father of the prodigal, upon his return, dressed him in the finest; he clothed him sumptuously, and put a crown and a ring upon his hand, and took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's great army which he sent among them, and he will therefore repair what they had devoured, because they were his army. Thus these great losses are repaired, and God is then said to do great things, to do wondrously, and to do great things; (v. 21.) He does wondrously with his people, v. 26. Herein he glorifies his power, and shows that he can relieve his people, though their distress be ever so great, and glorifies his goodness, that he will do it upon their repentance, though their people were ever so great. When God deals graciously with poor sinners that return to him, it must be acknowledged that he deals wondrously, and doeth great things. Some expositors understand these promises figuratively, as pointing at gospel-grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace, and they have the like promises. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the Author of it, we may well own that he has sent us (according to his promise here, v. 19.) corn, and wine, and oil, or that which is unspeakably better, and we have reason to be satisfied therewith. III. What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them, and the good account they shall turn to.
1. God shall have the glory of it; for they shall rejoice in the Lord their God; (v. 23.) and what is the matter of their rejoicing shall be the matter of their thanksgiving; they shall praise the name of the Lord their God, (v. 26.) and not praise their idols, nor call their corn and wine the rewards that their lovers had given them. Note, Then the plenty of our creature-comforts is a mercy indeed to us, when by them our hearts are enlarged above all the treasures in earth or heaven, and all things richly to enjoy, though we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. 

When Israel comes out of a wilderness into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then bless the Lord, with a very solemn psalm, as in the good land where he has given them, Deut. viii. 10. 2. They shall have the credit and comfort, and spiritual benefit of it. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it, (1.) Their reputation shall be redeemed; they and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another, when they are returned to him in a way of duty, and he to them in a way of mercy; (v. 19.) and (v. 20.) Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field; the heathen, that triumphed in your calamities, and insulted over you; and v. 26, 27. "My people shall never be ashamed, as they have been, of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again and ever have the same occasion to boast of it." Note, It redounds much to the honour of God, when he does that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, though they be for a time he for a time, they shall not be always, a reproach among the heathen; if we be rightly ashamed of our sins against God, we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God. (2.) Their joys shall be revived; (v. 23.) Be glad and rejoice, O land, and all the inhabitants of it. Times of plenty are times of joy; yet the favour of God puts gladness into the heart, more than they have whose corn and wine and oil increase. But especially be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, v. 23. They mourned in Zion, (v. 15.) and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice; for those that sow in penitential tears, shall certainly reap in thankfull joys; the children of Zion, who led the rest in fasting, must lead the rest in rejoicing. The Lord will make them fruitful as a field, as the good land where he has given them. 

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share in it, and be made easy by it; Fear not, O land, v. 21. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field, v. 22. They had suffered for the sin of man, and for God's quarrel with him; and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance, and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the Lord shall make you fruitful; Deut. (v. 20.) and now that cry is answered, and they are bid not to be afraid, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves. God, in sparing Nineveh, had an eye to the cattle, (Jer. iv. 11.) for the cattle had fasted, ch. iii. 8. This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the creature that is now made subject to vanity and groans under it, shall be brought, though not into the glorious joy, yet into the glorious liberty, of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21. 

28. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. 30. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, in blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. 32. And it shall come to pass, that whatsoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. 

The promises of corn and wine and oil, in the foregoing verses, would be very acceptable to a wasted country; but here we are taught that we must not rest in these things. God has reserved some better things for us, and these verses have reference to those better things; both the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory, and the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told, 

I. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, v. 26, 29. We are not at a loss for the meaning of this promise, nor in doubt what it refers to, and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an awful explication and application of it, shewing us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, on the day of Pentecost, (Acts ii. 1, &c.) that was the very thing which was spoken of here.
by the prophet Joel, v. 16, 17. That was the gift of the Spirit, which, according to this prediction, was to be bestowed upon all, and not any more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now, 1. The blessing itself here promised, is, the pouring out of the Spirit of God, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the Author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming like drops, as it were, upon the judges and prophets when God had something to say to them; but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream; as was promised with an eye to gospel-times; (Isa. xlv. 3.) I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed. 2. The time fixed for this is after-ward; after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises, this shall be fulfilled. St. Peter expounds this of the last days, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the divine will and grace in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution. 3. The extent of this blessing, in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed; the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, Rom. x. 12. Hitherto the promises were confined to the sons of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel had the Spirit of prophecy; but, in the last days, all flesh shall see the glory of God, (Isa. xl. 5.) and shall come to worship before him, Isa. lxvi. 23. The Jews understand it of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it as speaking of the Gentiles, till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his friends, who were Gentiles, (Acts x. 44, 45.) which was but a continuation of the same gift which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, upon all those whose hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost; upon all flesh, upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined, as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. (1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex; not your sons only, but your daughters, shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family, that were prophetesses, Acts xii. 11. On the day of Pentecost, this shall be filled with the Spirit; which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church. (2.) Upon some of each age; Your old men, who are past their vigour, and whose spirits begin to decay, your young men, who have yet but little acquaintance with, and experience of, divine things, yet they shall dream dreams, and see visions; God will reveal himself by dreams and visions both to young and old. (3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition; even upon the servants and the handmaids; the Jewish doctors say, Prophecy does not reside on any, but such as are wise, valiant, and rich, not upon the soul of a poor man, or a man in sorrow; but in Christ Jesus there is neither bond nor free, Gal. iii. 28. There were many that were cold and dead, that were neither wise, nor rich, nor valiant, but who were brought to life, and the Spirit poured out upon them. (4.) The effect of this blessing; They shall prophesy; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things secret, distant, and future, which, by the utmost sagacities of reason, and powers of human understanding, they could not have any insight into, or foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts the Christian church was first founded and set up, and the scriptures written, and ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and preserved in the world. 

11. How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced by the universal change of nature, v. 30, 31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this and tremble. There is a great and terrible day of the Lord coming, which shall be ushered in with wonders in heaven and earth, blood, and fire, and fumes of smoke, the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood. This is to have its full accomplishment (as the learned Dr. Pocock thinks) in the day of judgment; at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them, yet so that it was accomplished in part, in the death of Christ, which is called the judgment day of this world, when the curtain was opened, and the sun was darkened, and a great and terrible day it was; and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, beside the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the exhalations of the earth, and destruction of nations, which our Saviour spoke of as the beginning of these sorrows, Matth. xxiv. 6, 7. But before the last judgment there will be wonders indeed in heaven and earth, the dissolution of both without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prefigures and parables of the judgment of the world in the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out, shall foresee and foretell that great and terrible day of the Lord, and expand the wonders in heaven and earth, that go before it; for as to his first coming, so to his second, did, and do, all the prophets bear witness, Rev. x. 7. 

111. The safety and happiness of all true believers both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, v. 32. This speaks of particular persons, for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations than the Old. 

Now observe here, 1. That there is a salvation wrought out; though the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance; this is the day that the Lord, his day of judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile. In the everlasting gospel, which went from Zion, in the church of the first-born typified by mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is deliverance; a way of escaping the wrath to come, is found out, and laid open. Christ is himself not only the Saviour, but the Salvation; he is so to the ends of the earth. This deliverance, laid up for us in the covenant of grace, is in performance of the promises made to the fathers; There shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said. See Luke i. 72. Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that, whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them, if it be not their own fault. (2.) To us it is delivered, but we must apply ourselves to the gospel-Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is in that remnant, that is, among them, that the deliverance is; or in them, in their souls and spirits, there are the earnest and evidences of it; Christ in the heart of the believer, is the Saviour of his soul. This is a remnant because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant, but a chosen one, a remnant according to the election
of grace. And here we are told who they are, that shall be delivered in the great day. (1) Those that sincerely call upon God; Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, whether Jew or Gentile, or for the apostle expounds it so, Rom. x. 13, where he lays this down as the great rule of the gospel by which we must all be judged, shall be delivered. This is the same promise of God, which he made to him, desire toward him, dependence on him, and, as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for without that, crying Lord, Lord, will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be saved remnant. And it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish, that they might have been saved on condition of this remnant. (2) These texts are called, The deliverance is sure to the remnant whom the Lord shall call; not only with the common call of the gospel, with which many are called, that are not chosen; but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whom the Lord predestinates, or prepares, so the Chaldee. St. Peter borrows this phrase, Acts ii. 39. Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day, that are now effectually called from sin to God, from self to Christ, from things below to things above.

CHAP. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a gracious promise of deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem; now this whole chapter is a comment upon that promise, shewing what it is and how it shall be wrought by the destruction of the church's enemies, and how it shall be perfected in the everlasting rest and joy of the church. This was in part accomplished, in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attempt that Nebuchadnezzar made upon it in Hezekiah's time, and afterward in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances wrought for the Jewish church before that and Christ's coming. But it has a further reference to the great redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, and the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and all their agents, and will have its full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day. Here is a prediction, I. Of God's reckoning with the enemies of his people for all the injuries and indignities that they had done them, and returning them upon their own head, v. 1 . 8 . II. Of God's judging all nations, when they are brought into his sight, V. 9. 17. III. Of the provision God has made for the refreshment of his people, for their safety and purity, when their enemies shall be made desolate, v. 18. 21. These promises were not of private interpretation only, but were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope.

1. For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem; 2. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land, 3. And they have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink, 4. Ye, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine! will ye render me a recompence! and if ye recompence me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; 5. Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my godtly pleasant things. 6. The children also of Judah, and the children of Jerusalem, have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. 7. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whether ye have sold them, and will return your recompense upon your own head: 8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabæans, to a people far off: for the Lord hath spoken it.

We have often heard of the year of the redeemed, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion; now here we have a description of the transactions of that year, and a prophecy of what shall be done when it comes, both as to the enemies, and the deliverances of the church. And, at the end of time it will come once for all.

1. It shall be the year of the redeemed, for God will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 1. Though the bondage of God's people may be grievous, and very long, yet it shall not be everlasting. That in Egypt ended at length in their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Let my soul go, that he may serve me. That in Babylon shall likewise end well. And the Lord Jesus will provide for the effectual redemption of poor captivated souls from under the dominion of sin and Satan, and will proclaim that acceptable year, the year of jubilee, the release of debts and servants, and the opening of the prison to them who were bound. There is a day, there is a time, fixed for the bringing again of the captivity of God's children, for the redeeming of them from the power of the grave; and it shall be the last day, and the period of all time.

2. It shall be the year of recompenses of the controversy of Zion. Though God may suffer the enemies of his people to prevail against them very far, and for a long time, yet he will call them to an account for all the blood shed. The year shall begin with a fornicating captivity, (Ps. lxxxviii. 18.) will lead those captive, and lead his people captive, Rev. xiii. 10. Observe, 1. Who they are that shall be reckoned with; all nations, v. 2. This intimates, (1.) That all the nations had made themselves liable to the judgment of God for wrong done to his people. Persecution is the reaping of the criminal world, that brings in wickedness itself is set against godliness. The enmity that is in the old serpent, the god of this world, against the seed of the woman, appears more or less in the children of this world; marvel not if the world hate you. (2.) That whatsoever nation injured God's nation, they should not go unpunished; for he that touches the Israel of God, shall be made to know that he touches the apple of his eye. Jerusalem was to be destroyed to all people, Zech. xii. 5. But the neighboring nations shall be particularly reckoned with; Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Palestine or the Phœbites, who had been troublesome neighbours to the Israel of God; (v. 4.) when the more remote and potent nations that laid Israel waste, are reckoned with, the impotent malice of these that lay near them, and headed forward the affliction, (Zech. i. 13.) and made a hand of it, (Ezek. xxvi. 2.) shall not be passed by. Note, Little persecuters shall be called to an account as well as great ones; and though
they could not do much mischief, shall be reckoned with according to the wickedness of their endeavour, and the mischief they would have done.

2. The sitting of this court for judgment. They shall be brought together. They who have combined together against God's people, with one consent, (Ps. xxxiii. 5.) may together receive their doom. They shall be brought down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, which lay near Jerusalem, and there God will plead with them. (1.) Because it is fit that criminals should be tried in the same country where they did the fact. (2.) For their greater comfort, when they shall see islands which they have so long endevoured and hoped for the ruin of, in spite of all their rage, made a praise in the earth. (3.) For the greater comfort and honour of God's Jerusalem, which shall see God pleading their cause. (4.) Then shall be re-acted what God did for Jehoshaphat, when he gave him victory over those that invaded him, and furnished him and his people with matter of joy and praise, in the valley of Berachah. See 2 Chron. xx. 26. (5.) It was in this valley of Jehoshaphat, (as Dr. Lightfoot suggests,) that Sennacherib's army, or part of it, lay, when it was destroyed by an angel. They came together to ruin Jerus. dem, but God brought them together for their own ruin, as sheaves in the floor, Matt. x. 45. Then shall all the islands be assembled together, and sit up in the shade of God's temple.

3. The plaintiff called, on whose behalf this prosecution is set on foot; it is for my people, and for my heritage Israel. It is their cause that God will now plead with jealousy. Note, God's people are his heritage, his peculiar, his portion, his treasure, above all people, Exod. xix. 5. Deut. xxxii. 9. They are his demesne, and therefore he has a good action against them that treat them as they do; they are his inheritance, and therefore he shall deal with them as a judge.

4. The charge exhibited against them, which is very particular. Many affronts they had put upon God by their idolatries; but that for which God has a quarrel with them is, the affront they have put upon his people and upon the vessels of his sanctuary. (1.) They had been very abusive to the people of Israel, had scattered them among the nations, and forced them to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or carried them captive into their respective countries, and there industriously dispersed them, for fear of their incorporating for their common safety. They parted their land, and took every one his share of it as their own; nay, they have cast lots for my people, and sold them. When they had taken them prisoners, [1.] They made jest of them, made a scorn of them as of no value, whom they would not release, and yet thought them not worth the keeping; they made nothing of playing them away at dice; or they made a dividend of the prisoners by lot, as the soldiers did of Christ's garments. [2.] They made a gain of them; when they had them, they sold them, yet with so much confidence, as if God could not take away their price; they gave a boy taken in war for the hire of a harlot, and a girl for so many bottles of wine as would serve them for one sitting; a goodly price at which they valued them, and greatly preference for a son and daughter of Israel, to be a slave and a drudge in a tavern or a brothel. Obs. The laws of God and nature were so commonly spent upon them. The spoil which these enemies of the Jews gathered by injustice and violence, they scattered and threw away in drinking and whoring; such is frequently the character, and such the conversation, of the enemies and persecutors of the people of God. The Tyrians and Philistines, when they seized any of the children of Judah and Jerusalem, either took prisoners in war, or kidnapped them; they sold them to the Grecians, (with whom the men of Tyre traded in the persons of men, Ezek. xxxvi. 13.) that they might remove them far from their own border, ver. 6. It was a great reproach to Israel, God's first-born, to be thus bought and sold among the heathen.

(2.) They had unjustly seized God's silver and gold; (ver. 5.) by which some understand the wealth of Israel. The silver and gold which God's people had, he calls his, because they had received it from him and devoted it to him; and whenever robbed them, God took it as if they had robbed him, and therefore had a right to take it again. These who were away the estates of good men for well-doing, will be found guilty of sacrilege; they take God's silver and gold. But it seems rather to be meant of the vessels and treasures of the temple, which God here calls his goodly pleasant things, precious and desirable to him and all that are his. These they carried into their temples as trophies of their victory over God's Israel, thinking that therein they triumphed over Israel's God, nay, and that their idols triumphed over him. Thus the ark was put in Dagon's temple. Thus they did unjustly, "What have you to do with me, (ver. 4.) with my people? what wrong have they done you? What provocation have they given you? You had nothing to do with them, and you need not this great revenge to be taken against them, lining against the subject in the land, and these offended and harmed, that are harmless and ineffectual: Will you render me a recompense?" Can they pretend that either God or his people have done them any injury, for which they may justify themselves by the law of retaliation, in doing them these injuries? No, they have no colour for it. Note, It is an evil thing for the humble and poor, and those that are obliging to their neighbours, to find them very kind and unneighborly; and for those who do no injuries to suffer many.

5. The sentence passed upon them. In general, (ver. 4.) "If you recompense me, if you pretend a quarrel with me, if you provoke me thus to jealousy, if you touch the apple of my eye, I will swiftly and speedily return your recompense upon your own head." Those that contend with God will find themselves unable to make their part good with him. He will recompense them suddenly, when they little think of it, and have not time to prevent it; if he take them to task, he will soon effect their ruin. Particularly, it is threatened, (1.) That they shall not gain their end in the mischief they designed against God's people. They though they have moved them so far from their border, that they should never return to it again, ver. 6. But (says God) "I will raise them out of the place whether you have sold them, and they shall not, as you intended, be buried alive there." Men's selling the people of God will not deprive him of his property in them. (2.) That they shall be paid in their own coin, as if they were their own. See God "I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the children of Judah, you shall lie as much at their mercy, as they have been at yours." Isa. lx. 14. Thus the Jews had rule over them that hated them, Esther ix. 1. And then they shall justly be sold to the Sabians, to a people far off. (This some think, had its accomplishment in the victories obtained by Maccabees over the enemies of the Jews; some think it looks as far forward as the last day, when the upright shall have dominion, (Ps. xlix. 14.) and the saints shall judge the world. It is certain that none ever hardened his heart against God, or his church, and prospered long; no, not Pharaoh himself, for the Lord has spoken it, for the comfort of all his suffering servants, that vengeance is his, and he will repay.

9. Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles.
Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up: 10. Beat your plough-shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. 11. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about; 'tis thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. 12. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13. Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for the wickedness is great. 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. 15. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. 16. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

What the psalmist had long before ordered to be said among the heathen, (Ps. xcv. 10.) the prophet will have in like manner to be published to all nations, That the Lord reigns, and that he comes, he comes to judge the earth, as he had long been judging in the earth. The notice here given of God’s judging the nations, may have reference to the destruction of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and the antichrist especially, and all the proud enemies of the Christian church; but some of the best interpreters, ancient and modern, (particularly the learned Dr. Pocock,) think the scope of the verses is to set forth the day of the last judgment under the similitude of God’s making war upon the enemies of his kingdom; and his gathering of the harvest of the earth, both which similitudes we find used in the revelation, ch. xix. 11.—xviii. 18.

Here we have,

I. A challenge given to all the enemies of God’s kingdom, to do their worst; to signify to them that God is preparing war against them, they are called upon to prepare war against him, v. 9.—11. When the hour of God’s judgment is come, it will be effectual. He declares how God will call together all nations to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, Rev. xvi. 14.—xx. 8. It seems to be here spoken ironically; "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles;" let all the forces of the nations be summoned to join in confederacy against God and his people. It is like that, Rev. vii. 9. "Associate yourselves, O ye people, and gird yourselves, and ye shall stand in the fight:" prepare war, muster up all your strength, wake up the mighty men, call them into your service, excite them to vigilance and resolution; let all the men of war draw near, let them come and enter the lists with Omnipotence if they dare; let them not complain for want of weapons, but let them beat their plough-shares into swords, and their pruning-hooks into spears. Let them resolve, if they will, never to return to their husbandry again, but either to conquer or die; let none plead unfaithfulness to bear arms, but let the weak say, I am strong, and will God be in war, the Lord of hosts; he is the head and end of all mighty power, and can give defiance to all the opposition of the powers of darkness; let the heathen rage, and the kings of the earth take counsel together, against the Lord and his Christ; let them assemble and come, and gather themselves together; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, and, while he thus calls them, he has them in decision, Ps. ii. 1. 4. The heathen are like grass, the wicked and 'the dead, that they may come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, to receive their doom, (v. 12.) may come up out of their graves, come up into the air, to meet the Lord there. Jehoshaphat signifies, the judgment of the Lord. Let them come to the place of God’s judgment, which perhaps is the chief reason for the using of this name here, but it is put before a little, because the heathen have not yet been gathered to the place so called, which we observed before; let them come thither where God will set to judge the heathen, to that throne of glory before which shall be gathered all nations; (Matth. xxv. 32.) for before the judgment-seat of Christ we must all appear. The challenge (v. 9.) is turned into a summons, v. 12. It is not only, Come if you dare, but, Ye shall come, which is the same as you must, for there is no escaping of the judgments of God.

II. A charge given to the ministers of God’s justice, to appear and act against these daring enemies of his kingdom among men. And therefore cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord; (v. 11.) when they bring their forces into the field, let God bring his, let the archangel’s trumpet sound a charge, to call together his mighty ones, his angels. Perhaps it is with reference to this that Christ’s coming from heaven at the last day is said to be with his mighty angels, 2 Thess. i. 7. These are the hosts of the Lord, that shall fight his battles when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, when he shall judge among the heathen, Ps. cx. 6. Some think these words, (v. 9, 10.) Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, are not a challenge to the enemies’ hosts, but a charge to God’s hosts; let them draw near, and come up. When God’s cause is to be pleaded, either by the law, or by the sword, he has those ready, that shall plead it effectually; witnesses ready to appear for him in the court of judgment, soldiers ready to appear for him in the field of battle. They shall beat plough-shares into swords, if need be. However, it is plain that to Christ’s coming is spoken here as a thing sure, turn plough-shares into swords, that is, the wickedness is great, the measure of it is full, and they are ripe for war. Our Saviour has expounded this, Matth. xiii. 39. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. And they are commanded to thrust in their sickle, their sharp sickle, and gather in both the harvest and the vintage, xiv. 20. Note, God’s enemies’ wickedness makes them ripe for God’s judgment.

III. The vast appearance that shall be in that great and solemn day; (v. 14.) Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision, the same which before was called the valley of Jehoshaphat, or of the judgment of the Lord, for the day of the Lord is near in that valley. Note. I. The judgment-day, the day of the Lord, the day of wrath and of judgment, was but one, and spoken of, as nigh at hand. Enoch said, Behold, the Lord comes, as if the Judge were then standing before the door; because it is certain that that day will come, and will come according to the appointment, and a thousand years with God are but as one day; things are ripening space for it; we ought always to be ready for it, because judgment is at hand. 2. The day of judgment will be the day of decision. When every man’s eternal
state will be determined, and the controversy that has been long depending between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan, shall be finally decided, and an end put to the struggle. The valley of the judgment, (see the Chaldee,) when every man shall be, according to the things written in the book, The valley of threshing; so the margin, carrying on the metaphor of the harvest, v. 13. The proud enemies of God's people will then be crushed and broken to pieces, and made as dust of the summer threshing-floors. 3. Immense multitudes will be gathered together, to receive their final doom. The destruction of Gog we read of the valley of Hinnom-Gog, and the city of Hamonah, (Ezek. xxxix. 13, 16,) both signifying the multitude of the vanquished enemies; it is the word here used, Hamonim, Hamonim, expressed by way of admiration. Of what vast multitudes of sinners will divine justice be glorified in the ruin of that day! A multitude of living, (says one of the rabbins,) and a multitude of dead, for Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.

IV. The amazing change that shall then be made in the kingdom of nature; (v. 15.) The sun and moon shall be darkened; as before, ch. ii. 31. Their glory and lustre shall be eclipsed by the far greater brightness of that glory in which the Judge shall then appear. Nay, they shall themselves be set aside in the dissolution of all things; for damned sinners in hell shall not be allowed their light, being cast upon the children; and glorified saints in heaven shall not need their light, for God himself will be their everlasting Light, Isa. lx. 19. Those that fall under the wrath of God in that day of wrath, shall be cut off from all comfort and joy, signified by the darkening not only of sun and moon, but of the stars also.

The different impressions which that day will make on the children of this world, and the children of God, according as it will be to them.

1. To the wicked it will be a terrible day. The Lord shall then speak from Zion and Jerusalem, from the throne of his glory, from heaven, where he manifests himself in a peculiar manner, as sometimes he had done in the glorious high throne of his sanctuary, which yet was but a faint resemblance of the glory of that day. He shall speak from heaven, from his holy hill; and his saints, (so some understand it,) the holy society of which may be called Zion and Jerusalem, for when we come to the heavenly Jerusalem, we come to the innumerable company of angels; see Heb. xii. 22, 25. Now his speaking in that day will be to the wicked as roaring, terrible as the roaring of a lion, for so the word signifies; he long kept silence, but now our God shall come, and shall not keep silence, Ps. 1. 3. 21. Note, The judgment of the great day will make the ears of those to tingle, that continue the implacable enemies of God's kingdom. God's voice will then shake terribly both heaven and earth, (Isa. ii. 21,) yet once more, Hagg. ii. 6. Heb. xii. 26. This denotes that the voice of God will in the great day make the earth and heaven shake, and the heavens and earth, as well as heaven and earth shall be separated, to put even heaven and earth into a constitution. When God comes to pull down and destroy his enemies, and make them all his footstool, though heaven and earth should stand up in defence of them, and undertake their protection, it shall be all to vain; even they shall shake before him, and be an insufficient shelter to those whom he comes forth to contend with. Note, As blessing will be bestowed on the sweetest blessings, and enough to make heaven and earth sing, so terrors out of Zion are the sorest terrors, and enough to make heaven and earth shake.

2. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved and burnt up, then will the Lord be the Hope of his people, and the Strength of the children of Israel; (v. 16,) and then shall Jerusalem be holy, v. 17. The saints are the Israel of God, they are his people, the church is his Jerusalem, they are in covenant and communion with him; now in the great day their hope shall be satisfied; The Lord will be the Hope of his people. As he always was the Founder and Foundation of their hopes, so he then will be the Crown of their hopes. He will be the Harbour of his people, (so the word is,) their Reception, Refuge, and Home. The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall stand for ever at home with God; to their father's house, the house not made with hands. (1.) Their happiness shall be confirmed; God will be in that day the Strength of the children of Israel, enabling them to bid that day welcome, and to bear up under the weight of its glories and joy. In this world, when the judgments of God are abroad, and sinners are falling under them, God is, and will be, the Hope and Strength of his people; the Strength of their heart and their Portion, when other men's hearts fail them for fear. (2.) Their holiness shall be completed; (v. 17.) Then shall Jerusalem be holy, the holy city indeed; such shall the heavenly Jerusalem be, such the glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Jerusalem shall be holy; (so the word is,) it shall be perfectly holy, the Lord shall be in it, and he shall be its King; The church is a holy society, even in its militant state, but will never be holy itself, till it comes to be triumphant. Then, no stranger shall pass through her any more; there shall not enter the new Jerusalem any thing that defiles, or works iniquity; none shall be there but those who have a right to be there, none but its own citizens; for it shall be sanctified, and the glory of the Lord shall there be. Its walls shall be the millet, all in all this be manifested and magnified; So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God. By the sanctifying and glorifying of the church God will be known in his holiness and glory, as the God that dwells in his holy mountain, and makes it holy by dwelling in it; and they that are sanctified and glorified, are so through the knowledge of him that is, the glory of the Lord. Those know God who have of God is, [1.] An appropriating knowledge; they know that he is the Lord their God, yet not theirs only, but theirs in common with the whole church, that he is their God, but dwelling in Zion his holy mountain; for though faith appropriates, it does not engross or monopolize, the privileges of the covenant. [2.] It is an experimental knowledge. They shall find him their Hope and Strength in the worst of times, and so they shall know that he is the Lord their God. Those know best the goodness of God, who have tasted and seen it, and have found him good to them. 18. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. 19. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. 20. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21. For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.
These promises with which this prophecy concludes, have their accomplishment in part, in the kingdom of grace, and the comforts and graces of all the faithful subjects of that kingdom; but even to all these, of course, and generically, unless, there are a consequence, that time, and generally, the church shall have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of glory; for as to the Jewish church, we know not of any event concerning that, which answers to the extent of these promises; and what instances of peace and prosperity they were blessed with, which these may be supposed to have been hyperbolical description of, were they but figures of better things reserved for us, that they, in their best estate, without, might be preferred to the comfortable blessings of the kingdom of grace. It is not for their violence against the children of Judah, and the injuries they had done them; see Ezek. xxv. 3, 15.—These things are here promised.

1. Happy. That is put last here as a reason for the rest, v. 21. But we may consider it first as the ground and foundation of the rest. I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, their bloody, heinous sins, especially shedding innocent blood; that fitch and guilt they had contracted by sin, which rendered them unfit for communion with God, and made them odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; this they shall be washed from in the fountain opened, Zech. xiii. 1. That shall be cleansed by the blood of Christ, which could not be cleansed by the sacrifices and purifications of the ceremonial law. Or if we apply it to the happiness of the future state, it speaks the cleansing of the saints from all these corruptions from which they were not cleansed either by ordinances or provision of the church, that they shall not be cleansed in the remains of sin in them there. Here, though they are washing daily, there is still something that is not cleansed; i.e. in heaven even that also shall be done away. And the reason is, because the Lord dwells in Zion, dwells with his church, and much more gloriously with that in heaven, and holiness becomes his house for ever, for which reason, where he dwells, the holiness of the church shall be an essential and perfect state of holiness. Note, Though the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of, that is not cleansed, yet there is a time coming, when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be all fair, and no spot, no stain, in her; and we must wait for that day.

2. Plenty; v. 18. That is put first, because it speaks the reverse of the judgment threatened in the foregoing chapters. (1.) The streams of this plenty overflow the land, and enrich it; The mountains shall drop new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk; such great abundance shall be seen, and of suitable provision, both for baby and strong men. It speaks the abundance of vineyards, and all fruitful; and the abundance of cattle in the pastures that fill them with milk. And to make the corn-hand fruitful, the rivers of Judah shall flow with water, so that the country shall be like the garden of Eden, and fruitful and full of prosperity, every where, and greatly enriched, Ps. lxx. 9. But this seems to be spoken of the graces and comforts of the new covenant, which are compared to wine and milk; Isa. lv. 1. and the Spirit to rivers of living water, John vii. 38. And these gifts abound much more under the New Testament than they did under the Old; when believers receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, when they are enriched with everlasting consolations, and filled with joy and peace in believing; then the mountains drop new wine, and the hills flow with milk. Drink ye, drink abundantly, O beloved. When there is a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace, then the rivers of Judah flow with water, and make glad, not only the city of our God, (Ps. lxxvi. 4.) but the whole land. (2.) The fountain of this plenty is in the house of God, whence it flows, from the fountain of water, which supplies streams, and makes the country fruitful, and in which it is said, xxxiv. 15. And the fountain of water runneth over; the fountain out of the house of the Lord, in which, as in a fountain, they are served; the fountain of God's Spirit, promises, and consolations, flowing from the fountain of grace and blood, which, as from one fountain, they are abundantly supplied with; and he who is supplied from that fountain is made happy in the fruits of righteousness, which had long lain as the barren wilderness. This grace is a fountain overflowing, overflowing, from which we may be continually drawing, and yet need not fear its being drawn dry. This fountain comes out of the house of the Lord; for these that would partake of the promised graces and comforts, must diligently and constantly attend upon instituted ordinances, and from the house of the Lord above, from his temple in heaven, flows all that good which here we are daily tasting the streams of, but hope to be shortly, hope to be eternally, drinking at the fountain-head of.

III. Perfect. This crowns all the rest; (v. 20.) Judah shall dwell for ever, (when Egypt and Edom are made a desolation,) and Jerusalem shall continue from generation to generation. This is a promise, and a precious promise it is. (1.) That the church of Christ shall continue in the world to the end of time. As one generation of professing Christians passes away, another shall come, in whom the church shall not cease, nor the dispensation, nor the work of holiness. Note, Though the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of, that is not cleansed, yet there is a time coming, when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be all fair, and no spot, no stain, in her; and we must wait for that day.
EXPOSITION,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS
OF THE PROPHECY OF
AMOS.

Though this prophet appeared a little before Isaiah, yet he was not, as some have mistaken, that Amos, who was the father of Isaiah, (Isa. i. 1.) for in the Hebrew their names are very different; their families too were of a different character; for Isaiah was a courtier, Amos a country farmer. Amos signifies, a burden, whence the Jews have a tradition, that he was of a slow tongue, and spake with stammering lips; we may rather, in allusion to his name, say, that his speech was weighty, and his word the burden of the Lord. He was (as most think) of Judah, yet prophesied chiefly against Israel, and at Bethel, ch. vii. 13. Some think his style savours of his extraction, and is more plain and rustic than that of some of the other prophets; I do not see it so, but it is plain that his matter agreed with that of his contemporary, Hosea; that out of the mouth of these two witnesses the word might be established. It appears by his context with Amaziah the priest of Bethel, that he met with opposition in his work; but was a man of undaunted resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproving sin, and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing in his exhortations to repentance and reformation. He begins with threatenings against the neighbouring nations that were enemies to Israel, ch. i. and ii. Then calls Israel to account; and judges them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favours God had bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibility under his judgments, ch. iii. and iv. He calls them to repentance, (ch. v.) rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices, unless they did repent. He foretells the desolations that were coming upon them, notwithstanding their security, (ch. vi.) some particular judgments, (ch. vii.) particularly on Amaziah; and after other reproofs and threatenings, (ch. viii. and ix.) concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom, and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein; just as the prophecy of Joel concluded. These prophets, having opened the wound in their reproofs and threatenings, which show all wrong, in the promises of gospel-grace open the remedy, which alone will set all to rights.

AMOS, I

In this chapter, we have, I. The general title of this prophecy, v. 1. with the general scope of it, v. 2. II. God's particular controversy with Syria, (v. 3. 5.) with Palestine, (v. 6. 8.) with Tyre, (v. 9. 10.) with Edom, (v. 11. 12.) and with Ammon, (v. 13. 15.) for their cruelty to his people, and the many injuries they had done them. This explains God's dealing with the nations, Joel iii. 2.

1. THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2. And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

Here is,

1. The general character of this prophecy. It is, the words which the prophet saw. Are words to be seen? Yes, God's words are; the apostles speak of the word of life, which they had not only heard, but which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled; (1 John i. 1.) such a real, substantial thing is the word of God. The prophet saw these words. (I.) They were revealed to him in a vision, as John is said to see the voice that spake to him; Rev. i. 12.

2. That which was foretold by them, was to him as certain as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes.
It in imitates how strong he was in that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.

2. The person by whom this prophecy was sent; Amos, who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa, and was a skilful vinedresser in the vineyards; some think he was a rich deacon in the temple; the word is used concerning the king of Moab; (2 Kings iii. 4.) He was a sheep-master; it is probable that he got money by that business, and yet, he must quit it, to follow God as a prophet. Others think he was a poor keeper of cattle, for we had, (ch. vii. 14, 15.) that he was within a gatherer of wild figs, a poor employment, by which we may suppose he did not live in great plenty; God took him, as he did David, from following the flock, and Elisha from following the plough. Many were trained up for great employments, in the quiet, innocent contemplative business of shepherds. When God would send a prophet to reprove and warn his people, he employed a shepherd, a herdsman, to do it, for they had made themselves as the horse and mule, that have no understanding; nay, worse than the ass that knows his owner. God sometimes chooses the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise. 1 Cor. i. 27.

Note, Those whom God has endowed with abilities for his service, ought not to be despised or laid aside for the meanness either of their original, or of their beginnings. Though Amos himself is not ashamed to own that, he was a herdsman, yet others ought not to upbraid him with it, or think the worse of it for it.

3. The persons concerned in the prophecy of this book; it is concerning Israel, the ten tribes, who were now ripened in sin, and ripening space for ruin. God had raised them up prophets among themselves, (ch. ii. 11.) but they regarded them not; therefore God sends them one from Tekoa, in the land of Judah, that, coming from another country, and not associated with the scurvy, was the reverse sent out of his own country, because there he was despised for his having been a herdsman. See Matt. xviii. 33, 34.

4. The time when these prophecies were delivered. (1.) The book is dated, as laws used to be, by the reigns of the kings under whom the prophet prophesied. It was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well, and of Jotham the second king of Israel, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well; yet then they must both be told both of the sins they were guilty of, and of the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins, that they might not with the present gleam of prosperity flatter themselves into an opinion of their innocence, or a confidence of their perpetual security. 2. It is dated by a particular event to which his prophecy had reference; it was two years before the earthquake, that earthquake which is mentioned to have been in the days of Uzziah, (2 Chron. xiv. 5.) which put the nation into a dreadful fright, for it is there said, They fled before it. But how could they flee from it? Some conjecture that this earthquake was at the time of Isaiah's vision, when the posts of the north and south did shake. The tradition of the Jews is, that it happened just at the time when Uzziah presumptuously invaded the priest's office, and went in to burn incense, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. Josephus mentions this earthquake, Antiq. IX. 11. and says, "By it half of a mountain was removed and carried to a plain four furlongs off; and it spoiled the king's gardens." God by this prophet gave warning two years before to God by it would shake down their houses, ch. iii. 15.

5. The introduction to these prophecies, containing the general scope of them; (v. 2.) The Lord will roar from Zion. His threatenings by his prophets, and the executions of those threatenings in his providence, will be as terrible as the roaring of a lion is to the shepherds and their flocks. Amos here speaks the same language with his contemporaries, Hosea (ch. xi. 10.) and Joel, ch. iii. 15. The lion roars before he tears; God gives warning before he strikes. Observe, (1.) Wherein this warning comes; from Zion and Jerusalem, from the oracles of God there delivered; for by them is thy servant warned, Ps. xix. 11. Our God, whose special residence is there, will issue out warrants. Given at that court, as it were, for the executing of judgments on the land. See Jer. xxx. 30. In Zion was the mercy-seat, thence the Lord roars; intimating that the God of truth and justice, whose judgments are not alloyed and mitigated by mercy, may, as they are warnings, they are really acts of mercy. We are chastened, that we may not be condemned. (2.) What effect the warning has; The habitations of the shepherds mourn, either because they fear the roaring lion, or, because they feel what is signified by that comparison, the consequence of a great drought, (ch. iv. 7.) which made the top of Carmel, of the most fruitful fields, to wither, and become as a desert, Joel i. 12, 17.

3. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron: 4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad. 5. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord. 6. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: 7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: 8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon: and I will turn my hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God. 9. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: 10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof. 11. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and kept his wrath for ever: 12. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah. 13. Thus saith the Lord. For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not
turn away the punishment thereof; because they have rapped up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border.

14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind:

15. And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the Lord.

What the Lord says here, may be explained by what he says, Jer. xii. 14. Thus saith the Lord, against all my evil neighbours that touch my heritage; I will make them a replenishment of all the people that is round about them. Behold, I will pluck them out.

Damasus was a near neighbour to Israel on the north, Tyre and Gaza on the west, Edom on the south, Ammon and (in the next chapter) Moab on the east; and all of them had been, one time, one way, or other, prickings briers and grieving thorns to Israel, evil neighbours to them; and because God espouses his people's cause, he there calls them his evil neighbours, and here comes for to reckon with them.

The method taken in dealing with each of them is, in part, the same, and therefore we put them together, and yet in each there is something peculiar.

1. Let us see what is repeated, both by way of charge, and by way of sentence, concerning them all. 'The controversy God has with each of them, is brought home to Alis and Judah, he denounces judgments against these nations whom he made use of as scourges to them for their sojourn; which might serve for a check to their pride and insolence, and a relief to his people under their dejections; for hereby they might see that God had not quitted his interest in them, and therefore might hope they had not lost their interest in him.

Note, Warnings are there arraigned.

1. The indictment drawn up against them all is thus far the same, (1.) That they are charged in general with three transgressions, and with four, that is, with many transgressions; as by one or two, we mean a few, so by three or four we mean many, as in Latin, a man that is very happy, is said to be terque querque beate—three and four times happily; or by three and four, that is, with seven transgressions, a number of perfection; intimating that they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and are ripe for ruin. Or, with three, that is, a variety of sins, and with a fourth especially, which is specified concerning each of them, though the other three are not. As Prov. xxx. 15, 18, 21, 29, where we read of three things, viz. four, generally one seems to be more especially intended. (2.) That the particular sin, which is fastened upon as the fourth, and which alone is specified, is, the sin of persecution; it is some mischief or other done to the people of God, that is particularly charged upon every one of them; for persecution is the measure-filling sin of any people; and it is this sin that will be particularly reckoned for; I was hungry, and you gave me no meat; much more if it may be said, I was hungry, and you took my meat from me.

2. The judgment given against them all, is thus far the same. (1.) That, their sin being come to such a height, God will not turn away the punishment thereof. Though he has granted them a long reprieve, and has often turned away their punishment, yet now he will turn it away no longer, but justice shall take its course, "I will not revoke it (so some read it); I will not recall the voice which is gone forth from Zion and Jerusalem, (v. 2.) speaking death and terror to the sinful nations." It is an irrepealable sentence; God has spoken it, and he will not call it back.

(2.) That God will kindle a fire among them; this is said concerning all these evil neighbours, v. 4, 7, 10, 12, 14. God will send a fire into their cities.

When fires are kindled, that lay cities, villages, and houses in ashes, whether designedly or casually, God must not be acknowledged in it; they are of his sending; sin stirs up the fire of his jealousy, and that kindles other fires.

11. Let us see what is mentioned both by way of charge, and by way of sentence, that is peculiar to each of them; that every one may take his portion.

1. Concerning Damasus, the head city of Syria, a kingdom that was often vexations to Israel, (1.) That he fiercely or sun of Damasus was, using the Galatites barbarously; They threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron, (v. 3.) which may be understood either literally, of putting the inhabitants of Gilead to the torture, or to cruel deaths, whom they got into their hands; as David put the Ammonites under saws and harrows, 2 Sam. xii. 31. We read with what inhumanity Hazael king of Damascus used the Syrians; (2 Kings xx. 21, 22) he tellingly, with fierce treatment, to the end of the world; they cut off to all the inhabitants of the third generation, (v. 21.) but most severely reckoned with for it, which yet God justly permits them to do. The church is called God's threshing, and the corn of his floor; (Isa. xxi. 10.) but if men make it their threshing, and the chaff of their floor, they shall be sure to hear of it. (2.) The peculiar punishment of Damascus is, (1.) That the fire which shall be sent up, shall lasten upon the city, and be not quenched so long as it shall be left; even for the city itself, and for the country towns, but on the house of Hazael, which he built; and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad, the royal palaces inhabited by the kings of Syria, many of whom were of that name. Note, Even royal palaces are no fence against the judgments of God, though ever so richly furnished, though ever so strongly fortified. (2.) That the enemy shall force his way into the city; (v. 5.) I will break the bar of Damascus; and when the gate gies open. Or, it may be understood figuratively; all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city, shall fail, and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission, it is in vain to think of turning them out. (3.) That the people shall be destroyed with the sword; I will cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, the valley of idolatry, for they did sacrifice to their gods; the Syrians were gods of the valleys, (1 Kings xx. 23.) were worshipped in valleys; as the idols of Israel were worshipped on the hills; him also that heldeth the sceptre of power, some petty king or other that used to boast of the sceptre he held from Beth-Eden; the house of pleasure. Both those that were given to idolatry, and those that were given to sensuality, shall be cut off together. (4.) That the spoil of the nation shall be carried off. The people shall go into captivity unto Kir, which was in the country of the Medes. We find this fulfilled, (2 Kings xvi. 9.) about fifty years after this, when the king
of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin, at the instigation of Ahaz king of Judah.

2. Concerning Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and the inhabitats of the other cities of the Philistines, were carrying away captive the whole captivity, either of Israel or Judah, which, some think, refers to that inroad made upon Jehoram, when they took away all the king's sons, and all his substance; (2 Chron. xxvii. 17.) or, perhaps it refers to their seizing of those that fled to them for shelter, when Semachibar invaded Judah; and the spoil of that country. (2 Kings v. 26, 27.) or, (as here) to the Edomites, who were, always wars enemies to the people of God. They spared none, but carried off all they could lay their hands on, designing, if possible, to cut off the name of Israel, Ps. lxxx. 4. 7. (2) The peculiar punishment of the Philistines is, that the fire which God will send, shall devour the palaces of Gaza, and that the inhabitants of the other cities of the Philistines, Ashkelon, (or Azotus,) Ashdod, and Ekron, should all be cut off, and God would make as thorough work with them in their ruin as they would have made with God's people when they carried away the whole captivity; for even the remnant of them shall perish. (3) Note, God will make a full end of those that think to make a force of the strength and multitude of their enemies.

3. Concerning Tyre, that famous city of wealth and strength, that was itself a kingdom, v. 9. (1.) The peculiar sin of Tyre is, delivering up the whole captivity to Edom, selling to the Edomites those of Israel that fled to them for shelter, or any way fell into their hands; not caring what hardships they put upon them, so they could but make gain of them to themselves. Herein they forgot the brotherly covenant, the league of friendship, which was concluded upon by Hiram king of Tyre, (1 Kings v. 12.) which was so intimate, that Hiram called Solomon his brother, 1 Kings ix. 13. Note, It is a great aggravation of enmity and malice, when it is the violation of friendship and of a brotherly covenant. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Tyrus, but that the palaces thereof shall be devoured, which was done when Nebuchadnezzar took it after thirteen years' siege. Their merchants were all princes, and their private houses were as palaces; but the fire shall make no more of them than cottages.

4. Concerning Edom, the posterity of Esam. (1.) Their peculiar sin was, an unmerciful, unwearyed pursuit of the people of God, and their taking all advantages against them to do them a mischief, v. 11. He did pursue his brother with the sword, not only of old, when the king of Edom took up arms to oppose the children of Israel's passage through his border, (Numb. xx. 1.) but ever since upon all occasions; they had not strength and courage enough to face them in the field of battle, but, whenever any other enemy had put Judah or Israel to flight, then the Edomites set in with the pursuers. fell upon the rear, and made a carnage of them. How ready, and (as is usual with cowards when they have an enemy at an advantage) they did cast off all pity. Those that are least courageous, are commonly most cruel; Edom was so; his malice destroyed his compassion; (so the word is;) he stripped himself of the tenderness of a man, and put on the fierceness of a beast of prey; and, as such a one, he did rear, his anger day by day, against all his brother Jacob; and his anger he never knew when he had snacked enough of the blood of Israel; but, like the horse-leech, still cried, Give, give. Nay, he kept his wrath for ever; when he wanted objects of his wrath, and opportunity to show it, yet he kept it in reserve, (it rested in his bosom,) rolled it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and had it ready to spit in the face of Israel upon the next occasion. Cursed be such cruel wrath and anger so fierce, so outrageous; which makes men like the devil, who continually seeks to devour, and unlike God, who keeps not his anger for ever. (3.) The same sin was natural, for that he pursues the innocent, his brother, upon whom he ought to have protected: it was hereditary, as if it had been entailed upon the family ever since Esau hated Jacob, and time itself could not wear it out, no, nor the brotherly conduct of Israel toward them, (Deut. i. 4.) and the express law given to Israel, (Deut. xxviii. 7.) Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother. (2) Here is reason to fear an external enemy, to be wary of them; for a fire shall be sent to devour their palaces. Note, The fire of our anger against our brethren kindles the fire of God's anger against us. 5. Concerning the Ammonites, v. 15.—15. (1) See how violently the fire of their anger turned against the people of God; they not only triumphed in their calamities, (as we find, Ezek. xxxv. 2, 6.) but they did themselves use them barbarously, they ripped up the women with child of Gilead, a piece of cruelty, the very mention whereof strikes a horror upon one's mind; one would think it not possible that any of the human race should be so inhuman. Hazael was guilty of it, 2 Kings viii. 12. It was done not only in a brutish rage, which falls without consideration upon all that comes before it, but with a malicious design to extirpate the race of Israel by killing not only all that were born, but all that were to be born, worse than Egyptian cruelty. It was that they might enlargetheir border, that they might make the land of Gilead their own, and there might be none to lay claim to it, or give them any disturbance in the possession of it. We find, (Jer. xxxix. 3.) that the Ammonites inherited Gilead, that is, Gilead's land, as a perpetual and eternal inheritance, as much as if they had destroyed the nation, and left them no sons, no heirs. We know in nearly all cases their doom was, and how heinous their crime, who said, This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours by occupancy. See what cruelty covetousness is the cause of; and what horrid practices those are often put upon, that are greedy to enlarge their own border. (2.) See how violently the fire of God's anger burned against them; shall not God visit for these things done in any land, of any kind, especially when they are done to his own people? Shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this? No doubt there shall. (2 Kings v. 10.) The fire shall be kindled with shouting in the day of battle, war shall kindle the fire, it shall be a fire accompanied with the sword, or a ravaging fire, which shall make a noise like that of soldiers ready to engage. And it shall be a tempest in the day of the whirlwind, which comes swiftly, fiercely, and bears down all before it. Or, This tempest and whirlwind shall be as hollows to the fire, to make it burn the stronger, and spread the farther. It is particularly threatened that their kings and his princes shall go together into captivity, carried away by the king of Babylon, not long after Judah was. See what changes God's providence often makes with men; what various and contrary turns their own sins, kings become captives, and princes prisoners. Milkone shall go into captivity; some understand it of the god of the Ammonites, whom they called Moloch—a king; he, and his princes, and his priests that attended him, shall go into captivity; their id. 1 shall be so far from protecting them, that it shall itself go into captivity with them. Note, Those who by violence and wrongs, and by the exercise of wicked power, will justly be expelled and excluded their own border; nor is it strange if those who make no conscience of invading the rights of others, be able to make no resistance against those who invade theirs.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, I. God, by the prophet, proceeds in a like controversy with Moab as before with other nations.
1. 2. He shows what quarrel he had with Judah, v. 4. The length begins his censure against it, to which all that goes before is but an introduction. Observe, 1. The sins they are charged with—insult, oppression, whoredom, v. 6. 2. The aggravation of those sins—the temporal and spiritual mercies God had bestowed upon them, for which they had made him such ungrateful returns, v. 9., 12. 3. God's complaint of them for their sins, (v. 13.) and his threatenings of their ruin, and their utter inability to prevent it, v. 14., 16.

1. Micah saith to the Lord, for three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he burnt the bones of the king of Edom unto line; 2. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth; and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet: 3. And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord. 4. Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked; 5. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. 6. Thus saith the Lord, For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; 7. That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek; and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: 3. And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of condemned in the house of their god.

Here is, 1. The judgment of Moab, another of the nations that bordered upon Israel. They are reckoned with, and shall be punished for three transgressions and for four, as those before. Now, 1. Moab's fourth transgression, as theirs who were before set for the bar, was, cruelly; the instance given refers not to the people of God, but to a heathen like themselves, and this was the Edomites, or the Edomites upon the king of Edom into line. We find there was war between the Edomites and the Moabites, in which the king of Moab, in distress, and rage, offered his own son for a burnt-offering, to appease his deity, 2 Kings iii. 26, 27. And it should seem that afterward he, or some of his successors, in revenge upon the Edomites for bringing him t that extremity, having avenged it at first, and the idols of the Edomites seized him alive, and burnt him to ashes, or slew him, and burnt his body, or dug up the bones of their dead king, of that particularly who had so straitened him, and, in token of his rage and fury, burnt them to time, and perhaps made use of the powder of his bones for the white-washing of the walls and ceiling of his palace, that he might please himself with the sight of that monument of his revenge. Est vindicta bonum vida jucundius ipsam—Revenge is sweeter than life itself. It is barbarous to abuse human bodies, for we ourselves also are in the body; it is senseless to abuse dead bodies, nor, it is impious, for we believe and look for their resurrection. And to think that God and monarchs, whose persons and names ought to be in a particular manner respected and had in veneration, is an affront to majesty; it is an argument of a base spirit for those to trample upon a dead lion, who, were he alive, would tremble before him. 2. Moab's doom for this transgression is, (1.) A judgment of death. Those that deal cruelly shall be cruelly dealt with; (2.) Moab's doom is, that they shall fall off with the sword of war, which kills with tumult, with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, circumstances that make it so much the more terrible; as the lion's roaring aggravates his tearing; every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa. ix. 5. (2.) It is a judgment upon their judges, who had passed the sentence upon the bones of the king of Edom, but they should be burnt to time; I will cut him off, says God; (v. 3.) he shall know there is a Judge that is higher than he. The king, the chief judge, and all the inferior judges and princes, shall be cut off together. If the people sometimes suffer for the sin of their princes, yet the princes themselves shall not escape, Jer. xlvii. 47. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

II. Judah also is a near neighbour to Israel, and therefore now that justice is riding the circuit, that shall not be passed by; that nation had made itself like the heathen, and mingled itself with them, and therefore the indictment here runs against them in the same form in which it had run against all the rest: For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, their sins are as many as the sins of other nations, and we find them huddled up with them in the same character, Jer. ix. 26. Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, jumble them together, they are all alike; the sentence here also is the same. (v. 5.) I will send a fire upon Judah, though it is the land where God is known, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, though it is the holy city, and God has been known in its palaces for a refuge, Ps. xlviii. 8. But the sin here charged upon Judah, is different from all the rest. The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God, v. 4. 1. They put contempt upon his statues; and persisted in disobedience to them; They have despised the bow of the Lord, as if it were not worthy of credit, and had any thing in it valuable; and herein they despised the wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as the authority and sovereignty, of the Law-Maker; this they did, in effect, when they kept not his commands, made no conscience of them, took no care about them. 2. They put honour upon his rivals, their idols, here called their lips, which exposed them to God's displeasure and anger. Hb. ii. 18. And they that are led away into the error of idolatry, are by that led into a multitude of other errors, Unis dato aburda mile sequentur—One absurdity draws after it a thousand. God is an infinite, eternal Spirit; but when that truth of God is by idolatry changed into a lie, all his other truths are in danger of being so changed likewise; thus Idolatry is a root of all evil, it spreads, involves, and brings them up to strong delusions; nor was it any excuse for their sin, that they were the lies after which their fathers walked, for they should rather have taken warning, than taken pattern, by those that perished with these lies in their right hand.

III. We now at length come to the words which Amos says concerning Israel; the reproofs and threatenings having walked the round, here is the centre, here they settle. He begins with them as with the rest, For three transgressions of Israel, and
for four, I will not turn away the punishment there-
of: if all these nations must be punished for their
iniquities, shall Israel go unpunished? Observe here,
what their sins were, for which God would reckon
with them.
1. Perverting justice. This was the sin of those
who were intrusted with the administration of jus-
tice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties con-
cerned; they made nothing of selling a righteous
man for a pair of shoes, the least advantage to
themselves that could be proposed to them; give
them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor
man, who could not give them so much as that,
should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those
that will have no mercy; they will rather play at
small game than sit out; for a piece of bread such
a man will transgress. Note, Those who will wrong
their consciences for anything, will come at length
to do it for next to nothing, those who begin to sell
justice for silver, will, in time, be so sordid as to
sell it for a pair of old shoes.
2. Offpressing the poor, and seeking to benefit
themselves by doing them a mischief; They pant
after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor;
they swallow up the poor with the utmost greedi-
ness, and make a prey of them that are in sorrow,
with dust on their heads; poor orphans that are in
mourning for their parents, they catch at them to
get their estates into their hands; they never rest
 till they have got the heads of the poor in the dust,
to be trodden on. Or, They pant after the dust of
the earth, silver and gold, white and yellow dust;
they covet it earnestly, and levy it upon the head of
the poor, by their unjust exactations. Note, Men's
seeking to enrich themselves by the impoverishing
of others, is a transgression which God will not long
turn away the punishment of. This is turning aside
the way of the meek, contrasting to do injury to those
who, they know, are mild and patient, and will bear
injury. They invade their rights, break their meas-
ures, and obstruct the course of justice in favour of
them, not suffering them to go on with their right-
ceous cause; this is turning aside their way. Note,
The more patiently men bear the injuries that are
done them, the greater is the sin of those that injure
them; and the more occasion they have to expect
that God will right them, and take vengeance for
them. 1, as a deaf man, heard not, and then thou
wilt hear.
3. Abominable uncleanness, even incest itself, such
as is not named among the Gentiles, that a man
should have his father's wife, (1 Cor. v. 1) his fa-
ther's concubine; A man and his father will go in unto
her, and they will have a common cause, as any
other of an unbounded, promiscuous lust; and yet
where the former iniquities of oppression and extor-
tion are, this also is found; for laws of modesty
seldom hold those that have broken the bands of
justice, and cast away its cords from them. This
wickedness is such a scandal to religion, and the
profession of it, that they who are guilty of it, are
looked upon as cowards, as of no worth, no credit
nor holiness, and to render it odious among the hear-
them, as if he contemnenced the villanies which those
who pretend relation to him allow themselves in,
and were altogether such a one as they.
4. Regaling themselves, and yet pretending to
honour their God with that which they had got by
oppression and extortion, v. 8. They add idolatry
to their injustice, and then think they have more for
their injustice with their idolatry. (1.1) They make merry
with that which they have unjustly squeezed from
the poor. They lay themselves down at ease, and
in state, and stretch themselves upon clothes laid to
pledge, which they ought to have restored the same
night, according to the law, Deut. xxiv. 12, 13.
And they drink the wine of the condemned, of such
as they have fined and laid heavy mullets upon;
spending that in sensuality, which they have got by
injustice. (2.1) They think to make atonement for
their sins by feasting on the gains of oppression before
their altars, and drinking this wine in the house of
their god, in the temples where they worshipped
their calves, as if they would make God a Partner
in their crimes, by making him a Partner of the
profits of them—service good enough for false gods;
but the true God will not thus be mocked; he has
declared that he hates robbery for burnt-offerings,
and cannot be served acceptably but with that which
is got honestly.
3. Yet destroyed I the Amorite before
them, whose height was like the height of the
cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his
roots from beneath. 10. Also I brought you up
from the land of Egypt, and led you forty
years through the wilderness, to possess the
land of the Amorite. 11. And I raised up
of your sons for prophets, and of your young
men for Nazarites. Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord. 12. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink;
and commanded the prophets, saying, Prop-
hecy not. 13. Behold, I am pressed under
you, as a cart is pressed that is full of
sheaves. 14. Therefore the flight shall po-
rish from the swift, and the strong shall not
strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty
deliver himself: 15. Neither shall he stand
that handleth the bow; and he that is swift
of foot shall not deliver himself; neither shall
he that rideth the horse deliver himself: 16.
And he that is courageous among the mighty
shall flee away naked in that day, saith the
Lord.
Here, 1. God puts his people Israel in mind of the
great things he had done for them, in putting
them into possession of the land of Canaan,
the greatest part of which these ten tribes now enjoyed,
v. 9, 10. Note, We need often to be reminded of the
mercies we have received, which are the heavi-
est aggravations of the sins we have committed.
2. He gives them a castigation of their great
magnanimity and unworthiness, and the disproportion
between his gifts and our merits; but he justly up-
braids us with our ingratitude, and ill requital of his
favours, and tells us what he has done for us, to
shame us for not rendering again according to the
benefit done to us, Son, remember, Israel, remem-
ber, (1.) "That God brought thee out of a house
of bondage, and delivered thee out of the hand of
the Egyptians, and cut thee down on the high
place, where, else thou hadst perished in slavery." (2.)
That he led thee forty years through a desert land,
and fed thee in a wilderness, where, else, thou hadst
perished with hunger. Mercies to our ancestors
were mercies to us; for if they had been cut off,
we had not been. (3.) That he made room for them
in Canaan, by extirpating the natives, by a series of
wonders little inferior to those by which they were
redeemed out of Egypt; I destroyed the Amorite
before them, here put for all the devoted nations. Observe the magnificence of the enemies that stood in their way, which is a great noise of, that God did unto them; the multitude of them were, as it were, great stature, his height was like the height of the cedars, and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them; and of great strength, not only tall, but well set, he was strong as the oaks; their kingdom was eminent among the nations, and overtopped all its neighbours; the support and defence of it, he wished to have such men, among young men, among them, have therein such an advantage, both for direction and encouragement, to be religious, as they will be called to an account for another day, if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites, raised among them. Concerning the truth of this, he appeals to them; 'Is it not even thus,' &c. S. 7. They that have such men, among young men, among them, have therein such an advantage, both for direction and encouragement, to be religious, as they will be called to an account for another day, if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites, raised among them. Concerning the truth of this, he appeals to them; 'Is it not even thus,' &c. S. 7.

3. He charges them with the abuse of the means of grace they enjoyed, and the opposition they gave to God's designs in affording them these means, v. 12. They were so far from walking in the light, that they were in darkness, and did what they could to extinguish it, that it may be said, they took the faces to their conviction. (1.) They did what they could to debauch good people; to draw them off from their seriousness in devotion, and their strictness in conversation; Ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, contrary to their vow, that, having broken it in that instance, they might not pretend to keep it in any other. Some they surprised, or allure, into it, and with their much fair speech caused them to yield; others they forced and frightened into it, reproached and threatened them, if they were more precise than their neighbours; and by drawing them in to drink wine they spoiled them for Nazarites. Note, Satan and his agents are very busy to corrupt the minds of young people that look heavenward; and many that we thought would have been Nazarites, they have overcome by giving them wine to drink, by drawing them into the love of mirth and pleasure, and drinking company; multitudes of young men that bid fair for eminent professors of religion, have erred through wine, and been undone for ever. And how do the factors for hell triumph in the debauching of a Nazarite? (2.) They did what they could to alienate the young men from one another. They tell them the Nazarites, 'You commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not, and threatened them if they did prophesy, (ch. vii. 12.) as if God's messengers were bound to observe your orders, and might not deliver their errand unless you gave them leave, and so you not only receive the grace of God, in raising up those prophets, in ruin, but put the highest affront upon God himself, and made those very men that were your adversaries, Isa. i. 24. I am pressed under you, and the load of your sins, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, is loaded with corn, in the midst of the joy of harvest, as long as any will lie on.' Note, The great God complains of sin, especially the sins of his professing people, as a burden to him. He is wearied with this reproach (Ps. xcv. 10.) is broken with their stubborn heart, Ezek. vi. 9. A consideration which if it make not the sinners repentance very deep, it will make his
ruin very great. The great God that upholds the world, and never complains that he is pressed under the weight of it. He grieved not, he repined not; for the weight of that he bore was the weight of all Israel, yea, and of their hypocritical services too, that he is weary of bearing them, Isa. i. 14. No wonder the creature groans being burtenth, (Rom. viii. 22,) when the Creator says, I am pressed under them. 5. He threatens them with an unavoidable ruin. And so some read, v. 13. Behold, I will press or straiten your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses; they shall stand as was the weapons of war they sink under them, and shall make a noise, as a cart overloaded does. They that will not submit to the convictions of the word, that will neither be won by that, nor by the conversation of those about them, shall be made to sink under the weight of God's judgments. If God load us daily with his benefits, and we, notwithstanding that, lead him with our sides, how can we expect any other than that he should load us with his judgments? And it is here threatened in the three last verses, that when God comes forth to contend with this provoking people, they shall not be able to stand before him, to flee from him, or to make their part good with him; for when God judges, he will overcome. Though his patience be tired out, his power is not, and so the sinner shall find, to his cost. W. When the Assyrian army comes to lay the country waste by sword and captivity, none shall escape, but every one shall have his share in the common desolation. (1.) It will be in vain to think of fleeing from the enemy that comes armed with a commission to make all desolate. The flight shall perish from the swift; the arts of those that have been famed for happy escapes and happy retreats, shall now fail them; they shall have no power to flee, or to find no way to take; or they shall have no strength or spirit to attempt it. They shall be at their vote end, and then they are soon at their flight's end. Are they, as Asahel, as swift of foot as a wild roe? (2 Sam. ii. 18.) Yet, like him, they shall run the faster upon their own destruction; He that is swift of foot, shall not deliver himself; v. 15. Or, do they say, (as those in Isa. xxx. 16,) I have never fled, and yet we ride upon the swift? Yet they shall be forsaken; Neither shall he that rides the horse, deliver himself from the pursuers. A horse is a vain thing for safety. (2.) It will be in vain to think of fighting it out. God is at war with them; and are they stronger than he? Is there any military force that can pretend to be a match for Omnipotence? No, the strong shall not strengthen his force. He that has a habit of strength, shall not be able to exert it when he has occasion for it. And the mighty, who should protect and deliver others, shall not be able to deliver himself, to deliver his soul, (so the word is,) shall not save his life. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, nor trust in it, but strengthen himself in the Lord his God, for in him is his saving strength. And as the bodily strength shall fail, so the spirit, and the arm mon as well as the arm shall become insufficient; Neither shall he that stands that handles the bow, though he stand at a distance, but shall betake himself to flight, and not trust to his own bow to save him; though the arm were ever so strong, and the armour ever so well fixed, neither will avail when the spirit is weak. It is not courageous among the mighty, that used to look to chariots and horses, and not be dismayed at it, he shall flee away naked in that day; not only disarmed, having thrown away his weapons both offensive and defensive, but plundered of his treasure, which he thought to have carried away with him, and he shall think it as much a bargain, that he has his life for a prey. Thus when God pleases, he takes away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causes them who used to boast of their courage, and their daring enterprises in the field, to wander and sneak in a wilderness where there is no way, Job xii. 24.

CHAP. III.

A stupid, senseless, heedless people, are, in this chapter, called upon to take notice. I. Of the judgments of God denounced upon them, and the reason of those judgments; and to be hereby awakened out of their security, v. 1. 8. II. Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, and thus punish, that they might justify God in his controversy with them, and, unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other than that God should proceed in his controversy, v. 9. 15. 1. HEAR this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, 2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. 3. Can two walk together except they be agreed? 4. Will a lion roar in the forest when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den if he have taken nothing? 5. Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? 6. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? 7. Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. 8. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy? The scope of these verses is, to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them; that which the prophet has to say to them, is, to let them know that the Lord has something to say against them, v. 1. They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it; nevertheless he had something against them, and they were called to hear what it is, that they may consider what answer they shall make; as the prisoner at the bar is bid to hearken to his indictment. The children of Israel would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord has spoken against them; for He will act as He has spoken.

Let them know that the gracious cognizance God had taken of them, and the favours he had bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. It is a family that God brought up out of the land of Egypt, (v. 1.) and it was no more than a family, when it went down thither; whence God delivered it, thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, that must take notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the whole family that God brought up out of Egypt. It is a family that God has bestowed distinguishing favours upon, has owned in a peculiar manner; You only have I known of all the families of the earth. Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all.
the families of the earth. Those that know God, are known of him; in Judah is God known, and therefore Judah is more than any people known of God. God has known them; he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance.

Now, one would think, it should follow, "Therefore I will spare you, will connive at your faults, and excuse you." No. There's 1. I will punish you for your iniquity. Note, The distinguishing favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment: nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely, will he reckon with them, if they by a course of wilful sin profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished. Therefore they shall be punished, because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him, more than the sins of others; and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour by making it appear that he hates, and hates most, the sins of his children, when he knows they are as bad as others, they shall be punished worse than others, because it is justly expected that they should be so much better than others. Judgment begins at the house of God, begins at the sanctuary; for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that come nigh unto him, Lev. x. 3.

2. Let them know that they could not expect any comfortable companionship with God, unless they first made their peace with him; (v. 3.) Can two walk together except they be agreed? No, how should they? Where there is no friendship, there can be no fellowship; if two persons be at variance, they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them, before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Is it not hard affronted God, that he has broken their covenant with him, and ill requited his favours to them; and yet they expected that he should continue to walk with them, should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them, though they go no care by repentance and reformation to agree with their Adversary, and to turn away his wrath. "But how can that be?" says God, "while you continue to offer incense to God, you can look for no other than that he should walk contrary to you," Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot walk together, except they be agreed; unless we agree with God in our end, which is his glory, we cannot reason our way.

3. Let them know that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching, were not careless and groundless, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which (if they did not speedily repent) they would infallibly feel the effects of; (v. 4.) "Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey in view? No, he returns to his den; nor will a young lion cry out of his den, if the old lion has taken nothing to bring home to him; nor would God thus give you warning both by the threatenings of his word, and by lesser judgments, if you had not by your sins made yourselves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not ready about to fall upon you with desolating, destroying judgments." Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are the nagging bears, to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man, and certain presages of the judgments of God.

4. Let them know that as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work, v. 5. When God is come forth to contend with a sinful people, it is necessary that they should understand, (1.) That it is their own sin that has entangled them; for, can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? No, nature does not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of man; a bird hunt taken in a snare by chance, except he be taken something as he designed? So neither will God remove the affliction he has sent, till it have done its work, and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered, and then, and not till then, the judgment which he laid with design, except he be taken something as he designed? (2.) It is nothing but their own repentance that can disentangle them; for shall one take up a snare from the earth, which he laid with design, except he be taken something as he designed? So neither will God remove the affliction he has sent, till it have done its work, and accomplished that for which he sent it.

This consideration, That, whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in public calamities, and to study to answer God's intention in them. Let them know that their prophets, who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have received from the Lord, to be delivered to his people. (1.) God makes it known beforehand to the prophets; (v. 7.) Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, none of that evil in the city spoken of, (v. 6.) but he reveals it to his servants the prophets, though to others it is hid. Observe, as prophets, what they see, not what they tell; who make light of the warnings which the prophets give them, in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are his servants, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men. The secret of God is with them; it is in some sense with all the righteous, (Prov. iii. 32.) with all that fear God, (Ps. xxv. 14.) but in a peculiar manner with the prophets, whom the Spirit of prophecy is a Spirit of revelation.

It had put honour enough upon prophets, if it had been only said, that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do; but it speaks something very great, to say that he doeth nothing, but what he reveals it to them, as if they were the men of his counsel. Shall I hide from Abraham, who is a prophet, the thing which I do? Gen. xviii. 17. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those who put contempt on the prophets whom he uses this honour upon. (2.) The prophets cannot but make that known to the people, which God has made known to them; (v. 8.) The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy? His prophets, whom he has spoken in secret by dreams and visions, cannot but speak in public to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured concerning them, and so much affected with them, that they cannot but speak of them; for out of the abundance
of the heart the mouth will speak. I believed, therefore have I spoken, Acts iv. 20. Nay, and beside the prophetic impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word like a fire in their bones, (Jer. xx. 9.) they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with; and they had been false to their trust, if they had not done it. Necessity was laid upon them, as upon the preachers of the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16.

7. Let them know that they ought to tremble before God, upon the fair warning he had given them; as they would, (1.) Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard, and stand to their arms; Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid, or run together? So, if they not immediately come together in a fright, to consider what is best to be done for the common safety? Yet when God by his prophets gives them notice of their danger, and summons them to come, and enlist themselves under his banner, it makes no impression; they will sooner give credit to a watchman on their walls, than to a prophet sent of God; will sooner obey the summons of the Lord, than the summons given them by the Governor of the world. God says, Hearken to the voice of the trumpet, but they will not hearken, nay, and they tell him plainly that they will not, Jer. vi. 17. (2.) Upon the roaring of a lion. God is sometimes as a lion, and a young lion, to the house of Judah, Hos. v. 14. The lion roars before he tears; thus God warns before he wounds; it overtook the traveller, (as he did against Samson, Judg. xiv. 5.) he cannot but be put in great consternation; yet the Lord roars out of Zion, (ch. i. 2.) and none are afraid, but they go on securely as if they were in no danger. Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken, will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark. O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the terrors of the Lord.

9. Publish in the palaces of Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. 10. For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. 11. Therefore thus saith the Lord God. An adversary shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. 12. Thus saith the Lord, As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. 13. Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord God, the God of hosts. 14. That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el; and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. 15. And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord. 16. The Israelites are here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of, and the punishment they are condemned to.

I. Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to publish it in the palaces of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; nay, the summons must go further, even to the palaces in the land of Egypt; the great men of both those nations that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighbouring nations, and are conversant with the public intelligence, let them assemble themselves upon the mountains of Samaria, v. 9. There, upon a throne high and lifted up, the judgment is set; Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried, let them be present at the trial, for it shall be (as other trials are) public, in the face of the country; let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his adversaries. God appeals to all impartial righteous men, Ezek. xxiii. 45. They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings, when they see how the case stands. Note, God's controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny; even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see, and say, that the ways of the Lord are equal, but our ways are unequal. They are likewise summoned to attend, and be witnesses against him; and be witnesses for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning; for if judgment begin at the house of God, as they see it does, what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? 1 Pet. iv. 17. If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry? Or, this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious, that the neighbours could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit that their punishment should be so. If it could have been concealed, we would have said, Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon; but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they be grown inpudent in sin, let them bear the shame; publish it in Ashdod, in Ekron, or elsewhere.

1. Let them see how black the charge is, and how well proved; let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria, let them look off from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud the cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom. (1.) Look into their streets, and you will see nothing but riot and disorder, great tumults in the midst thereof; reason and justice are upon all occasions run down by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob; the dominion of which is the sin and shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin. (2.) Look into their prisons, and you see them filled with injured innocents; the oppressed are in the midst thereof; thrown down and crushed by their oppressors, overpowered and overwhelmed, and they had no confessor, Ecc. iv. 1. (3.) Look into their courts of justice, and they who preside in those courts, knew no how to do right, because they have always been accustomed to do wrong; they act as if they had no notion at all of the thing called justice, are in no care to do justice themselves, or to see that others do justice. (4.) Look into their treasures and stores, and you see them replenished with violence and robbery, with that which was unjustly got, and is still unjustly kept; thus they have heaped treasure together for the last days, but it will prove a treasure of wrath against the day of wrath. It may well be
said, Those know not to do right, who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong.

2. Let them see how heavy the doom is, and how well executed, v. 11, 12. (1.) Their country shall be invaded and ruined; and observe how the punishment answers to the sin. [1.] Great ramparts are in the midst of the land, and therefore an adversary shall be even round about the land; the Assyrian forces shall surround it, and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harrowed and indulged in the midst of a people, they can expect no other than that adversaries should be round about them, so that, go which way they will, they go into the mouth of danger, Luke xix. 43. [2.] They strengthened themselves in their wickedness, but they shall find in their own strength their weakness, that strength which they abused in oppressing the poor, and doing violence to all about them. Note, That power which is made an instrument of righteousness, will justly be brought down and broken. [3.] They stored up robbery in their palaces, and therefore their palaces shall be spoiled; for what is got and kept wrongfully, will not be kept long; and the poor will be protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men, if they have spoiled others, shall themselves be spoiled, for the Lord is the Avenger of all such. (2.) Their countrymen shall not escape, v. 12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up, and they shall be destroyed by the sword, or the lion, or the king of Assyria shall fall upon them both, but none to make any account of: and those that do escape, it shall be with the utmost difficulty and hazard, by hiding themselves in the corner of a bed or under the bed’s feet; which intimates that their spirits shall be quite cowed and broken, and they shall sneak shamefully in the time of danger; they shall not hide themselves in the corner of the bed, or the bed’s corner, or the piece of a bed, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape; as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem, that there shall be two in a bed together, one taken, and the other left. Note, When God’s judgments come forth against a people with commission, it will be in vain to think of escaping them. Some make their dwelling in the corner of a bed, and in a couch, to speak their present security and sensuality; they are at ease, as in a bed or on a couch, but when God comes to contend with them, he shall make them misery, shall take them away out of the bed of their sloth and slumber; those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God’s judgments are abroad, shall go captive with the first that go captive.

II. Notice is given of it to themselves, v. 13. Let this be testified, and heard, in the house of Jacob, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by the Lord God, the God of hosts, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; let them know from him, that the day is a day of the Lord, in which God will visit the transgressions of Israel upon him; when he will inquire into them, and reckon for them; there will come a day of visitation, a day of punishment, and in that day, all those things they are proud of, and put confidence in, shall fail them, and so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

1. Wo to their altars, for God will visit them. He will inquire into the sins they have been guilty of at their altars, and bring into the account all their superstition and idolatry, all their expenses on their false gods, and all their expectations from them; and he will lay the altars themselves under the marks of his displeasure; for the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground, and with them the altar itself demolished, and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against, (1 Kings xii. 3.) and immediately rent; (v. 5.) and that prophecy fulfilled when Josiah burnt men’s bones upon it, 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16. This here seconds that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolatrous altars, God will, and those with them that had them in veneration. Some make a return to the altar to signify all those things which they flee to for refuge, and trust in, and which they make their sanctuary; they shall all be cut off, so that they shall have nothing to take hold of.

2. Wo to their houses, for God will visit them too. He will inquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the robbery they have stored up in their houses, the luxury in which they lived; and (v. 15.) I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house. Their nobility, and gentry, and rich merchants, had their winter-houses in the city, and their summer-houses in the country; so nice were they in guarding against the inconveniences of the winter, when the country was thought too cold, and yet they were in the winter-houses when it was hot; though the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat was ever in extremity. They indulged a foolish affectation of change and variety; but God will, either by war, or by the earthquake, smite both the winter-house and the summer-house; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments; their houses shall be burnt, and the great houses shall have an end, the most splendid and spacious houses, the houses of their great men, they shall no longer be; or, at least, be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp and pleasantness of mansions will be so far from affording them comfort in the judgments of God’s indignation, that it will make them the more grievous and vexatious; as their extravagance about them will be put to the score of their sins and follies.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, I. The oppressors in Israel are threatened for their oppression of the poor, v. 1-5. II. The idolaters in Israel, being joined to idols, are given up to their own heart’s lusts, v. 4, 5. III. All the sins of Israel are aggravated from their incorrigibilities in them, and their refusal to return and reform, notwithstanding the various rebukes of Providence, and evidences of God’s goodness to them, v. 6-11. IV. They are invited yet at length to humble themselves before God, since it is impossible for them to make their part good against him, v. 12, 13.

1. HEAR this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. 2. The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks. 3. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her; and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the Lord. 4. Come to Bethel and
transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years; 5. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free-offerings; for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

It is here foretold, in the name of God, that oppressors shall be humbled, and idolaters shall be hardened. 1. That proud oppressors shall be humbled for their oppressions; for he that does wrong, shall receive according to the wrong that he has done. Now observe,

How their sin is described, v. 1. They are compared to the king of Bashan, which were a breed of cattle very large and strong, especially if, though bred there, they were fed upon the mountain of Samaria, where the pastures were extraordinarily fat. Amos had been a herdsman, and he speaks in the dialect of his calling, comparing the rich and great men, that lived in luxury and wantonness, to the king of Bashan, which were wanton and unrighteous, working and feeding within the bounds of their own pasture, but broke through the hedges, broke down all the fences, and trespassed upon the neighbouring grounds; and not only so, but pushed and gored the lesser cattle that were not a match for him. They that had their summer-houses upon the mountains of Samaria, when they went thither for fresh air, were as mischievous as the king upon the mountains of Bashan, and as injurious to those about them. (1.) They oppress the poor and needy themselves; they crush them, to squeeze something to themselves out of them. They take advantage of their poverty, and necessity, and inability to help themselves, to make them poorer, and more necessitous than they are. They make use of their power as judges and magistrates for the invading of men's rights and properties, the poor not excepted; for they made no conscience of robbing even the hospital. (2.) They are in confederacy with them that do so. They say to their masters, to the masters of the poor, that abuse them, and violently take from them what they have, when they ought to have relieved them, they say to them, "Bring, and let us drink, let us feast with you upon the gains of your oppression, and then we will protect you, and stand by you in it, and regard it as a matter of the poor against you." Note, What is got by extortion is commonly made use of as provision for the flesh, to satisfy the lusts thereof; and therefore men are tyrants to the poor, because they are slaves to their appetites; Bring, and let us drink, is the language of those that crush the needy, as if the tears of the oppressed, mingled with their wine, made it drink the better. And by their associations with those who are the objects of the most violent grief, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

2. How their punishment is described; (v. 2, 3.) God will take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks; he will send the Assyrian army upon them that shall make a prey of them, sit down for drinking and revelling, and an excess of riot, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

out with a hook and a cord than the Leviathan can, Job xli. 2. But God will make them know that he has a hook for their nose, and a bridle for their jaws, Isa. xxxvii. 29. The enemy shall take them away as easily as the fisherman takes away the little fish, and shall make it their sport and recreation. When the enemy has made himself master of Samaria, then, (1.) Some shall attempt to escape by sea; Ye shall go out at the breaches made in the wall of the city, and there ye may try to shift for her, to shift for her own safety, and make the best of their way; and now the uniruly king of Bashan is turned, and are themselves crushed, as they crushed the poor and needy. Note, Those to whom God has given a good pasture, if they are wanton in it, will justly be turned out of it; and those who shall not be kept within the hedges of God's precept, forfeit the benefit of the hedges of God's land, and will be forced in vain to fly through the breaches they have themselves fearfully made in that hedge. (2.) Others shall think to shelter themselves, or, at least, their best effects, in the palace, because it is a castle well fortified and a garrison well manned; Ye shall throw yourselves, (so some read it,) or throw them, your posterity, your children, or whatever it is described; the palace shall be a place where the enemy may find it ready to be seized. Note, What is got by oppression cannot long be enjoyed with satisfaction.

3. How their sentence to this punishment is ratified; The Lord God has sworn it by his holiness; he had often said it, and they regarded it not, they thought God and his prophets did but jest with them; therefore he swears it in his wrath, and what he has sworn he will not revoke. He swears by his holiness, that attribute of his which is so much his glory, and which is so much glorified in the punishment of wicked people; far as sure as God is a holy God, they that proud impiety, and sow wickedness, shall reap the same.

11. That obstinate idolaters shall be hardened in their idolatries; (v. 4. 5.) Come to Bethel, and transgress. It is spoken ironically; "Do so, take your course, multiply your transgressions by multiplying your sacrifices, for this liketh you; but what will ye do in the end hereof?" Here we see, 1. How intent they were upon the service of their idols, and how willing they were to be at cost upon them; they brought their sacrifices, and their tithes, and their free-offerings, hoping that therein they should be accepted of God, but it was all an abomination to him. The profusion of idolaters in the service of their false gods may shame our strait-handness in the service of the true and living God. 2. How they mimicked God's institutions. They had their daily sacrifice at the altar of Bethel, as God had at his altar; they had their thank-offerings as God had, only they allowed the leaven in all of, which God had forbidden, because their priests did not like to have the bread so heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, or something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were pleasant bread. 3. How well pleased they were with these services themselves; This liketh you, O ye children of Israel. So ye love. What was their great delight in it, was to think that they were acceptable to God; and thought it must therefore be pleasing to God, because it was agreeable to their own fancy. 4. How they are upbraided with it; "Come to Bethel, to Gilgal, bring the sacrifices and tithes yourselves, proclaim and publish to the nation the free-offerings, pressing them to bring in abundance of such, go on in this way," that is, (1.) "It is plain that you are, and think you are, acceptable to God, whereas the Scripture say to the contrary." (2.) "Your prophets shall let you alone in it, and not admonish you as they have done, for it is to no purpose; Let us man
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AMOS, IV.

I.

Here, the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, the God of hosts, is his name.

Here,

1. God complains of his people's incorrigibility under the judgments which he had brought upon them, in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them his displeasure, with this design, that they might by repentance make their peace with him; but it had not that effect. It is five times repeated in these verses, as the burden of the charge, "Yet have you not returned unto me, saith the Lord; you have been several times corrected, but in vain; you are not reclaimed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home."

1. This intimates that that which God designed in all his providential rebukes, was, to reduce them to their allegiance, to influence them to return to him.

2. That, if they had returned to their God, they should have been accepted, he would have bid them welcome, and the troubles they were in, would have been removed, though why God sent further troubles, was, because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflic. 2. That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly; "You have not returned to me from your vomit, you are not upright, neither have you been in covenant, to me who stand ready to receive you, to me who have so often called you."

Now, to aggravate their incorrigibility, and to justify himself in inflicting greater judgments, he recounts the lesser judgments with which he had tried to bring them to repentance.

1. There had sometimes been a scarcity of provision, though there was no visible cause of it. (v. 6). "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, for you had no meat to chew, whereby your teeth might be foolish," especially no flesh, which dirties the teeth; or emptiness of teeth, nothing to fill your mouths with. "Bread, the staff of life, has been wanting, for you have seven much and brought in little;" as Hag. 1. 9. Some think this refers to the seven years' famine that was in Elshah's time, in which we read of, 2 Kings viii. 1. Now when God thus took away their corn in the season thereof, because they had prepared it for Baal, they should have said, We will go and return to our first husbands, having paid dear for leaving him; but it had not that effect; They have not returned to me, saith the Lord.

2. Sometimes they had wanted rain, and then of course they wanted the fruits of the earth. This evil was of the Lord; I have withheld the rain from you. God has the key of the clouds, and if he shut up, who can open? v. 7. The rain was withheld when there were yet three months to the harvest, at the time when they used to have it; and therefore the withholding of it was an extraordinary thing, and the curse of nature was, that men must therein own the hand of the God of nature; and it was at a time when they most needed it, and therefore the want of it was a very sore judgment, and blasted their expectations of a crop at harvest.

And one circumstance which made this very remarkable, was, that when there were some places that wanted rain, and withered for want of it, there were other places near adjoining that had it in abundance. God caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, in the same country; nay, he caused it to rain upon one field, one piece of a field, and it was thereby made fruitful and flourishing, but on the next field, on the other side of the hedge, nay, on another part of the same field, it rained not at all, and it was so long without rain, that all the products of it withered.

No doubt this was literally true, and there were many instances of it, which were generally taken notice of. Now, [1.] By this it appeared that the withholding of the rain was not casual, but by a divine direction and disposal; that the cloud which waters the earth is turned round about by the counsel of God, to do whatsoever he conveys it to, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, Job xxxvii. 12, 18. Rain does not go by planets, (as common people speak,) but as God sends it by his winds. [2.] We have reason to think that those cities on which it rained not, were the most infamous for wickedness, such as Bethel and Gilgal,
(v. 4.) and that those on which it rained, were such
as retained something of religion and virtue among
them. And so in the towns-fields it rained, or rained
not, upon the piece, according as the owner was; for
we are sure the curse of the Lord is in the house,
and upon the ground, of the wicked, but he blesses
the habitation of the just, and his field is a field that
the Lord has blessed. [3.] It would be the greater
grief and vexation to those whose fields withered for
want of rain, and whose crops of grain and vines fell
watered and flourishing. My servants shall eat, but
ye shall be hungry, Isa. lxv. 13. The wicked shall
see it, and be grieved. Probably, those that were
oppressed, were rained upon, and so they recovered
their losses, while the oppressors withered, and so
lost their gains. [4.] Yet as to the nation in gene-
ral, it was a mixture of mercy with the judgment;
and, when God was pleased to raise up a sinner and
pariah, and cause the learned and refined to fall
into nakedness and reformation, and encouraged them to hope
for all mercy, in their returns to God, since there
was so much mercy even in God's rebukes of them.
But because they did not make a good use of this
gracious alloy to the extremity of the judgment,
they had not the benefit of it, which otherwise they
might have had, for (v. 8.) Two or three cities were
at uncertainty, as beggars, to one city, to drink water,
and to some city they went and returned; they came
cy home with them, but they were not satisfied; it
was but here and there one city that had water,
while many wanted, and then it was not, as usual,
Usum communis aquarum—Water is free to all;
they that had it, had occasion for it, or knew not
how soon they might, and therefore could afford but
little to them that wanted, saying, Less there be not
effect for thee and me. They that came drunk with
drinking water, but they were not satisfied, because
they drank it by measure, and with astonishment;
and they that drink of this water, shall thirst again,
John iv. 15. They were not satisfied, because their
wishes were greedily, and what they had God did
not bless to them, Hag. i. 6.

And now, one would think, when they met with
all this disappointment, they should have considered
their ways, and repented; but it had not that effect;
"Yet have ye not returned to me, no, not so much as
to pray in a right manner for the former and latter
rain," Zech. x. 1. See the folly of carnal hearts;
they will wander from city to city, from one creature
to another, in pursuit of satisfaction, and still they
miss of it; they labour for that which satisfies not,
(Isa. xli. 17.) and therefore they say, I will go to
God, will not incline their car to him in whom
they might have satisfaction. The preaching of the
gospel is as rain; God sometimes blesses one place
with it more than another; some countries, some
cities are, like Gideon's fleece, wet with this dew,
while the ground about is dry; all others where
this rain is wanting; but it were well if people were
but as wise for their souls as these are for their
bodily necessities, if they have not this rain near them,
would go and seek it where it is to be had; if they
seek aright, they shall not seek in vain.

(3.) Sometimes the fruits of their ground were
eaten up by caterpillars, or blasted with mildew;
(v. 9.) heaven and earth are armed against those
who have made God their Enemy; when God pleased,
that is, when he was displeased, [2.] They suffer
by the scorching of the sun, by the great heat, either
too hot or too cold, blasted their fruits, with
a force that could be neither discerned nor re-
sisted, and against which there was no defence. [2.]
They suffered by malignant animals. Their vine-
yards and gardens yielded their increase in great
abundance, so did their fig-trees and olive-trees, but
the, fowler-worm devoured them before the fruits
were ripe, and fit to be gathered in; this was either
the same judgment with that which we read of, Joel
i. 4, 6. or a lesser judgment of the same nature, 
put before to give warning of that. But they did not
take warning; Yet ye have not returned unto me.

(4.) Sometimes the plague had raged among
them, and the sword of war had cut off multitudes,
v. 10. The pestilence is God's messenger, this he
sent among them, with directions whom to strike
dead, and it was done; it was a pestilence after the
manner of Egypt; deaths were scattered among them
like rain, and they were like Egypt, that was scattered
perhaps this pestilence, as that of Egypt, fastened
upon the first-born in the way of Egypt, so the
margin; when they were making their escape to
Egypt, or going thither to seek for aid, the pesti-
ence seized them by the way, and stopped their
journey. The sword of war is likewise the sword
of the Lord; this was drawn among them with com-
mon consent, and from the operations of the sword,
and the strength of the present generation, and the seed
of the next. God says, I have slain them; he avows the
execution. The slain of the Lord are many.
The enemy took away their horses, and converted
them to their own use; and the dead carcases of
those that were slain either with sword or pes-
tilence were so many, and for want of surviving
friends, were left so long unburied, that the stench
of their corpses came into their nostrils, and was
both noisome and dangerous, and might put them
in mind of the offensiveness of their sin to God.
And yet this did not prevail to humble and reclaim them;
You have not returned to him that smites you. Such
a receul, woeful sight as this, prevailed not to make
them religious.

(5.) In these and other judgments some were
remarkably cut off, and made monuments of justice,
others were remarkably spared, and made monuments
of mercy, the setting of which the one over against
the other, one would have thought likely to work
upon them, but it had not its effect, v. 11.

[1.] Some were quite ruined, their families de-
stroyed, and themselves in them; I have overthrown
some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Go-
morrah, perhaps consumed them with lightning,
while Sodom was, or the houses were, some other way,
burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants in them.
Sodom and Gomorrah, are said to be condemned
with an overthrow, and so made an example, 2 Pet.
i. 6. God had threatened to destroy the whole
land with such an overthrow as that of Sodom,
Dent. xxix. 23. But he began with some particular
goods first, and afterwards the multitude, and made
some particular persons, whose sins went before-
hand to judgment. [2.] Others very narrowly
escaped; Ye were many of you as a firebrand
flitted out of the burning, like Lot out of Sodom,
when the fire had already kindled upon you; and
yet you hate sin never the more for the danger it
has brought you to, nor love God ever the more
for the death which you. and your children, and
your posterity, have been so signally delivered, and in such a
distingushing way, have not returned unto me.

II. God, in the close, calls upon his people, now
at length, in this their day, to understand the things
that belong to their peace, before they were hid
from their eyes, v. 12, 13. Observe here,

1. How God threatens them with severer judgments
than any by which he was pleased to visit them,
warning you have been wrought upon by correction
hitherto, thus will I do unto thee, O Israel. He
does not say how he will do, but it shall be some-
things worse than had come yet, John v. 14. Or,
Thus I will go on to do unto thee, following one
judgment with another, like the plagues of Egypt,
till I have made a full end. Nothing else but refor-
mation will prevent the ruin of a sinful people;
I say then, they turn not to him, his anger is not
turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. I will punish you
yet seven times more, if you will not be reformed; so it was written in the law, Lev. xxvi. 25, 24.

2. How he awakens them therefore to think of making their peace with God: "Seeing I will do this unto thee, and there is no remedy, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel;" that is, (1.) Consider how unable thou art to meet him as a combatant.

Some make it to be spoken by way of irony or challenge: "Prepare to meet God, who is coming forth to contend with thee; what armour of proof canst thou put on? What courage canst thou steal thyself with? Also, it is but putting briery and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Art thou with less than 10,000 men, to meet him that comes forth against thee, with more than 20,000?" Luke xxxiv. 31. (2.) "Resolve therefore to meet him as a penitent, as a humble suppllicant; to meet him as thy God, in covenant with thee, to submit, and stand it out no longer." We must prepare to meet God in the way of his judgments, (Isa. xxvi. 8.) to take hold on his strength, that we may make peace. Note, Since we cannot flee from God, we are concerned to prepare to meet him; and therefore he gives us warning, that we may prepare. When we are to meet him in his ordinances, we must prepare to meet him, prepare to seek him.

3. How he sets forth the greatness and power of God as a reason why we should prepare to meet him, v. 15. If he be such a God as he is here described, to come, it is folly to contend with him, and our duty and interest to make our peace with him; it is good having him our Friend, and bad having him our Enemy. (1.) He formed the mountains, made the earth, the strongest, statelyst parts of it, and by the word of his power still upholds it and them. Whatever are the products of the everlasting mountains, he formed them; whatever salvation is hasted for the mountains and the hills of it, Ps. lxxxix. 11, 12. He that formed the great mountains, can make them plain, when they stand in the way of his people's salvation. (2.) He creates the winds: the power of the air is derived from him, and directed by him; he brings the wind out of his treasures, and orders from what point of the compass it shall blow; and he that made it, rules it; even the winds and the waves obey him. (3.) He declares unto man what is his thoughts; he makes known his counsel by his servants the prophets to the children of men, the thought of his justice against impenitent sinners, and the thought of good he thinks toward those that repent. He can also make known, for he perfectly knows, the thought that is in man's heart; he understands it afar off, and in the day of conviction will set the evil thoughts among the other sins of sinners in order before them. (4.) He often makes the morning darkness, by thick clouds overspreading the sky immediately after the sun rose bright and glorious; so when we look for prosperity and joy, he can dash our expectations with some unlooked-for calamity. (5.) He treads upon the high places of the earth: is not only higher than the highest, but he treads all creatures down upon them, and upon the idols that were worshipped in the highest places. (6.) Jehovah, the God of hosts is his name, for he has his being of himself, and is the Fountain of all being, and all the hosts of heaven and earth are at his command. Let us humble ourselves before this God, prepare to meet him, and give all diligence to make him our God, for happy the people whose God he is, who have all this power engaged for them.

CHAP. V.
The scope of this chapter is to prosecute the exhortation given to Israel in the close of the foregoing chapter, to prepare to meet her God; he here tells them, 1. What preparation they must make; they must seek God, and love it, v. 14, 15. 2. Why they must make this preparation to meet their God. 1. Because of the present deplorable condition they were in, v. 1, 2. Because that so far he had been so long in possession of their sins, and in such a condition, v. 7, 10, 12. 3. Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he was ready to be found of them, v. 8, 9, 14. Because he would proceed, in his wrath, to their utter ruin, if they did not seek him, v. 5, 6, 13, 16, 17. 4. Because all their confidences would fail them, if they did not seek unto God, and make him their Friend. (1.) Their profane contempt of God's judgments, that had been sent against them was an argument to secure them, v. 18, 20. (2.) Their external services in religion, and the shows of devotion, would not avail in turn away the wrath of God, v. 21, 24. (3.) Their having been too long in possession of church-prerogatives, and in a course of holy duties, would not be their protection, while all along they had kept up their idolatrous customs, v. 25, 27. They have therefore no way left them to save themselves, but by repentance and reformation.

1. HEAR ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel. 2. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsoaken upon her land; there is none to raise her up. 3. For thus saith the Lord God, The city that went out by a thousand shall leave a hundred, and that which went forth by a hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

This chapter begins, as these two next foregoing began, with, Hear this word. Where God has a mouth to speak, we must have an ear to hear; it is our duty, it is our interest; yet so stupid are most men, that they need to be again and again called upon to hear the word of the Lord; to give audience to, and receive attention from, a word of God, the awakening word must be heard and heeded, as well as words of comfort and peace; the word that is taken up against us, as well as that which makes for us; for, whether we hear or forbear, the word of God shall take effect, and not a tittle of it shall fall to the ground. It is the word which I take up—not the prophet only, but the God that sent him. It is the word that the Lord has spoken, ch. xxxii. 12.

The word to be heard is a lamentation, a lamentable account of the present calamitous state of the kingdom of Israel, and a lamentable prediction of its utter destruction. Their condition is sad: The virgin of Israel is fallen, (v. 2.) is come down from what she was; that state, though not pure and chaste as a virgin, yet was beautiful and gay, and had its charms; she looked high herself, and was courted by many as a virgin; but she is fallen into contempt and poverty, and is universally slighted; nay, and their condition is helpless; She shall no more rise, shall never recover her former dignity again. God had lately begun to cut Israel short, (2 Kings x. 32.) and because they repented not, it was not long before he cut Israel short, (1.) Their princes, that should have helped them up, were disabled; She is forsoaken upon her land. Not only those she was in alliance with abroad failed her, but her friends at home deserted her; she had not been carried captive into a strange land, if she had not first been forsoaken upon her own land, and they, that were around her, and all her true interests abandoned by those that should have had them at heart. There is none to raise her up, none that can do it, none that cares to lend her a hand.

2. Their people, that should have helped them up, were diminished, v. 3. The city that had a multitude a thousand strong, and in the beginning of the war, had furnished out a thousand effective
men, able-bodied and well armed, when they come to review their troops after the battle, shall find but a hundred left; and, in proportion, the city that sent out a hundred, shall have but ten come back; so great a slaughter shall be made, and so few left to the house of Israel for the public service and safety.

Scarcely one in ten shall escape of the hands that should relieve this abject, this desolated nation. Note, The lessening of the numbers of God's spiritual Israel by death or desertion, is just matter for lamentation; for by whom shall Jacob arise, by whom shall the decays of piety be repaired, when He is thus made small.

4. For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. 5. But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. 6. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel.

7. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name: 9. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

10. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly.

11. Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. 12. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.

13. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. 14. Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

This is a message from God to the house of Israel, in which,

1. They are told of their faults, that they might see what occasion there was for them to repent and reform, and that, when they were called to return, they might not need to ask, Wherein shall we return? God tells them in general, (v. 12.) "I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins; and you shall be made to know them too." In our penitent reflections upon our sins, we must consider, as God does in his judicial remarks upon them, and will do in the great day, 1. That they are very numerous; they are our manifold transgressions, sins of various kinds, and often repeated.

O what a multitude of vain and vile thoughts lodge within us! What a multitude of idle, foolish, wicked words have been spoken by us! In what a multitude of instances have we gratified and indulged our corrupt appetites and passions! And how many are our omissions of duty, and in duty! Who can consider, and can tell, how many of our sins, which we have committed, have been committed for us? God knows how many, just how many, our transgressions are; none of them pass him unobserved; we know that they are to us innumerable, more than the hairs of our head; and we have reason to see what danger we have brought ourselves into, and what abundance of work we have made for repentance, by our manifold transgressions, by our manifold sins, by our manifold omissions of duty, and in duty.

2. That some of them are very heinous; they are our mighty sins; sins that are more exceeding sinful in their own nature, and by being committed presumptuously, and with a high hand, sins against the light of nature, flagrant crimes, that are mighty to overpower your convictions, and to pull down judgments upon you.

3. That some of these mighty sins. (1.) They corrupted the worship of God, and turned to idols; that is implied, v. 5. They had sought to Bethel, where one of the golden calves was; they had frequented Gilgal, a place which they chose to set up idols in, because it had been made famous in the days of Joshua by God's wonderful appearances to, and for, his people. Beer-sheba likewise, a place that had been famous in the days of the patriarchs, was now another rendezvous of idols; as we find also, ch. viii. 14. And thither they passed, though it lay at a distance, in the land of Judah. Now, having thus shamefully given a whoring from God, no doubt they should have felt concern, and a hope of pardoning and restoration to him, to return to him. (2.) They perverted justice among themselves; (v. 7.) "Ye turn judgment to wormwood; ye make your administrations of justice bitter and nauseous, and highly displeasing both to God and man."

That fruit is become a weed, a weed in the garden; as nothing is more venerable, nothing more valuable, than justice duly administered, so nothing is more hateful, nothing more abominable, than designedly doing wrong, under colour and pretence of doing right. Corrupto optimi est interior. The best vices are detestable, because vainglorious. Ye have left off righteousness in the earth; as if those that do wrong were accountable to the God of heaven only, and not to the princes and judges of the earth; thus it was as before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence. (3.) They were very oppressive to the poor, and made them poorer; they tread upon the poor, (v. 11.) trampled upon them, heeded only the wealth of them, their houses. Those were the most imperious and barbarous to those that were most obsequious and submissive; they cared not what shame and slavery they put them to who were poor, and such as they could get nothing by. That was it that the judges aimed at, nothing but to enrich themselves; and therefore they took from the poor buttress of wheat, took it by extortion, by bribery of them, their lands. The poor, in no other way to save themselves from being trodden upon, and trodden to dirt, by them, than by presenting to them horse-loads of that corn which they and their families should have had to subsist upon; and they forced them to do it. They took from the poor debts of wheat; so some read it. It was legally due either for rent or for corn lent, but they exacted it with rigour from those who were disabled by the providence of God to pay it, as Neh. v. 2, 3. In demanding and recovering even of a just debt, we
ен the thing also a spiritual man will say to a bold repever, as Erasmus to Luther, Ali in cellam, et die, Niserever mei, Domine—Away to thy cell, and cry, Have mercy on me, O Lord. Let grave lessons and counsels be kept for better men, and better times. And there is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak, Exch. ili. 7. Evil times will not bear plain dealing; that is, evil men will not. And the men the prophet here speaks of, had reason to think themselves evil men indeed, when wise and good men thought it in vain to speak to them, and were afraid of having any thing to do with them.

II. They are told of their danger, and what judgments they lay exposed to for their sins. 1. The places of their idolatry are in danger of being ruined. Perhaps the first place of the six mentioned is most to the purpose to be spoken of; it is, with more propriety, the ruin of idolatry, shall go into captivity; not only its inhabitants, but its images, and Bethel with its golden calf, shall come to naught. The victorious enemy shall make nothing of it, so easily shall it be spoiled; and shall bring it to nothing, so effectually shall it be spoiled. Idols were always vanity, and things of naught, and so they shall prove when God appears to abolish them. 2. The body of the kingdom is in danger of being ruined with them. 6. There is danger, lest, if you seek him not in time, he break out like a fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it; for our God is a righteous Judge, is a consuming Fire, and the men of Israel, as criminals, are stubble before him; wo to those that make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath! It follows, And there shall be none to quench it in Bethel; there their idols were, and their idolatrous priests, thither they brought their sacrifices, and there they offered up their prayers; but God tells them that when the fire of his judgments kindles upon them, all the gods they served at Bethel should not be able to quench it, should not turn away the judgment, or be any relief to them under it. Thus they shall make an end of the world, and no further can be expected to protect them, when God comes to reconstitute them with their spiritual idolatry. 3. What they have got by oppression and extortion shall be taken from them; (v. 11.) "You have built houses of horn stones, which you thought would be lasting; but ye shall not dwell in them, for your enemies shall burn them down, or possess them for themselves, or take them up for their own houses." All pleasant vineyards, have contrived how to make them every way agreeable, and have promised yourselves many a pleasant walk in them; but you shall be forced to walk off, and shall never drink wine of them.

The law had tenderly provided that if a man had built a house, or planted a vineyard, he should be at his liberty to return from the wars, Deut. xx. 5, 6. But now the necessity would be so urgent, that it would not be allowed, all must go to the battle, and many of those who had lately been building and planting, should fall in battle, and never enjoy what they had been labouring for. What is not honestly got is not likely to be long enjoyed.

III. They are told of the miseries and have great encouragement to set about it in good earnest, and good reason. The duties here prescribed to them are, godliness and honesty, seriousness in their applica-
tions to God, and justice in their dealings with men; and each of these is here pressed upon them with proper urgency, and enforced by the doom of 10. They are here exhorted to be sincere and devout in their addresses to God, ver. 4. God says to the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and with good reason; for should not a people seek unto their God? Isa. viii. 19. Whither else should they go but to their Protector? Israel was a prince with God; let his descendants seek the Lord, as he did, and they shall have it. Now, however, things have changed; they must abandon their idolatries. God is not sought truly, if he he not sought only, for he will endure no rivals; "Seek ye the Lord, and seek not Bethel, (v. 5.) consult not your idol-oracles, nor ask at the mouth of the priests of Bethel; seek not to the golden calf there for protection, nor bring your prayers and sacrifices any longer thither, or to Gilgal, for you forsake your own mercies, if you observe these lying vanities. But seek the Lord; (ver. 6, 8.) inquire after him, inquire of him; seek to know his mind as your rule, to secure his favour as your felicity. To press this exhortation, we are bid to consider, (1.) What we shall get by seeking God; it will be our life, we shall find him, and shall be happy in him. So he tells them himself; (ver. 4.) Seek ye me, and ye shall live. So the prophet tells them, and the Lord, and we shall live. They that seek perishing gods, shall perish with them, (v. 5.) but they that seek the living God, shall live with him: "You shall be delivered from the killing judgments which you are threatened with; your nation shall live, shall recover from its present languishings; your souls shall live, you shall be sanctified and comforted, and made for ever blessed; Ye shall live." (2.) What a God he is, whom we are to seek, ver. 8. 9.

[1.] He is a God of almighty power himself. The idols were impotent things, could do neither good nor evil, and therefore it was folly either to fear or trust them; but the God of Israel does every thing, and can do any thing, and therefore we ought to seek to him; he challenges our homage, who has all power in his hand, and it is our interest to have him on our side.

Divers proofs and instances are here given of God's power, as Creator, in the kingdom of nature, as both founding and governing that kingdom. Compare ch. iv. 13. First, The stars are the work of his hands; those stars which the heathens worshipped, (v. 26.) the stars of your god, these stars are God's creatures moreover. He made the seven stars and Orion, two very remarkable constellations, which Amos, a herdsman, while he kept his cattle by night, had particularly observed the motions of. He made them at the first, he still makes them to be what they are to this earth; and either binds or looses the sweet influences of Pleiades and Orion, the two constellations here mentioned, (Job xxxxxviii. 31.—32.) to which passages Amos supplies this moral, and so by these ancient discoveries of the glory of God before he was called the God of Israel. Secondly, The constant succession of day and night is under his direction, and is kept up by his power and providence. It is he that turns the night (which is dark as the shadow of death,) into the morning by the rising of the sun, and by the setting of the sun makes the day dark. The sun and moon are the same, yet the one is able to put out the sun, and the sun is able to put out the moon. Then follows an extraordinary and solemn piece, where he promises, that all that are now under the power of God, shall rise out of the darkness into the light of life. Thirdly, The rain rises and falls as he appoints. He calls for the waters of the sea; out of them vapours are drawn up by the heat of the sun, which gather into clouds, and are poured out upon the face of the earth, to water it, and make it fruitful. This was the mercy that had been withheld from them of late; (ch. iv. 7.) and therefore to whom should they apply the prayer, but to him who had power to give it? For all the vanities of the heathen could not give rain, nor could the heavens of themselves give showers, Jer. xiv. 22. It is God that has made these things; Jehovah is his name; the name by which the God of nature, the God of the whole earth, has made himself known to his people Israel, and condescending with them to their low estate.

[2.] As he is a God of almighty power himself, so he gives strength and power unto his people that seek him, and renews strength to those that had lost it, if they wait upon him for it; for (ver. 9.) he strengthens the spoiled against the strong, to such a degree, that the spoiled come against the fortress, and make bold and brave attacks upon those that had spoiled them. They are such people to seek the Lord, that if they do so, they shall find him able to retrieve their affairs, when they are brought to the lowest ebb; though they are the spoiled, and their enemies are the strong, if they can but engage God for them, they shall soon recruit so as the next time to be not only the aggressors, but the conquerors; they come against the fortress, to make reprisals, and become the strong.

They are here exhorted to be honest and just in their dealings with men, (ver. 14, 15.) where observe,

(1.) The duty required; Seek good, and not evil. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate; re-establish it there, whence it has been banished, ver. 7. Note, Things are not so bad but that they may be amended, if the right course be taken; we must not despise but that grievances may be redressed, and abuses rectified; justice may yet triumph there where injustice tyrannizes. In order to this, good must be loved and sought, evil must be hated, and no longer sought. We must love good principles, and adhere to them, love to do good, and abound in it; love good people, and good converse, and good duties; and, whatever good we do, we must do it from a principle of love; do it of choice and with delight. They who thus love good, will seek it, will contrive to do all the good they can, inquire for opportunities to do it, and endeavour it to the utmost of their power. They will also hate evil, will abhor the thought of doing an unjust thing, and abstain from all appearance of it.

In vain do we pretend to seek God in our devotions, if we do not seek good in our whole conversations.
to make the nation happy; "If you seek and love that which is good, you may contribute to the saving of the land from ruin." It may be, the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph; though there is but a remnant left, if God be gracious to that remnant, it will rise to a great nation again; and if some among them turn from sin, especially if judgment be established in the gate, though we cannot be certain of it, there is a great probability, that public affairs will take a new and happy turn, and every thing will mend if men mend their lives. Temporal promises are made with an If: and our prayers must be made accordingly.

16. Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus. Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! And they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to waiting. 17. And in all vineyards shall be wailing; for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord. 18. Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. 19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Here is,

1. A very terrible threatening of destruction approaching, v. 15, 17. Because they would not take the right course to obtain the favour of God, God would take an effectual course to make them feel the weight of his displeasure. The threatening is introduced with more than ordinary solemnity, to strike an awe upon them; it is not the word of the prophet only, (if so, it might be made light of,) but it is the Lord Jehovah, who has an infinite, eternal being, it is the God of hosts, who has a boundless, irresistible power, and it is Adoni—the Lord, who has a personal, immediate, sovereign, and universal dominion, it is he who says it, who can and will make his words good, and he has said, 1. That the land of Israel shall be put in mourning, true mourning; that all places shall be filled with lamentation for the calamities coming upon them. Look into the cities, and wailing shall be in all streets, in the great streets, in the by-streets. Look into the country, and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! we are all undone! The lamentation shall be so great, as not to be confined within doors, nor kept within the bounds of decency, but it shall be proclaimed in the streets and highways, and shall run wild. The husbandman shall be called from the plough by the calamities of his country to the natural expressions of mourning; and because they will come, short of the merits of that cause, such as are skilful of lamentation shall be called to artificial mourning, to put accents upon the lamentations of the real mourners with their Ahone, alone. Even in all the vineyards, where there used to be nothing but mirth and pleasure, there shall be general wailing, when a foreign force invades the country, lays all waste, and there is not making any head against it, no weapons left but prayers and tears. 2. That the land of Israel shall be brought to ruin, and the advances of that ruin are the occasion of all this wailing; I will pass through thee, as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, but then passed over the houses of the Israelites. God's judgments had often passed by them, but now they shall pass through them, shall run them through.

11. A just and severe reproof to those who made light of these threatenings, and impudently bid defiance to the justice of God and his judgments, v. 19. Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord, that really wish for times of war and conflict, as some do who have restless spirits, and long for changes, or who choose to fish in troubled waters, hoping to raise their families, as some had done, upon the ruins of their country; but the prophet tells them that this should be so great a desolation, that nobody could get by it. Or, it is spoken to those who, in their writings and lamentations for the calamities they were in, wished they might be cut off, and be rid out of their misery; as Job did, with passion. The prophet shows them the folly of this. Do they know what death is to those who are unpre pared for it, and how much more terrible it will be than any thing that can befal them in this life? Or, rather, it is spoken to those who speak jestingly of the day of the Lord, who would have some serious of it, they desired it, they challenged it; they said, Let him do his worst, let him make speed, and hasten his work, Isa. v. 19. Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Pet. iii. 4. It intimates, 1. That they do not believe it. They say that they wish it would come, because they do not believe it will ever come; nor will they believe it unless they see it. 2. That they do not fear it; though they and made some belief of it, yet they have so little consideration of it, and their mind is so intent upon other things, that they are under no apprehension at all of their peril from it; instead of having the conscience to dread it, they have the curiosity to desire it. In answer to this,

(1.) He shows the folly of those who impatiently wished for any of God's judgments: "To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come? You will find it both certain and sad; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no, nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it does come. The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light, v. 19. Shall in the eye of any of any of the terrors of the Lord; "To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come? You will find it both certain and sad; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no, nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it does come. The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light, v. 19. Shall in the eye of any of any of the terrors of the Lord; but that which will come, and which will be the effect of the day of the Lord and what the day of the Lord is, what effect it will have, the day of judgment will be so; and sometimes the day of their present trouble. And when God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light.

(2.) He shows the folly of those who impatiently wished for a change of God's judgments, in hopes that the next will be better and more tolerable. They desire the day of the Lord, in hopes to mend themselves, (though their hearts and lives be not amended,) or, however, to know the worst. But the prophet tells them that they know not what they ask, v. 19. It is as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, a beast of prey more cruel and ravenous than a lion. Or as if a man, to escape all dangers abroad, went into the house for security, and leaned his hand on the wall to rest himself, and there a serpent bit him. Note, Those who are not reformed by the judgments of God, will be pursued by them; and if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them; fear, and the pit, and a snare are before them. In the end, it is madness therefore to defy the day of the Lord.

21. I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.
22. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. 23. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. 24. But, let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. 25. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26. But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chim in your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. 27. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.

The scope of these verses is to show how little God valued their shows of devotion, nay, how much he detested them, while they went on in their sins. Observe,

1. How unpleasing, nay, how displeasing, their hypocritical services were to God. They had their feast-day at Bethel, in imitation of that at Jerusalem, in which they pretended to rejoice before God; they had their solemn assemblies for religious worship, in which they put on the gravity of those who come before God, as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit; they offered to God burnt-offerings, to the honour of God, together with the meat-offerings which the law were to be offered with them; they offered the peace-offerings, to improve the favour of God, and they offered them of the fat beasts that they had. 

2. In imitation likewise of the temple-music, they had the noise of their songs, and the melody of their viols. 23. This was to God an abomination of God. 

3. He hated, he despised, their fast-days, not only despised them as of no valuable services done to him, but hated them as an affront and provocation to him, as we hate to see men dissemble with us, pretend a respect for us, when really they have none.

4. Nothing more hateful, more despicable, than hypocrisy; he that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, it shall be counted a curse, when it appears that his heart is not with him. God will not smell in their solemn assemblies, for there is nothing in them that is grateful to him, but a great deal that is offensive. Their sacrifices are not to him of a sweet-smelling savour, as Noah's was, Gen. viii. 21. He will not accept them, he will not regard them, will not take not him; for he will not hear the melody of their viols; for when sin is a jar in the harmony, it grates in his ears: “Take it away,” says God, “I cannot hear it.” Now this speaks, (1.) That sacrifice itself is of small account with God, in comparison with moral duties; to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice. (2.) That the sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him, Prov. xv. 8. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found, when, at any place in hell, he will be better than other, that will be the hypocrite's portion.

5. What it was that he required in order to the acceptableness of their sacrifices, and without which no sacrifice would be acceptable; (v. 24.) Let judgment run down as waters among you, and righteousness as a mighty stream. (1.) “Let there be a general reformation of manners among you; let religion, God's judgment and righteousness, have their due influence upon all your actions. If you have been watered with corruption, and let it hear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness; let it run wide as overflowing waters, and yet run strong as a mighty stream.” (2.) “In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely as waters do, in the natural course, let it be clear as the stream, without ceremonial; and whatever may pervert justice; let it run like a mighty stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded by the fear of man; let all have free access to it as a common stream, and have benefit by it, as trees planted by the rivers of waters.” The great thing laid to Isaiah's charge was, turning judgment into wormwood; (v. 7.) in that matter therefore they must reform, Zech. vii. 9. This was it that God desired more than sacrifices, Hos. vi. 6. 1 Sam. xv. 22.

3. What little stress God had laid upon the law of sacrifices, though it was his own law, in comparison with the moral precepts; (v. 25.) Did we offer unto me sacrifices in the wilderness forty years? No, you did not; for the greatest part of that time sacrifice was very much neglected, because of the preoccupations of the people. When the passover was not kept till they were come into Canaan, and other institutions were in like manner intermitted; and yet, because God will have mercy and not sacrifice, he never imputed the emission to them as their fault, but continued his care of them, and kindness to them; it was not that, but their murmuring and unbelief, for which God was displease with them. He that so owned his right, though they did not sacrifice, when in other things they kept close to him, will certainly discern them, though they do sacrifice, if in other things they depart from him. But though ritual sacrifices may thus be dispensed with, spiritual sacrifices will not; even justice and honesty will not excuse for the want of prayer and praise, a broken heart, and the love of God. Stephen quotes this passage, Acts vii. 42. to show that no sacrifice could be imagined, to think it strange that the ceremonial law was repealed, when from the beginning it was comparatively made light of. Compare Jer. vii. 22, 23.

4. What little reason they had to expect that their sacrifices should be acceptable to God, when they and their fathers had been all along addicted to the worship of other gods. So some take v. 26. Did you offer to me sacrifices, to ME only? No, and therefore not at all to ME acceptably; for the law of worshiping the Lord our God, is, Him only we must serve. “But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch, (v. 26.) little shrines that you made to carry about with you, pocket-idols for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have sold the images of your god’s, (or moloch king,) (or sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies,)’ “and Chint, or Remphan;” as Stephen calls it, Acts vii. 43. after the LXX. which, it is supposed, represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets. The worship of the sun, moon, and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry; they made to themselves the star of their god, some pocket-idols to keep to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to; (Dont. iv. 19.) and those that retain any affection for false gods, cannot expect the favour of the true God.

5. What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry; (v. 27.) I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus. They
were led captive by Satan into idolatry; and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, who were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus; their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for if lesser judgments do not work that for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or, the captivity of Israel under Shalmaneser, was far beyond that of Damascus under Tiglath-pileser, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold, ch. i. 5. For, as the sins of God's professing people are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected that their punishments will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus, and that of Samaria, carried off together; but nothing of it, Isa. vii. 13.

4. Stephen says, that I will carry you away beyond Babylon, (Acts vii. 43.) further than Judah shall be carried, so far further, as not to return. And, to make this name appear both the more certain, and the more dreadful, he that passes it, himself the Lord, whose name is, The God of hosts, and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having hosts at command.

CHAP. VI.

In this chapter we have, 1. A signal people studying to put a slight on God; and, to make them appear trivial; confounding their privileges and pre-eminences above other nations, (v. 2, 3.) and their power, (v. 13.) and wholly addicted to their pleasures, v. 4—6. 11. They having this relation to put a more height on God's threatenings, and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon those sensualists; (v. 7.) God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and their death, (v. 8—11.) and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he had taken for their conviction, v. 12—14.

1. Wo to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! 2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms! or their border greater than your border? 3. Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; 4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; 5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; 6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they sound very strange, and contrary to the sound of a valley. For what are they that are at ease! We are ready to say, Happy they that are at ease, that neither feel any trouble, nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart; and wise we think are they that do so, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense, and care not how the world goes. They are looked upon as doing well for themselves, that do well for their bodies, and make much of them; but against them this wo is denounced, and we are here told what their case is, and what the wo is.

1. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would vainly secure them from the judgments threatened, and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man. (1.) Those that dwell in Zion, thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they might there be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a strong city, well fortified both by nature and art, (we read of Zion's strongholds, and her builders, Ezek. xvi. 15.) it was the head-quarters of its religion, and by tract of time the hill of Shemer became with them in as good repute as the hill of Zion ever was. They hoped for salvation from these hills and mountains. (2.) Both these two kingdoms valued themselves upon their relation to Israel, that prince with God, which they looked upon as making them the chief of the nations, and, perhaps, their nation, and the head-quarters of its religion; and by tract of time the hill of Shemer became with them in as good repute as the hill of Zion ever was. But, for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of these cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion or Samaria was, and yet were destroyed, v. 2. Go to Calneh, (which was an ancient city built by Nimrod, Gen. x. 10.) and see what is become of that, it is now in ruins; so is Hamath the great, one of the chief cities of Syria; Semachith boasts of destroying the gods of the earth, who were like the gods of the nations, made desolate by Hazael, and not long ago, 2 Kings x. 17. Now were they better than these kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Yes, they were, and their border greater than your border, so that they had more reason to you than you be confident of their own safety: yet you see what is become of them, and dare you be secure? Art thou better than populous No? No, ii. 8. Note, the examples of others' ruin forbids us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses, upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them; (v. 3.) "You put far away the evil day, the day of reckoning, as a thing that shall never come; or, you look upon it as at such a distance,
that it makes no impression at all upon you; you put it far away, and think you can still put it yet further, and adjourn it de die in diem—from day to day, and there you can dismiss it as a matter of violence to demand not, ye venture upon all acts of injustice and oppression, and have fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frames mischief by a law, Ps. xciv. 20. "You cause that to come near, as if that would be your protection from these judgments, which really ripens you for them." Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgment to be far off from them; but they can never play in sin, who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, v. 4, 6. These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites. Their dignities, (in consideration of which they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification,) they thought, would justify them in their sensuality: the gains of their oppression and violence, they thought, would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that that might give them no disturbance in it.

That which they are here charged with, is not in itself sinful, (these things might be soberly and moderately used,) but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites; and though they were men in office, that had business to mind, and the judgments of God were ready to break upon them, they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant, (Isa. lvi. 12.) thus walking contrary to God, and setting his justice at defiance. (1.) They were extravagant in their furniture; nothing would serve them but beds of ivory, to sleep upon, or to sit on at their meat, when sack-cloth and ashes had better become them. (2.) They were prodigal in their delicacies, and despised the meanest fare of ease; they did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business; they were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing; they abounded in superfluities, (so the margin reads it,) when many of their poor brethren wanted necessaries. (3.) They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best, and abundance of it; they eat the lambs out of the flock, (lambs by wholesale,) and the calves out of the midst of the stall, the fattest they could lay their hand on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor. (4.) They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts with music and singing; they were so solemnly gay, that they were out of concert, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of music, striving herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits on work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never show their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent instruments of music, like David; entertain six singing maids with the psalms, and have the entertainment of kings only. Or, it imitates their profaneness in their mirth; they mimicked the temple-music, and made a jest of that, because, it may be, it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride in bantering it, as the Babylonians did when they urged the captives to sing them the songs of Zion; such was Belshazzar's profaneness, when he drank wine in temple-bowls, and such theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm tunes, on purpose to ridicule a divine institution. (5.) They drink to excess, and never think the worst of the thoughts; they drink wine in bowls, not in glasses or cups; (as Jer. xxxv. 5.) they hate to be stinted, and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels, that they can steal a draught out of. (6.) They affect the strongest perfumes; they anoint themselves with the chief ointments, to please the smell, and to make them more in love with their own bodies, and to guard against those odours by which they which carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointments would serve their turn; they must have the chief; such as were far-fetched and dear-bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking, and going to decay; They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; the church of God, including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, (which are called Joseph, Ps. lxxx. 1.) was in distress; invaded, insulted, and broken in upon; their own kingdom which they were intrusted with the government of, the affairs of which they were the directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators, was half destroyed, and was to become putrefaction, through their negligence; and which they carried about with them while they live.

H. Here is the doom passed upon them; (v. 7.) Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the banquet of them that stretched themselves upon their couches, shall be removed. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and all they made it the food and fuel of their lusts. 1. Those who lived in luxury, shall lose even their liberty; and by being brought into servitude, shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion. 2. Those who trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land, shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence; they shall be taken, and the captivity of them shall be in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures; their banquet shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard. 4. Those who stretched themselves, shall be made to contract themselves, and to come into a less compass. 5. Those who put the evil day far from them, shall find it nearer to them.
than it is to others; they shall go captive with the first, who flattered themselves with hopes that if trouble did come, they would be the last who should be seized by it. These are ripening apace for trouble themselves, who lay not to heart the troubles of others, and of the church of God. Those who give themselves to mirth, when God calls them to mourning, will find it is a sin that shall not go unpunished. Isa. xxi. 14.

3. The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord, the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city, with all that is therein. 9. And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. 10. And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue; for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. 11. For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. 12. Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plough there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock. 13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? 14. But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Haphaz unto the river of the wilderness.

In the former part of the chapter, we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures, as if they could never be made merry enough; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they never could be made miserable enough. And observe,

I. How strongly this burthen is bound on, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by the Lord, the God of hosts, by his mighty, his almighty hand, which none can resist; it is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation; The Lord God has sworn, and he will not repent, and since he could swear by no greater, he has sworn by himself. How dreadful, how incomparable, is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin, God himself has sworn, who can execute his purpose, and cannot alter it!

II. How heavy this burthen lies! Let us see the particulars.

1. God will abhor and abandon them; and that speaks misery enough, all misery; I abhor the excellency of Jacob; all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they call and count themselves the chief of the nations. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar, and priesthood, these were, more than any thing, the excellencies of Jacob; but when these were profaned and polluted by sin, God abhorred them, he hated and despised them, ch. v. 21. Note, God abhors that form of godliness which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if he abhors their temple, for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he hates their palaces, for the injustice and oppression he finds there. Note, That creature which we take such complacency, and put such a confidence in, as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to him. He hates the palaces of sinners, for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein, Prov. iii. 13. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked. And if God abhor them, immediately it follows, He will deliver up the city with all that is therein, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy, that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth. Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God, are undoubted subjects of reprobation and punishment.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them; (v. 9.) If there remain ten men in one house, that have escaped the sword of the enemy, yet they shall be met with another way; they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope that at least the one half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, one taken and the other left; but here not one of ten shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality, is, (v. 10.) that the nearest relations of the dead shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies, and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it; that is all that the least of kin, to whom the right of redemption belongs, can do for them, and with such reluctance will they do that. It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the uncle that survives, is, ordinarily, the senior relation. When the uncle comes with the sexton, (or him that burns,) to bring out the bones out of the house, he shall say to him that he sees next about the house, "Is there yet any with thee?" and he shall say, "No, this is the last, now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains." But that which makes this judgment the more grievous, is, that their hearts seem to be hardened under it. When he that was found by the sides of the house, began to enter into discourse with those that were carrying the dead, they shall say, Hold thy tongue, and do not stand preaching to us about the hand of Providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord; God is so angry with us, that there is no speaking to him, he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss, that we dare not so much as make mention of his name." Thus the foolishness of men perverts their way, and brings them into distress, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it.

Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention of the name of Jehovah, as by the law of Moses it was forbidden to make mention of the names of the heathen gods; We may not do it without incurring the penalty. Note, That was a monstrous crime, that would not stand preaching to us about the hand of Providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord; God is so angry with us, that there is no speaking to him, he is so extreme to mark what we do amiss, that we dare not so much as make mention of his name." Thus the foolishness of men perverts their way, and brings them into distress, and then their hearts fret against the Lord. Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed, v. 11. God will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts; they shall both be cracked as to lose their beauty and strength, and to be hastening towards a fall. The princes' palaces are not above the rebukes of divine justice, nor the poor men's cottages beneath it; neither shall escape when sin has marked them for ruin, God will find ways to bring it about. It is by order from him that breakers are made.
III. How justly they are thus burthened; if we understand the matter aright, we shall say, The Lord is righteous.

1. The method used for their reformation had been all fruitless and ineffectual; (v. 12.) Shall horses draw the rock, to hurl or harrow the ground there? Or will one plough there with oxen? No, for there will be no profit to counterfeit the pains. God had sent them his prophets, to break up their fallow-ground; but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor work upon them, and therefore they shall not attempt it any more. They will not be reclaimed, and therefore shall not be reproved, but quite abandoned. Note, Those who will not be husbands as fields and vineyards, shall be rejected as barren rocks and deserts, Heb. vi. 7, 8.

2. They had abused their power to the wrong and oppression of many, whose injured cause the sovereign Judge would not only right, but revenge; Ye have turned judgment into gall, which is nauseous, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which is noxious; it would make one sick to see how those that were intrusted with the administration of public justice, bear down equity with that power with which they ought to have defended and supported it, and so turned its own artillery against itself. Note, When our services of God are sour, and our providences will justly be imblotted to us.

3. They had set the judgments of God at defiance, and confiding in their own strength, thought themselves a match for Omnipotence, v. 13. They rejoiced in a thing of naught, pleased themselves with a fancy that no evil should befal them, though they had no ground at all for that confidence, nothing to trust to that would bear any weight. They said, Have we not taken unto us horns, are we not arrived to great dignity and dominion, have we not pushed down our enemies, and pushed upon our victories, and by our own strength rejoice in a thing of naught, and so they will find. Probably they did not say this with their lips, sed idem verbis, but it was the language of their hearts, and of their actions, both which God understands.

IV. How easily and effectually this burden shall be brought upon them, v. 14. He that brings it upon them is the Lord, the God of hosts, who both may do, and can do, what he pleaseth; who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not want instruments to do it with; though they are the house of Israel, yet he will raise up against them a nation which they feared not. And in many a time hoped in, even the Assyrians, and this nation shall afflict them, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from the entering in of Hamath, in the north, to the river of the wilderness, the river of Egypt, Sihor, or Nile, in the south. The whole nation hath shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the calamity. They had taken one another by various instruments of affliction to us, we must see God raising them up against us, for they are his hand, the rod, the sword in his hand. The Lord hath hidden Shimei curse David.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, we have, 1. God contending with Israel, by the judgments brought on their land. 1. They are threatened with lesser judgments, but are reproved, and the judgments turned away at the prayer of Amos, v. 1-5. 2. God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and so to foreordained ruin, v. 7-9. II. Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. 1. Amaziah informs against Amos, (v. 10, 11.) and does what he can to rid the country of him as a public nuisance, (v. 12, 13.) 2. Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet, (v. 14, 15.) and denounces the judgments of God against Amaziah his prosecutor, (v. 16, 17.) for when the contest is between God and man, it is very easy to foretell, who will come off with the worst of it.

1. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. 2. And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 3. The Lord repented for this: it shall not be, saith the Lord. 4. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me; and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. 5. Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 6. The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God. 7. Thus he shewed me; and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. 8. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more; 9. And the high places of Israel shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

We here see that God bears long, but that he will not bear always, with a provoking people; both these God here shewed the prophet: Thus hath the Lord God shewed me, v. 1, 4, 7. He showed him what was present, foreshowed him what was to come; gave him the knowledge both of what he did, and of what he designed; for the Lord God reveals his secret to his servants the prophets, ch. iii. 7.

1. We have here two instances of God's sparing mercy, remembered in the midst of judgment, the narratives of which are so like one another, that they will be best considered together, and very considerate they are.

1. God is here coming forth against this sinful nation, first by one judgment, and then by another.

(1.) He begins with the judgment of famine; the prophet saw this in vision. He saw God, for the sake of grasshoppers, or locusts, and bringing them up upon the land, to eat up the fruits of it, and so to strip it of its beauty, and starve its inhabitants, v. 1. God formed these grasshoppers, not only as they were his creatures, (and much of the wisdom and power of God appears in the formation of minute animals, as much in the structure of an ant as of an elephant,
AMOS, VII.

981 was the Lord is turn Or, of good [2.]
Now a us, himself entering ing the grass it. the Jire called H. burnt groundless. [11] which which were pluck of the land. 

Though the water designed for the stopping and quenching of this fire was as the water of the great deep, it could not stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God! It did eat up a part, a great part, of the cities where it was sent; or, it was as the fire at Taberah, which consumed the uttermost parts of the camp; (Num. xi. 1) when some were overthrown, others were as brands plucked out of the fire. All deserved to be devoured, but it ate up only a part, for God does not strike at nothing.

2. The prophet goes forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, and by prayer seeks to turn away his wrath, v. 2. 
When he saw, in vision, what dreadful work these caterpillars made, that they had eaten up in a manner all the grass of the land, (he foresaw they would do so, if suffered to go on,) then he said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; (v. 2) cease, I beseech thee, v. 3. He that foretold the judgment in his preaching to the people, yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee. It was the business of prophets to pray for those whom they prophesied to, and so to make it appear that though they denounced, they did not desire, the wasteful day. He speaks not of his private prayer in supplication, but of his public prayer, possibly, praying, that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap, to turn away God's wrath, as Moses, that great prophet, often did. Now observe here,

(1.) The prophet's prayer; O Lord God, [1.] Forgive, I beseech thee, and take away the sin. He sees enough at the bottom of the trouble, and therefore concludes that the pardon of sin must be at the bottom of the deliverance, and prays for that in the first place. Note, Whatever calamity we are under, personal or public, the forgiveness of sin is that which we should be most earnest with God for. [2.] Cease, I beseech thee; and take away the judgment; cease the fire, cease the controversy; cause thine anger towards us to cease. This follows upon the forgiveness of sin. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. Note, These whom God contends with, will soon find what need they have to cry for a cessation of arms; and there are hopes that though God has begun, and proceeded far, in his controversy, yet it may be obtained.

(2.) The prophet proceeds to the judgment of fire, to show that he has many arrows in his quiver, many ways of humbling a sinful nation; (v. 4.) The Lord God called to contend by fire. He contended; for God's judgments upon a people are his controversies with them; in them he prosecutes his action against them; and his controversies are neither causeless nor groundless. He called to contend; he did by his prophets give them notice of his controversy, and drew up a declaration, setting forth the meaning of it. Or, he called for his angels, or other ministers of his justice, that were to be employed in it. A fire was kindled among them; by which is meant, either a great drought, the heat of the sun, which should have warmed the earth, scorched it, and burnt up the fruits of the earth; or, as some corrected, they had eaten the spires of; or, a raging fever, which was as a fire in their bones, which devoured and ate up multitudes; or, lightning, fire from heaven, which consumed their houses, as Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed; (ch. iv. 11.) or, it was the burning of their cities, either by accident, or by the hand of the enemy, for fire and sword used to go together; thus were the towns wasted, as the country was by the grasshoppers. This fire which God called for, did terrible execution; it devoured the great deep, as the fire that fell from heaven on Elijah's altar, licked up the water that was in the trench. Though the water designed for the stopping and quenching of this fire was as the water of the great deep, it could not stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God! It did eat up a part, a great part, of the cities where it was sent; or, it was as the fire at Taberah, which consumed the uttermost parts of the camp; (Num. xi. 1) when some were overthrown, others were as brands plucked out of the fire. All deserved to be devoured, but it ate up only a part, for God does not strike at nothing.

3. God graciously lets fall his controversy, in answer to the prophet's prayer, once and again; (v. 3.)
The Lord repented for this; he did not change his mind, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? But he changed his way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy, and not in wrath. He said, It shall not be. And again, (v. 6.) This also shall not be. The catarpillars were countermanded, were remanded, a stop put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual, fervent prayer, and of prayer according to the breadth and depth of the heart, and how swift, God is to show mercy, how he waits to be gracious. Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it, and looks about to see if there be any that will intercede for it, Isa. lx. 16. Nor are former reproaches objected against further instances of mercy, but are rather encouragement to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be, and more to the purpose of the case. It is a mark of his indignation towards them, that he multiplies to pardon, that he spares, and forgives, to more than seventy times seven times.

11. We have here the rejection of those at last, who had been often reproved, and yet never reigning, reduced to straits, and yet never reduced to their God and their duty. This is represented to the prophet by a vision, (v. 7, 8.) and an express prediction of utter ruin, v. 9. The vision is of a plumb-line, a line with a plummet at the end of it, such as masons and bricklayers use, to run up a wall by, that they may work it straight and true, and by rule. (1.) Israel was a wall, a strong wall, which God himself had reared, as a bulwark, or wall of defence, to his sanctuary, which he set up among them. The Jewish church says of herself, (Cant. viii. 18.) I am a wall, and my breasts like towers. This wall was made by a plumb-line, very exact and firm. So happy was its constitution, so well compacted, and every thing so well ordered according to the model; it had long stood fast as a wall of brass; but (2.) God now stands upon this wall, not to hold it up, but to tread it down; or rather, to consider what he should do with it; he stands upon it with a plumb-line, to measure to take measures of it, that it may appear to be a bowing, bulging wall, Recti est index sui et obliqui—This plumb-line would discover where it was crooked. Thus God would bring the people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness, and show wherein they erred; and he would likewise bring his judgments upon them according to equity; would set a plumb-line in the midst of them, to mark how far their wall must be pulled down; as David measured the Moabites with a line, (2 Sam. viii. 2.) to put them to death. And when God is coming to the ruin of a people, he is said to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; for when he punishes, it is with exactness. It is now determined, I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be spared and lifted up, as they were, but their fruit shall not be turned away, ch. 2:11. Nor God's patience, which has long been sinned against, will at length be sinned away; and the time will come when those that have been spared once, shall be no longer spared. My spirit shall not always strive. After frequent reproaches, yet a day of execution will come.

2. The prediction is of utter ruin, v. 9. (1.) The body of the people shall be destroyed, with all those things that were their ornament and defence. They are here called Isaac as well as Israel; the house of Isaac; (v. 16.) some think, in allusion to the significance of Isaac's name; it is laughter; they shall become a jest among all their neighbours; they shall laugh at them. The desolation shall fasten upon their high places, and their sanctuaries; either their castles, or their temples, both built on high places; their castles they thought safe, and their temples sacred as sanctuaries; these shall be destroyed; and this is a dark prediction of their ruin. God shall make them ashamed of their carnal confidences, which were the two things for which God had a controversy with them. When these were made desolate, they might read their sin and folly in their punishment. (2.) The royal family shall sink first, as an earnest of the ruin of the whole kingdom; I will rise against the house of Jeroboam, Jeroboam the second, who was king of the ten tribes. This family was extirpated in his son Zechariah, who was slain with the sword before the people, by Shallum, who conspired against him, 2 Kings xv. 10. How unrighteous soever the instruments were, God was righteous, and in them God rose up against that idolatrous family. Each king's houses will be no shelter against the sword of God's wrath.

10. Then Amaziah, the priest of Beth-el, sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. 11. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. 12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. 14. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. 15. And the Lord said unto me, Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac. One would have expected that what we met with in the former part of the chapter, should, 1. Have awakened the people to repentance, when they saw that those who were perfectly restored, and the people have space to repent, and that they could not obtain a pardon unless they did repent. 2. That it should have endeared the prophet Amos to them, who had not only showed his good will to them, in praying against the judgments that invaded them, but had prevailed to turn away those judgments; which, if they had had any sense of gratitude, would have gained him an interest in their affections; but it fell out quite contrary; they continue impenitent,
the next we hear of Amos, is, that he is persecuted.

Note. As it is the praise of great saints, that they pray for those that are enemies to them, so it is the shame of many great sinners, that they are enemies to those who pray for them, Ps. xxxv. 13, 15. cix. 4. We have here,

1. The malicious information brought to the king against the prophet Amos, v. 10, 11. The informer was Amaziah the priest of Bethel, the chief of the priests that ministered at Bethel, (so some read it,) that had the principal hand in civil affairs there. He complained against Amos, not only because he prophesied without license from him, but because he prophesied against his altars, which would soon be deserted and demolished. If Amos's preaching could but have gained this, the kingdom had been had of Paul, because his preaching tended to spoil their trade. Note. Great pretenders to sanctity are commonly the worse enemies to those who are really sanctified. Priests have been the most bitter persecutors. Amaziah brings an information to Jeroboam against Amos. Observe,

1. The crime he is charged with, is no less than that of being a hireling against thee, to dispose and murder thee, he aims at succeeding thee, and therefore is taking the most effectual way to weaken thee. He sows the seeds of sedition in the hearts of the good subjects of the king, and makes them discontented to him and his government, that he may draw them by degrees from their allegiance; upon this account the land is not able to support his charge, that he compared to the king, that the country was exasperated against him, and it is given in as their sense, that his preaching was intolerable, and such as nobody could be reconciled to, such as the times would by no means bear, that is, the men of the times would not. Both the impiety of his supposed treason, and the ill influence it would have upon the country, are intimates in that part of the charge, that he complained to the king, that the country was exasperated against him, and it is given in as their sense, that his preaching was intolerable, and such as nobody could be reconciled to, such as the times would by no means bear, that is, the men of the times would not.

2. The words laid in the状actment, for the support of this charge; (v. 11.) Amos says, and they have witnesses ready to prove it, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall be led away captive; and hence they infer that he is an enemy to his king and country, and not to be tolerated. See the advice of Amaziah; he does not tell the king how Amos had interceded for Israel, and by his intercession had turned away, first one judgment and then another, and did not let fall his intercession till he saw the decree was gone forth; he does not tell him that these threatenings were conditional, and that he had often assured them, if they would repent and reform, the ruin should be prevented. Nay, it was not true that he said, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, nor did he so die, (2 Kings xiv. 28.) but that God would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword, v. 9. God's prophets and ministers have often had occasion to make David's words good, Ps. lvi. 5.) Every day they wrest my words. But shall it be made the watchman's crime, when he sees the sword coming, to give warning to the people, that they may get themselves secured? Or the physician's crime, to tell his patient of the danger of his disease, that he may use means for the cure of it? What enemies are foolish men to themselves, to their own peace, to their best friends! It does not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of this information; perhaps he reverenced a prophet, and stood more in awe of the divine authority than Amaziah his priest did.

II. The method he used to persuade Amos to withdraw, and quit the country; (v. 12, 13.) when he could not gain his point with the king to have Amos imprisoned, banished, or put to death, or at least to have him frightened into silence or flight, he tried what he could do by fair means to get rid of him; insinuated himself into his acquaintance, and with all the arts of wheedling endeavoured to persuade him to go prophesy in the land of Judah, and not at Bethel. He owns him to be a seer, and does not pretend to enjoin him silence, but suggests to him, 1. That he was a prophet. Amos was specially called to prophesy in his own land, and to exercise his ministry in, for it was the king's chapel, or sanctuary, where he had his idols, and their altars and priests; and it was the king's court, or the house of the kingdom, where the royal family resided, and where were set the thrones of judgment, and therefore prophesy not any more here. And why not? (1.) Because Amos is too plain and bold a prophet for the king's court, and the king's chapel. They that wear silk and fine clothing, and speak silken soft words, are fit for kings' palaces.

(2.) Because the worship that is in the king's chapel will be a continual vexation and trouble to Amos, let him therefore get far enough from it, and what the eye sees not, the heart grieves not for. (3. Because it was not fit that the king and his house should be afflicted in their own court, and chapel by the reproofs and threatenings which Amos was continually thickening them with in the name of the Lord; as if it were the prerogative of the prince, and the privilege of the priests, when they are running headlong upon a firepiece, not to be told of their danger. (4.) Because he could not expect any maintenance or encouragement there, but, on the contrary, to be bantered and ridiculed by some, and to be threatened and brow-beaten by others; however, he could not think to make any converts there, or to persuade any from that idolatry which was supported by the authority and example of the king. To preach his doctrine there, was but (as we say) to run his head against a post; and therefore prophesy not here, they say. But as we have seen, that the land of Judah was the fittest place for him to set up in: Flee thee away thither with all speed, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; thou wilt be safe; there thou wilt be welcome, the king's court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee, the priests and princes will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honourable maintenance. See here, (1.) How willing were the men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to say to the seers, See not, or see not for us; the two witnesses were a torment to them that dwelt on the earth, (Rev. vi. 10.) and they were indeed a pity that men should be tormented before the time, but that it is in order to the preventing of eternal torment. (2.) How apt worldly men are to measure others by themselves; Amaziah, as a privileged man, aimed at nothing but the profite of his place, and he thought Amos, as a prophet, had the same views, and therefore advised him to prophesy there where he might eat bread, where he might be sure to have as much as he chose; whereas Amos was to prophesy where God appointed him, and where there was most need of him, not where he could get most money. Note. Those that make a trade of their godliness, and are governed by the hopes of wealth and preferment themselves, are ready to think these the most powerful inducements with others also.

III. The reply which Amos made to these sug
gestions of Amaziah's; he did not consult with flesh and blood, nor was it his care to enrich himself, but to make full profit of his ministry, and to be found faithful in the discharge of it, not to sleep in a white skin, but to keep a constant watch. He therefore resolves to abide by his post, and, in answer to Amaziah,

1. He justifies himself in his constant adherence to his work, and to his place; (v. 14, 15.) and that which he is sure will not only bear him out, but bind him to it, is, that he had a divine warrant and commission for it; I was no prophet, or prophet's son; but another man was sent by me, and not designed for a prophet, as Samuel and Jeremiah, not educated in the schools of the prophets, as many others were; but I was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit. Our sycamores bear no fruit, but, it seems, theirs did, which Amos gathered, either for his cattle, or for himself and his family, or to sell; he was a plain countryman, bred up and employed in country work, and used to country fare. He followed the flocks as well as the herds, and thence God took him, and bid him go prophesy to his people Israel, deliver to them such messages as he should from time to time receive from the Lord. God made him a prophet, and a prophet to them; appointed him his work, and appointed him his post. Therefore he ought not to be silenced, for, (1.) He could produce a divine command from God, ought not to fear the face of man, he was sent, but pleads, as Paul, that he was called to be an apostle; and men will find it at their peril if they contradict and oppose any that come in God's name; if they say to his seers, Say not, or silence those whom he has bid speak, such fight against God. An affright done to an ambassador is an affright to the prince that sends him. Those that have a warrant from God, ought not to fear the face of man. (2.) The mean character he wore before he received that commission, strengthened his warrant, so far was it from weakening it. [1.] He had no thoughts at all of ever being a prophet, and therefore his prophesying could not be imputed to a raised expectation, or a heated imagination, but purely to a divine impulse. [2.] He was not educated or instructed in the art or mystery of prophesying, and therefore his courage and ability for it immediately from God, which is an indefeasible proof that he had his mission from him. The apostles, being originally unlearned and ignorant men, evidenced that they owed their knowledge to their having been with Jesus, Acts iv. 13. When the treasure is put into such earthen vessels, it is thereby made to appear that the excellency of the former is of God, and not of man, 2 Cor. iv. 7. [3.] He had an honest calling, by which he could comfortably maintain himself and his family, and therefore did not need to prophesy for bread, as Amaziah suggested, (v. 12.) did not take it up as a trade to live by, but as a trust to honour God and do good with. [4.] He had all his days been accustomed to a plain, homely way of living, among poor husbandmen, and never enjoyed the dainties, or thought of dainties, and therefore would not have thrust himself near the king's court and chapel, if the business God had called him to, had not called him thither. [5.] Having been so meanly bred, he could not have had courage to speak to kings and great men, especially to speak such bold and provoking things to them, if he had not been animated by a greater spirit than his own. If God shall say what he did not say it, the like could not thus have set his face as a flint, Isa. I. 7. Note, God often chooses the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wise and mighty; and a herdsman of Tekoa puts to shame a prince of Bethel, when he receives from God authority and ability to act for him.

2. He condemns Amaziah for the opposition he gave him, and denotes the judgments of God against him; not from any private resentment or revenge, but in the name of the Lord, and by authority from him, v. 15, 17. And Amaziah would not suffer Amos to preach at all, and therefore he is particularly ordered to preach against him; now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord, hear it and tremble. These that cannot bear general woes, may expect woes of their own. The sin he is charged with, is forbidding Amos to prophesy; we do not find that he beat him or put him in the stocks, only he enjoined him silence. Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Israel, he must not only not thunder against them, but he must not so much as drop a word against them; he cannot bear, no, not the most gentle distilling of that rain, that small rain. Let him therefore hear his doom.

(1.) For the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon himself and his family. This was the sin that filled the measure of his iniquity. [1.] He shall have no comfort in any of his relations, but be afflicted in those that were nearest to him. His wife shall be a harlot; either she shall be forcibly abused by the soldiers, as the Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah, (they ravish the women in Zion, Lam. v. 11.) or she shall herself wickedly play the harlot, which, though her sin, her great sin, would be his affliction, his great affliction as representing the land of Israel, in promoting spiritual whoredom. Sometimes the sins of our relations are to be looked upon as the judgments of God upon us. His children, though they keep honest, yet shall not keep alive; his sons and his daughters shall fall by the sword of war, and he himself shall live to see it. He had trained them up in iniquity, and therefore God will cut them off in it. [2.] His whole estate, all that he hath, shall fall into the hands of the enemy, and be divided by line, by lot among the soldiers. What is left will not be long kept. [3.] He shall himself perish in a strange country, not in the land of Israel, which had been holiness to the Lord, but in a polluted land, in a heathen country, the fittest place for such a heathen to end his days in, that hated and silenced the true prophets, and persecuted the devoted son of God, who in his land with idolatry.

(2.) Notwithstanding the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon the land and nation; he was accused for saying, Israel shall be led away captive, (v. 11.) but he stands to it, and repeats it; for the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of no effect; the beueth of the word of the Lord may be stripped with, but it cannot be shaken off. Let Amaziah rage, and fret, and say what he will to the contrary, Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land. Note, It is to no purpose to contend with the judgments of God; for when God judges he will overcome. Stopping the mouth of God's ministers will not stop the progress of God's word, for it shall not return void.

CHAP. VIII.

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so necessary is the connexion between them; it is threatened here again and again that the slaughter shall be turned into mourning. By them the vineyard of the Lord is stripped of the fruit it is sown with, (v. 1.3.) and that shall change their note. [1.] Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing of the poor, and therefore humbly beseech him to avert the ruin that threatens them, mourning, v. 4-10. III. A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a whoring after other gods; (v. H.14.) yet for this, which is the most just and dreadful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

1. Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me, and hearken, a basket of
AMOS, VIII.

summer-fruit. 2. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer-fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. 3. And the songs of the temples shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance de die in diem—from day to day, is, because they think God thus defers his judgments, and there is no song wherewith they so effectually sing themselves to God as that which they call the songs of the temple, and therefore God, by his prophets, frequently refers to Israel the day of his wrath not only as just and certain, but as very near and hastening on apace; so he does in these verses.

1. The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by a basket of summer-fruit which Amos saw in a vision; for the Lord showed it him, (v. 1.) and then said, (v. 2.) what seest thou? Note, It concerns us to inquire whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to show us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shows once, yea, twice, and men hereafter it not. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty? Let us examine ourselves, and to be base, a summer-fruit gathered and ready to be eaten; which signified, (1.) That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sics of his judgments, and to cut them off; nay, the thing was in effect done already, and they lay ready to be eaten up. (2.) That the year of God’s patience was drawing towards a conclusion, it was out with them, and their day would quickly have its period in a dismal winter. (3.) Those we call summer-fruits that will not keep till winter, but must be used immediately; an emblem of this people, that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

2. The intent and meaning of this vision is no more than this. It signifies that the end is come upon ru, and especially upon those who cast their lot with the end is ketz, which is of near affinity with kitz, the word used for summer-fruit. God had long spared them, and borne with them, but now his patience is tired out: they are indeed his people Israel, but their end, that latter end they had been so often reminded of, but had so long forgotten, is now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea, though they be his people Israel. What was said, ch. vii. 8. is here repeated as God’s determined resolution; I will not again pass by them any more, they shall not be conivled at as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

3. The consequence of this shall be a universal desolation; (v. 3.) When the end is come, sorrow and death shall ride in triumph, they are accustomed to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, Rev. xxi. 4. But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation, (1.) Sorrow reigns; reigns to that degree, that the songs of the temple shall be howlings; the songs of God’s temple at Jerusalem, or, rather, of their idol-temples, where they used, when, in honour of the golden calves, they had eaten and drunk, to rise up to play. They were perhaps wanton, profane songs; and it is certain that sooner or later those will be turned into howlings. Or if they had a sound or show of piety and religion, yet, not coming from the heart nor being sung to the glory of God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings. Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea, and sacred mirth too, if it be not sincere. And when God’s judgments are abroad, they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness; the temple-songs, which used to sound so pleasant, not only into sighs and groans, but into loud howlings which sound like malediction. They shall come to the temple, and, finding the presence of God, that which they shall have most bitterly. (2.) Death reigns; reigns to that degree, that there shall be dead bodies, many dead bodies in every place, (Ps. cxvi. 6.) slain by sword or pestilence; so many, that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals, they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall cast them forth with silence; shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent, and to take no notice of it; either because they have not wherewithal to hear the charges of a funeral, or because, the killing disease being infectious, none will come near them; or for fear the enemy should be provoked, if they should be known to lament their slain. Or, they shall charge themselves and one another silently to submit to the hand of God in their deaths, and not even say a word of the pine and quarrel with him. Or, it may be taken not for a patient but a sullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgment, either of God’s righteousness or their own unrighteousness.

4. Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, 5. Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit. 6. That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? 7. The Lord hath sworn by Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. 8. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 9. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: 10. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and showing them, 1. The heinousness of the sin they were guilty of; in short, they had the character of the unjust judge, (Luke xvii.) 2. That neither feared God nor regarded man.

1. Observe them in their excitations, and you will see, "They have no reverence for God." Bad as they are they do indeed keep up a show and form of godliness, they observe the sabbath and the new moon, they put some difference between those days and other days; but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, for their hearts
AMOS, VIII.

were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them, that they said, When will the sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn? Yet it is still the character of many that are called Christians. (1.) They were weary of sabbath-days; When will they be gone? They were weary of the restraints of the sabbaths and the new moons, and therefore wished them over, because they might do no servile work then. (2.) They are weary of the weariness of the sabbaths and new moons, snuffed at it, (Mal. i. 13.) and were as Doeg, detained before the Lord; (1 Sam. xxi. 7.) they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars. Note, Sabbath-days and sabbath-work are a burden to carnal hearts, that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communion with God? And how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the work of it, and reaped the gains of it? Why then should we be in such haste to part with it? (2.) They were fond of market-days; they longed to be selling corn, and setting forth trade. When they were employed in religious services, they were thinking of their marketings, their hearts were after the sabbath; (certainly, the sabbath was) and they made my Father's house a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves. Therefore they were weary of holy duties, because their worldly business stood still the while; in which they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary as a fish upon dry ground. Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market-days better than sabbath-days, that would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations, and you will see they have no regard to man; and this commonly follows upon the former; those that have lost the savour of piety, will not long retain the sense of common honesty. These here neither do justice, nor love mercy.

(1.) They cheat those they deal with. When they sell their corn, they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods, and in receiving the money for them. They measure him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they make the ephah small. The measure is scanty, and not statute measure, and so they wrong him that way; when they receive his money, they must weigh it in their own scales, by their own weights, and their shekel they weigh him by; (which they often do not, and so that the money, being found too light, must have more added to it; and so they cheat that way too,) and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice. By such wicked practices as these, men show such a greediness of the world, such a love of themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as speak a worse of their hearts than they dare pretend; and further the fear of that God who has so plainly said that false weights and balances are an abomination to him. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is, that they sell the refuse of the wheat, and, taking the advantage of their neighbours' ignorance or necessity, make them take it at the same price at which they sell the best of the wheat.

(2.) They are curious and unmerciful to the poor; they swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land to fail. [1.] They valued themselves so much on their wealth, that they looked upon all that were poor with the highest contempt imaginable; they hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them; and therefore did what they could to make them cease; not by relieving them to make them cease to be poor, but by banishing and destroying them, to make them cease to be, or, at least, to be in their land. But he who thus reproaches the poor, despises his Maker, in whose hands rich and poor meet together. [2.] They were so eager to increase their wealth, and make it more, that they robbed the poor to enrich themselves; and therefore they fastened upon the poor, to make a prey of them, because they were not able to right themselves, nor to resist or revenge the injuries of their oppressors. Thus riches that are got by the ruin of the poor, will bring ruin on those that get them. They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains; for therefore they falsify the balances by deceit, not only that they may enrich themselves, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else (as they think) at command too, but that they may overreach those about them, and bring them so low, that they may force them to become slaves to them, and so having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next to nothing: thus they buy the poor for silver, they bring them and their children into bondage, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the corn they have bought; And the word used here, that was reduced to this extremity, that the price was very low; and the oppressors had beaten it down so, that you might buy a poor man to be your slave for a pair of shoes. Property was first invaded, and then liberty: it is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars, and then to make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in the misery of those that are trampled on, and the tenderness of it in the sin of these that trample on them.

11. Observe the grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured, they will cry unto God, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them; for, they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself, Exod. xxiii. 23, 24.

1. God will remember their sin against them; He has sworn by the excellency of Jacob, (v. 7.) by himself, for he can swear by no greater; and who but he is the Glory and Magnificence of Jacob? He has sworn by these tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them despicable to him; for he is said (oh, vil. 8.) to abhor the excellency of Jacob. He swears in his wrath, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known, and was so great in Israel; he swears, Surely I will never forget any of their works; but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them, for more is implied than is expressed. I will never forget them, is as much as to say, I will never forgive them; and then it speaks of the particular things of which it speaks, that were not only not forgiven, but were hateful indeed, eternally miserable: wo, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy.

2. He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described largely, and in a great fertility of various and vivid expressions, that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation.

(1.) There shall be a universal terror and confusion; Shall not the land tremble for this, (v. 8.) this land, out of which you thought to have driven the poor? Shall not every one mourn, that dwells therein? Certainly they shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought for national sins, shall be made to tremble and mourn
And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. 13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. 14. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

In these verses is threatened,

1. A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land; a famine of the word of God; the failing of oracles, and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance; The days come, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon that land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after, there was great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of hearing the word of God, in season and out of season, they had precept upon precept, and line upon line; prophecy was their daily bread; and it is probable that they surfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens that hereafter he will deprive them of their daily provision. For his people of Israel there were not so many prophets, about the time that their destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity, they saw not their signs, there were no more any prophets, none to show them how long. Ps. lxiv. 9. The Jewish church, after Malachi, had no prophets for many ages; and he speaks of the blindness which is in part happened to Israel in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the gospel, and the ministers of it that God sends to them, and covet to have prophets of their own, as their fathers had, but they shall have none; the kingdom of God being taken from them, and given to another people. Observe how far the text goes, to give room to provest further, to enable them for their work. The word of the Lord shall be precious and scarce, there shall be no vision, 1 Sam. iii. 1. They shall have the written word, Bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them; the water in the well, but nothing to draw. It is a gracious promise, (Isa. xxx. 20) that those that have a scanty measure of grace, they shall have plenty of the means of grace. God will give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, but their eyes shall see their teachers; and it was a common saying among the Puritans, that brown bread and the gospel is good fare; but it is here a threatening, that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their teachers should be removed. Now, (1.) This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that to them were committed the oracles of God; but when those were taken from them, their beauty was stained, and their honour laid in the dust. (2.) This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them; surely he was

12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. 13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. 14. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

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angry indeed with them, when he would no more speak to them as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin, when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance. (5.) This made all the other calamities that were upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and will say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is of all others the worst, the heaviest judgment.

2. What will be the effect of this? (v. 12.) They shall wander from sea to sea, from the sea of Tiberias to the great sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets, either by sea or land, from other countries; since they have none among themselves, they shall go from the north to the east; when they are disappointed in one place, they shall try another, and shall again and again, as men at a loss, and in a hot pursuit, seek the word of the Lord, to inquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God, but they shall not find it. (1.) Though to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon; but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those mercies which other lands afforded them. (2.) Even then, that sighted prophets when they had them, shall wish for them, as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them; many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or, it may be meant thus, Though they should thus wander from sea to sea, in quest of the word of God, yet they shall not find it. Note, The means of grace are moveable things; and the candlestick, when we take it, may be moved from its place; (Rev. ii. 5.) and those that now slight the days of the son of man, may wish in vain to see them. And in the day of this famine the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst; (v. 13.) those who, one would think, could well enough have borne the toil, shall sink under it. The Jewish churches, and the masters of their synagogues, some take to be meanly by the virgins and the sons of men; these shall lose the word of the Lord, and the benefit of divine revelation, and shall faint away for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust in their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meanly by the fair virgins and the choice young men; those shall faint for thirst, when those that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

11. The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, v. 14. Observe, 1. The sin they were charged with. They swear by the sin of Samaria, by the god of Samaria, the idol that was worshipped at Bethel, not far off from Samaria; thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by that as their god, which was their iniquity, thinking that that could help them, which would certainly ruin them. It was the highest of their sins, which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; that was the other golden calf, a dumb, dead idol, and yet caressed and complimented as if it had been the living and the true God. They say, The manner, or way, or manner, of Beer-sheba liveth; they swear by the religion of Beer-sheba, the way and manner of worship used there, which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swear by, and appealed to as a judge of controversy. Thus the Papists swear by the mass, as the manner of Beer-sheba. 2. The destruction they are threatened with; those who thus give that honour to idols, which is due to God alone, will find that the God they affront is thereby made their enemy, so that they shall fall, and that the gods they serve cannot stand their friends, so that they shall never rise again. They will find that God is jealous, and will resent the indignity done him; and that he will be victorious, and it is to no purpose to contend with him.
which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people; and observe,

1. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision the Lord going up to them with a loud noise and the brother-offerings; by which the Lord has a sacrifice, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy-seat between the cherubims, and stands upon the altar, the judgment-seat, on which the fire of God used to fall, to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar, to show that the ground of his controversy with his people is not now his justice, but theirеть, wherein he here stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar; as also to signify that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. 1 Sam. iii. 14. He stands on the altar, to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given, is, Smite the lintel of the door of the temple, the cheser, smite it with a saw, that the posts may shake, and run down, wound them in the head, all of them; break down the door of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this—that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it. Or it signifies the destruction of those in the first place, that should be as the door-posts of the nation for its defence, so that, they being broken down, it becomes as a city without gates and bars. There is not a door, that the princes, who are as the posts, may shake; cut them in the head, cleave them down, all of them, as wood for the fire; and I will slay the last of them, the posterity of them, them and their families, or the least of them, them and all that are employed under them; or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man; the slaughter shall be general. There is no living for those of whom God has said, I will slay them; no standing before his sword.

2. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord to jealousy: let sinners read it, and tremble; as there is no fighting it out with God; for as sometimes the wicked flee when none pursues, so he cannot fly away out of the reach of danger; for no means, when they come with commission, as they will overpower the strongest that think to outface them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to outrun them, v. 2. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, shall soon be out of breath, and shall not fly away out of the reach of danger; for as sometimes the wicked flee when none pursues, so in the fulness of time, and the last hours of this judgment, when they come with commission, as they will overpower the strongest that think to outface them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to outrun them. 

(1.) Hell itself, though it has its name in English from its being hilled, or covered over, or hidden, cannot hide them; (v. 2.)Though they dig into hell, into the centre of the earth, or the deepest recesses of it, yet hence shall my hand take them, and bring them forth to be made public monuments of divine justice. The grave is a hiding-place to the righteous from the malice of the world; (Job iii. 17.) but it shall be no hiding-place to the wicked from the justice of God; from thence God's hands shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to everlastingshame and contempt. (2.) Heaven, though it has its name from being heaved, or lifted up, shall not put them out of the reach of God's judgments as hell cannot hide them, so heaven will not. Though they climb up to heaven in their own conceit, yet hence will I bring them down. Those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall sooner or later be led up to heaven, and there climb thither themselves, by their own presumption, and confidence in themselves, will be brought down, and filled with shame. (3.) The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country, shall not protect them; "Though they hide themselves there, where they imagine nobody will look for them, I will find them there; nothing is hid in Carmel, nor the thickest bushes, nor the darkest caves, in the top of Carmel, will serve to hide them. (4.) The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them; though they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them; Hence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them; the cocked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea. Is. xxvii. 1. Hence shall they find their plague and death there where they hope to find shelter and protection; diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing. (5.) Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall lesser judgments excuse them from greater; (v. 4.) Though they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with other nations, and make them to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn; Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword, when God judges, he will overcome. That which binds on all this, and makes their escape impossible, and their ruin inevitable, is, that God will set his eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. God's enemies are many, and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good, to show himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins, (Job xiii. 27.) and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserabili, who have the providence of God, and all the dispensations of it, against them, working for their hurt. What a great and mighty God he is, that pass es this sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatenings are more or less formidable, according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at impotent wrath; but the wrath of God is not so, it is omnipotent wrath; who knows the power of it? What he had before said he would do, (ch. viii. 8.) is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and all that dwell therein mourn, that the judgment should rise up wholly like a flood, and the country should be drowned, and laid under water, as by the flood of Egypt, v. 5. But is he able to make his words good? Yes, certainly he is, he does but touch the land, and it melts, touch the mountains and they smoke; he can do it with the greatest ease, for, (1.) he is the Lord God of hosts, who undertakes to do it; the God who has all the power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck and call, who, having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleases of them, and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those who have the Lord of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them. (2.) He is the Creator and Governor of the upper world. It is he that builds his stories in the heavens, the celestial orbs or spheres, one over another, as so many stories in a high and stately palace; they are his, for he built them at first, when he said, Let there be a firmament, and he made the
AMOS, IX.

I. The matter of the command is the same, and is as follows: He has given it to all, and his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is borne up. Now that has the command of those stories, is certainly to be feared, far from thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hail stones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories, to fight against them, as against Sisera. (3.) He has commanded him to turn up too, in which we dwell, the tempestuous globe, both earth and sea, so that, which way soever his enemies think to make their escape, he will meet them, or to make opposition, he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it? He has sounded his troop in the earth, his troop of guards, which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects, and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle, (as the margin reads it,) one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleases to discharge against the persecutors, Ps. vii. 13. They are all one army, one body; so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishing of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it? He has made the waters of the sea at command; even its waves, the most tumultuous, rebellious waters, do obey him. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of his common providence, causes vapours to ascend out of it, and pours them out in showers, as the small rain and the great rain of his strength, upon the face of the earth; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord, (ch. v. 8.) and make him our Rock. (ch. vi. 1.) The reason why we should fear him, and dread having him our Enemy.

3. How justly God passes this sentence upon the people of Israel. He does not destroy them by an act of sovereignty, but by an act of righteousness; for, (v. 8.) it is a sinful kingdom, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it, discovering it to be so; he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will destroy it from off the face of the earth. Note, When those kingdoms that in name and profession were holy kingdoms, and kingdoms of priests, as Israel was, become sinful kingdoms, no other can be expected than that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompense. This being a sinful kingdom, see how light God makes of it, v. vii. (1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it: Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? A sad change! children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians! [1.] They were so in themselves, that was their sin; it is a thing to be greatly lamented, and lamented over; for it is a great sin, that children of the Ethiopians, the children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them. Those that were well educated and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession, and become as bad as the worst. Have the gold become dross? [2.] They were so in God's account, and for them, therefore, was this sentence passed upon them, not for the good of the children of the Ethiopians; that children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of Ps. vii. that was Cush, (an Ethiopian, so some understand it,) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession are children of Israel, if they degenerate, and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians.

This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah; because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched and cast out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of rearing iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them, and none but children of the Ethiopians are the marks of the favours he had conferred upon them; they thought he would not, he could not, cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them. No, says he, The favours showed you are not so distinguishing as you think they are. Have I not brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? It is true, I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Caphtor, or Cappadocia, where they were either natives, or captives, or both; they are called the remnant of the country of Caphtor, (Jer. xlvii. 4.) and the Philistines are joined with the Caphtorim, Gen. x. 14. In like manner, the Syrians were brought away, and they had been carried away too, 2 Kings xi. 9. No, if God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarities of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become an act of common providence; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And if we live not upon the same terms of mercy, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile, in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet, the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones; no, the Judge of all the earth will do right, more right than to slay the righteous with the wicked, Gen. xiii. 25. His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom, to spy out those in it who preserve their integrity, and swim against the stream, who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation, so that the destruction shall not be total; I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous Judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted as corn is sifted; they shall be greatly hurried, and shaken, and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands, as the sieve in the hands of him that sifts; (v. 9.) I will sift the house of Israel among all nations; wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care not to suffer them to be scattered abroad, which was the thing he designed in sifting them, (1.) The righteous ones among them, that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from, or through, the common calamities of the kingdom; nor the least grain shall fall on the earth, so as to be lost and forgotten; not the least stone, so the word is, for the good corn is sifted, it is as light as a feather, and it will come up, and which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God does, and will, effectually provide that none who are truly his, shall be truly miserable. (2.) The wicked ones among them, who are hardened in their sins, shall all of them perish, v. 10. See what a height of impiety they are come to, They say, The evil shall not overtake
and prevent us, They think they are innocent, and do not deserve punishment, or, that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment, or, that they shall be able to make their part go on against the judgment of God, that shall see so seriously from them, that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them, that they shall not prevent or surprise them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impudent. But see what it will come to at last; all the sinners that thus flatter themselves, and affect God, shall die by the sword, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, though they be the sinners of my people; for their profession shall not be their protection. Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

11. In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all of the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. 13. Behold, the days, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. 14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

To Him whom all the prophets bare witness, this prophet, here in the close, bears his testimony, and speaks of that day, those days that shall come, in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, Acts xv. 13, 17. 1. It is promised that in the Messiah, the kingdom of David shall be restored; (v. 11.) the tabernacle of David it is called, his house and family, which, though great and fixed, yet, in comparison with the kingdom of heaven, was mean and movable as a tabernacle. The church militant, in its present state, dwelling as in shepherds' tents, to feed, as in soldiers' tents, to fight, is the tabernacle of David. God's tabernacle is called the tabernacle of David, because David desired and chose to dwell in God's tabernacle for ever, Ps. lxxiii. 4. Now, (1.) These breaches were fallen and gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained, and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity; sore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews; in the latter days of it, its glory was departed, it was like a tabernacle broken down, and brought to ruin, in respect both of purity and of prosperity. (2.) By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and rebuilt. In him God's covenant with David had its accomplishment; and the glory of that house, which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again, the breaches of it were closed, from its reinvigorated life, calling the Gentiles, and God's taking out of them a people for his name. Note, While the world stands, God will have a church in it, and if it be fallen down in one place, and among one people, it shall be raised up elsewhere.

2. It is promised that that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it; (v. 12.) that the house of David may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, that is, that Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Ps. ii. 8. Those that had been strangers and enemies, shall become willing, faithful subjects to the son of David, shall be added to the church, of the members of the kingdom of the Messiah, that belong to the election of grace, and are ordained to eternal life; (Acts xiii. 48.) for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded, Rom. xi. 7. Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, here said to be those that were called by his name; the promise is given them all that were ever called by his name, the children of the Lord our God shall call, Acts ii. 39. St. James expounds this as a promise, that the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called. But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord saith this, who doeth this; who can do it, who has determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it, and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

3. That in the kingdom of the Messiah there shall be great plenty, and abundance of all good things, that the country produces, (v. 13.) The ploughman shall overtake the reaper; there shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall not be common, even till abundance is scarce; and the land is to be replenished, and in like manner the vintage shall continue till seed-time; and there shall be such abundance of grapes, that even the mountains shall drop new wine into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren, shall be moistened, and shall melt with the fatness, or mellowness (as we may render it) of the grape, and it is time then to begin to plough again; and this, as long as the vintage lasts, and this till the vintage shall be as the first vintage. This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things, which all those are, and shall be, blessed with, who are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have bread, the bread of life, which is the great subject of all the divine consolations to make them glad; meat indeed, and drink indeed, all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the word and Spirit of God; these had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church, divine revelation, and the power that attended it, were to be found only within that enclosure; but in gospel-times, the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges by the gospel of Christ preached,
and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were always caused to triumph in the success of their preaching, then the ploughman overtook the reaper; and when the Gentile churches were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, and all manner of spiritual gifts, (1 Cor. i. 5.) then the mountains dropped sweet wine.

4. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled; as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat, v. 14. Those that were carried captives, shall be brought back out of their captivity; their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return, and shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them, shall form themselves into Christian churches, and set up pure doctrine, worship, and discipline among them, according to the gospel-charter, by which Christ’s cities are incorporated; and they shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof, they shall plant vineyards, and make gardens; though the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel-church are laid in common, yet they shall enclose for themselves, not to monopolize these privileges, to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges, in communion with others, and they shall drink the wine, and eat the fruit, of their own vineyards and gardens; for they that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and the profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God’s Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God’s Israel as a yoke of bondage, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, Gal. v. 1.

5. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world, as never to be rooted out of it; (v. 15.) I will plant them upon their land. God’s spiritual Israel shall be planted, by the right hand of God himself, upon the land assigned them, and they shall no more be pulled up out of it, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostasy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by the malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations, nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church: (1.) God’s grants to it; it is the land which I have given them; and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people, is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it. (2.) Its interest in him: He is the Lord thy God, who has said it, and will make it good, thus, O Israel, who shall reign for ever, as thine unto all generations. And because he lives, the church shall live also.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE PROPHECY OF

OBADIAH.

This is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament, the least of those tribes; and yet it is not to be

passed by, or thought meanly of, for this penny has Cæsar's image and superscription upon it; it is

stamped with a divine authority. There may appear much of God in a short sermon, in a little book;

and much good may be done by it; multum in parvo—much in a little. Mr. Norris says, "If angels

were to write books, we should have few folios;' that may be very precious, which is not voluminous.

This book is entitled, The Vision of Obadiah. Who this Obadiah was, does not appear from any other

scripture; some of the ancients imagined him to be the same with that Obadiah that was steward to

Ahab's household; (1 Kings xviii. 3.) and if so, he that hid and fed the prophets, had indeed a prophet's

reward, when he was himself made a prophet. But that is a conjecture which has no ground. This

Obadiah, it is probable, was of a later date; some think cotemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos; others

think he lived about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the children of Edom so barbarously

triumphed in that destruction. However, what he wrote was what he saw; it is his vision; probably,

there was much more, which he was divinely inspired to speak, but this is all he was inspired to write;

and all he writes is concerning Edom. It is a foolish fancy of some of the Jews, that because he

prophesies only concerning Edom, he was himself an Edomite by birth, but a proselyte to the Jewish

religion: other prophets prophesied against Edom, and some of them seem to have borrowed from him

in their predictions against Edom, as Jer. xliv. 7. &c. Ezek. xxv. 12. &c. Out of the mouth of these

two or three witnesses every word will be established.

OBADIAH.

This book is wholly concerning Edom; a nation nearly

allied, and near adjoining to Israel, and yet an enemy to

the seed of Jacob, inheriting the enmity of their father

Esau to Jacob. Now here we have, after the preface,

v. 1. I. Threatenings against Edom, I. That their pride

should be humbled, v. 2. 2. That their wealth should

be plundered, v. 3. 3. That their wisdom should be

infatuated, v. 4. 4. That their crafty devices toward

God's Israel should be confounded, v. 5. 5. Gracious promises to Israel; that they shall be restored

and reformed, and shall be victorious over the Edomites,

and become masters of their land and the lands of their

other neighbours, (v. 17. 20.) and that the kingdom

of the Messiah shall be set up by the bringing in of the
great salvation, v. 21.

1. THE vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom,

in battle. 2. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despoiled. 3. The pride of thy heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high;

that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? 4. Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. 5. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? 6. How are the things of Esau searched out! how are his hidden things
sought up! 7. All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border; the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee; they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee: there is none understanding in him. 

8. Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? 9. And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

Edom is the nation against which this prophecy is levelled, and which, some think, is put for all the enemies of Israel, that shall be brought down first or last. The rabbins by Edom understand Rome, Rome Christian they understand it of, and have an implaceable enmity to it as such; but if we understand it of some one else, it shall find the passages of it applicable enough. And though Edom was mortified in the time of the Maccabees, as it had been before by Jehoshaphat, yet its destruction seems to have been typical, as their father Esau's rejection, and to have had further reference to the destruction of the enemies of the gospel-church; for so shall all God's enemies perish; and we find (Note,) that the Lord proceeds against Edom, upon Edomæa, to signify the general day of God's recompenses for th' controversy of Zion, v. 8. Some have well observed, that it could not but be a great temptation to the people of Israel, when they saw themselves, who were the children of beloved Jacob, in trouble, and the Edomites, the seed of hated Esau, not only prospering, but triumphing over them in their troubles; and therefore God gives them a prospect of the destruction of Edom, which should be total and final, and of a happy issue of their own correction.

Now we may observe here,

1. A declaration of war against Edom; (v. 1.) We have heard a rumour, or rather, an order, from the Lord, the God of hosts; he has given the word of command, it is his own and his own, which can neither be reversed nor resisted, that all who do mischief to his people, shall certainly bring mischief upon themselves. We have heard a report, that God is raised up out of his holy habitation, and is preparing his throne for judgment; and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, a herald rather, some minister or messenger of Providence, to alarm the nations, or the Lord's prophets, who go to each nation its burden. Those whom God employs, cry to each other, Arise ye, stir up yourselves and one another, and let us rise up against Edom in battle. The confederate forces under Nebuchadnezzar thus animate themselves and one another to make a descent upon that country; Gather ye together, and come against her; so it is in the parallel place, Jer. xlix. 14. Note, When God has plainly work to do among the enemies of his church, he will find out and fit up both hands and hearts to do it.

2. A prediction of the success of that war. Edom shall certainly be subdued, and spoiled, and brought down; for all her confidences shall fail her, and stand her in no stead, and in like manner shall all the enemies of God's church be disappointed in the expectation which they staved themselves upon.

1. Do they depend upon their grandeur, the figure they make among the nations, their influence upon them, and interest in them? That shall dwindle; (v. 2.) Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen, so that none of thy neighbours will court thy friendship, or court an alliance with thee; thou art greatly despised among them, and looked upon with contempt, as an infatuated and unhallowed nation. And thus (v. 3.) the pride of thine heart has deceived thee. Note, (1.) Those that think well of themselves are not to expect to be beloved of God or any of them; but when they come to make trial of them, they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their pride deceives them, and by it slays them. (2.) God can easily lay those low, that have magnified and exalted themselves; and will find out a way to do it, for he resists the proud; and we often see those small and greatly despised, who once looked very big, now get big and despised.

2. Do they depend upon the fortifications of their country, both by nature and art, and glory in the advantages they have thereby? Those also shall deceive them. They dwell in the clefts of the rock, as an eagle in her nest, and their habitation was high, not only exalted above their neighbours, which was the matter of their pride, but fortified against their enemies, which was the matter of their security; and thus we may be either lifted up or cut down; I. What God says in the pride of his heart: Who shall bring me down to the ground? He speaks with a confidence of his own strength, and a contempt of God's judgments, as if almighty power itself could not overpower him. As for all his enemies, even God himself, he puffeth at them, (Ps. x. 5.) sets them all at defiance. Their argument is, God can lift them up, and God can cast them down. (Note,) Carnal security is a sin that most easily besets men in the day of their pomp, power, and prosperity; and does, as much as any thing, both to ripe men for ruin, and aggravate it when it comes. (2.) What God says to this, v. 4. If men will dare to challenge omnipotence, their challenge shall be taken up; Who shall bring me down? says Edom. I will, says God; Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle that soars high, and builds high, high, may, though thou set thy nest among the stars, higher than ever any eagle flew, it is but in vain, for God will come down. This we had, Jer. xlix. 15, 16. Note, Sinners will certainly be made ashamed of their pride and security; of their pride when it has a fall, and of their security when their confidences fail their expectation.

3. Do they depend upon their wealth and treasure, the abundance of which is looked upon as the show of war? Is their money their defence? Is that their strong city? It is so but in their own conceit, for it shall rather expose them than protect them; it shall be made a prey to the enemy, and they for the sake of it, v. 5, 6. Much to this purpose we had, Jer. xlix. 9, 10. Only here comes in a parenthesis, (How art thou cut off?) thou and all thy stores. The prophet foretells it, but laments it, that the thread of their prosperity was cut off. How art thou fallen, and how great is thy fall! How art thou stubborn! So the Chaldee words it. How senseless art thou under these desolating judgments, as if they were but common strokes! But he shows that it should be an utter ruin, not a usual calamity; for, (1.) It is indeed a usual calamity for those that have wealth, to have it stolen, and to lose a little out of their great deal. Those come to them, (for when increase is, there will be the birds of prey be gathered together,) robbers come by night, and they steal till they have enough, what they have occasion for, what they have a mind for; they steal no more than they think they can carry away.
and out of a great stock it is scarcely missed. Those that rob orchards, or vineyards, carry off with them what they think fit; but they leave some grapes, some fruit for the owner, who easily bears his loss perhaps, and soon recovers it; but, (2.) It shall not be so with Edom; his wealth shall all be taken away, and nothing shall remain of the kingdom of his, nor shall it be among the nations. And this is most precious and valuable.

6. How are the things of Edom, the things he sets his heart upon, and places his happiness in, his good things, his best things, how are these things, which were so carefully treasured up and concealed, how searched out by the enemy and seized! How are his hid things, his hid treasures, plundered, rifled, and carried away? Edom has been many years, as it were, before the eyes of many, and now they are a spoil to the enemy. Note, Treasures on earth, though ever so fast locked up, and ever so artfully hidden, cannot be so safely laid up but that thieves may break through and steal; it is therefore our wisdom to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

4. Do they depend upon their alliances with neighbouring states and potentates? Those also shall fail them; (v. 7.) "The men of thy confederacy, all of them, the Ammonites and Moabites, and other thy high allies that were at peace with thee, that entered into a league offensive and defensive with thee, that solemnly engaged not only to do thee no hurt, but to do thee all the service they could; they did eat thy bread, were magnificently treated and enterained, they set their face to the border; till they were just ready to engage the invading enemy; but then," (1.) "They have deceived thee; they flew back and retreated when thou wast in extremity, and proved as a broken reed to the traveller that is weary, and as the brooks in summer to the traveller that is thirsty; they bear no weight, yield no relief." Nay, (2.) "They have prevailed against thee; they were too bold, too dissembling, too crafty, imposed upon thee, and by cheating thee ruined thee; and therefore God will destroy their understanding. Note, God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of danger, that will not use their understanding to keep out of the way of sin. He that will be foolish, let him be foolish still. (2.) It was the forerunner of their destruction. A nation is then marked for ruin, when God hides the things that belong to its peace from the eyes of those that are intrusted with its counsels. Quos Deus vult perder, eos demiserit—God infatuates those whom he designs to destroy, Job xiii. 17.

6. Do they depend upon the strength and courage of their soldiers? They are not only able-bodied, but men of spirit and courage, they can face an enemy, and stand their ground; but now, (v. 9.) "They have broken thy castles, thy strongholds, and it shall be so, and their courage shall fail them, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter, and none escape; the weak and feeble and unarmed must fall of course into the hand of the destroyer, when the mighty men are dismayed, and not only lose the day, but lose their lives, because they have lost their spirit. Howl, for trees, if the cedar be shaken. St. Jer. The death of the mighty, often proves the death and destruction of the many; and it is in vain to depend upon mighty men for our protection, if we have not an Almighty God for us, much less if we have an Almighty God against us.

10. For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. 11. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. 12. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. 13. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity.

14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the cross-way, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. 15. For the day of the
When we have read Edom's doom, no less than utter ruin, it is natural to ask, What evil has he done? What is the ground of God's covenant with him? Many things, no doubt, were amiss in Edom, they were a sinful people, and a people laden with iniquity; but that one single crime which is laid to their charge, as filling their measure, and bringing this ruin upon them, that for which they here stand indicted, of which they are convicted, and for which they are condemned, is, the injuries and wrongs they had done to the people of God; (v. 10.) "It is for thy violence against thy brother Jacob, that ancient and hereditary grudge which thou hast borne to the people of Israel, that is it for which all this shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever." Note, Injuries to men are affronts to God, the righteous God that loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness; and, as the Judge of all the earth, he will do right to them that suffer wrong, and take vengeance upon those that do wrong. All violence, all unrighteousness, is sin; but it is a great aggravation of the violence, if it be done either, 1. Against any of our own people; it is violence against thy brother, thy near relation, to whom thou shouldst be a God—a redeemer, whom it is thy duty to right, if others wronged him; how wicked is it then for thee thyself to wrong him! Then sundry and abuse thine own mother's son; this makes the sin exceeding sinful, Ps. I. 20. Or, 2. Much more if it be done against any of God's people; it is thy brother Jacob, that is in covenant with God, and dear to him. Thou hastest him whom God has loved, and because God has loved him; him whose cause God espouses, and will plead with jealously; and in whose interest God is pleased so far to interest himself, that he takes the violence done to him and to himself; whose touches Jacob, touches the apple of the eye of Jacob's God. So that it is crimes low majestatis—high treason; for which, as for high treason, let Edom expect an ignominious punishment; Shame shall cover thee, and a ruining one, thou shalt be cut off for ever.

In the following verses we are told more particularly what the violence was which Edom did against his brother Jacob, and what are the proofs of his charge. It does not appear that the Edomites did themselves invade Israel, but that was mere for want of power than will, they had malice enough to do it, but were not a match for them; but that which is laid to their charge, is, their barbarous conduct towards Judea and Jerusalem, when they were in distress, and ready to be destroyed, probably, by the Chaldeans; or upon occasion of the other calamities of the Jews; for this seems to have been always their temper toward them. See this charged upon the Edomites, (Ps. cxxxvii. 7.) that in the day of Jerusalem, they said, Raze it, raze it, and Ezek. xxv. 12. They are here told particularly what they did, by being told what they should not have done; (v. 12.) Thou shouldst not have looked, thou shouldst not have entered; but thou didst do so. Note, In reflecting upon ourselves, it is good to compare what we have done with what we should have done, our practice with the rule, that we may discover wherein we have done amiss, have done those things which we ought not to have done; we should not have been where we were at such a time, should not have been in such and such company, should not have said what we said, nor have taken the liberty that we took. Sin thus looked upon in the glass of the commandment, will appear exceeding sinful. Let us see,

1. What was the case of Judah and Jerusalem, when the Edomites behaved themselves thus basely, and insulted over them. (1.) It was a day of distress with them; (v. 12.) it was the day of their calamity, so it is called three times, v. 13. With the Edomites it was a day of prosperity and peace, when with the Israelites it was a day of distress and calamity, for judgment commonly begins at the house of God. Children are corrected when strangers are let alone. (2.) It was the day of their destruction, (v. 12.) when both city and country were laid waste, were laid in ruins. (3.) It was a day when foreigners entered into the gates of Jerusalem, when the city, after a long siege, was broken up, and the great officers of the king of Babylon's army came, and sat in the gates, as judges of the land; when they cast lots upon the spoils of Jerusalem, as the soldiers for Christ's garments, what shares each of the conquerors shall have, what share of the lands, what share of the goods; or, cast lots, to determine themselves when and where they should attack it. (4.) It was a day when the strangers carried away captive his - people, (v. 11.) took the men of war by surprise, and carried them off, in poverty and shame, to their own country; or such a multitude of captives, that they were as an army. (5.) It was a day when thy brother himself, that had long been at home, at rest in his own land, became a stranger, an exile in a strange land. Now when this was the woful case of the Jews, the Edomites, their neighbours and brethren, should have pitied them and helped them; but they behaved basely, and the mind of man should have trembled to think that their own turn would come next: for if this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? But,

2. See what was the conduct of the Edomites toward them when they were in this distress, for which they are here condemned. (1.) They looked with pleasure upon the affliction of God's people; not with pity, but with joy, they saw them driven into distress, and were exceeding glad of it, Ps. xliii. 13. Note, They should have come in to the relief of their distressed neighbours, and looked upon them, and their day, looked on their affliction, (v. 12, 13.) with a careless, unconcerned eye, as the priest and Levite looked upon the wounded man, and passed by on the other side; those have a great deal to answer for, that are idle spectators of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers. But this was not all; they looked upon it with a scornful eye, with an eye of complacency and satisfaction; they looked and laughed to see Israel in distress, saying, Aha, so would we have it; they fed their eyes with the ruf ful spectacle of Jerusalem's ruin, and looked at it as those that had long looked for it, and often wished for it, and now they see it. Note, We may be led to look upon the afflictions of our brethren; if we cannot look upon them with a gracious eye of sympathy and tenderness, it is better not to look upon them at all; Thou shouldst not have looked as thou didst upon the day of thy brother. (2.) They triumphed and insulted over them, upbraided their brethren with their sorrows, and made themselves and their companions merry with them. They rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; they had not the good manners to conceal the pleasure they took in Judah's destruction, and to dissemble it, but openly declared it, and rudely and insolently declared it to them; they rejoiced over them, crowed, and hooted, and triumphed,
upon them. Those have the spirit of Edomites, that can rejoice over any, especially over Israelites, in the day of their calamity. (3.) They were for ever to be counted men of blood, and abusers of them; they were to be reckoned with as an accessory ex post facto—after the fact. Note, Those do but impoverish themselves, that think to enrich themselves by the ruins of the people of God; and those deceive themselves, who think they may call all that substance their own, which they can lay their hands on in a day of calamity. (4.) They did yet worse things; they not only robbed them of their substance, but, when the day of their calamity was gone, laid hands not only on their substance, but on their persons, v. 14. When the victorious sword of the Chaldeans was making bloody work among the Jews, many made their escape, and were in a fair way to save themselves by flight; but the Edomites basely intercepted them, stood in the cross-way where several roads met, by each of which the trembling Israelites were making the best of their way from the fury of the pursuers, and there they stopped them; some they barbarously and cowardly-like cut off themselves; others they took prisoners, and delivered up to the pursuers, only to ingratiate themselves with them, because they were now the conquerors. They should not have been thus cruel to them that lay at their mercy, and never laid hands on them, else they were more likely to be saved in any hurt; they should not have betrayed those whom they had such a fair opportunity to protect; but such are the tender mercies of the wicked. One cannot read this without a high degree of compassion toward those who were thus basely abused, who, when they fled from the sword of an open enemy, and thought they were got out of the reach of it, fell upon, and fell by, the sword of a treacherous neighbor, whom they were not apprehensive of any danger from. Nor can one read this, without a high degree of indignation toward those who were so perfectly lost to all humanity, as to exercise such cruelty upon such proper objects of compassion. (6.) In all this they joined with the open enemies and persecutors of Israel. Even thou wast as one of them, an accessary; and shall they not be as the principal? Even thou, who joins in with evil-doers, and is aiding and abetting in their evil deeds, shall be reckoned, and shall be reckoned with, as one of them. 

11. What the shame is, that shall cover them for this violence of theirs. 1. They shall soon find that the cup is going round, even the cup of trembling; and the sword is the cook in the pot, and the condition that the Israel of God is now in, they will be required to remember how they triumphed over them; (v. 15.) The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen, when God will recompense tribulation to the troubler of his church. Though judgment begins at the house of God, it shall not end there. This should affect the people of God, and the injuries they have done shall be recompensed into their own bosoms; As thou hast done it shall be done unto thee. The righteous God will render both to nations and to particular persons according as their wickedness deserved. That punishment is often made exactly to answer to the sin—and those that have abused others, come to themselves abused in like manner. The just and jealous God will find out a time and way to avenge the wrongs done to his people, on those that have been injurious to them. As ye have drunk upon my holy mountain; (v. 16.) that is, God's professing people, who inhabit the holy mount Zion, are puffed up with the cup of affliction, and (they being of the holy mountain would not excuse them,) so shall all the heathen drink, in their turn, of the same bitter cup; for if God bring evil on the city that is called by his name, shall they be unpunished, that never knew his name? See Jer. xxv. 29. And it is part of the burden of Edom; (Jer. xlix. 12.) They that judge evilly, and have reason to judge evilly, who had reason to promise themselves an exemption from it, have assuredly drunken; and shall Edom go unpunished, that is the generation of God's wrath? No, thou shalt surely drink of it; the cup of trembling shall be taken out of the hand of God's people, and put into the hand of them that affect them, Isa. li. 22, 23. Nay, they may expect their case to be worse in the day of God's wrath than it was in their day; for, (1.) The afflictions of God's people were but for a moment, and soon had an end, but their enemies shall drink continually the wine of God's wrath, Rev. xiv. 10. (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth; (Ps. cxlviii. 8.) they shall drink and swallow down, or sip up, (as the margin reads it,) they shall drink it to the bottom. (3.) The people of God, though they may be made to drink of the wine of astonishment for awhile, (Ps. lx. 3.) shall yet recover it, and come to themselves again; but the heathen shall drink, and be as though they had not been, there shall be neither any remains nor any remembrance of drink, but they shall be wholly extirpated and rooted out. So let all those enemies perish, O Lord; so they shall perish, if they turn not.

17. But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. 18. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it. 19. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria; and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. 21. And survivors shall come up on mount Zion to
judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

After the destruction of the church's enemies is threatened, which will be completely accomplished in the great day of recompense, and that judgment for which Christ came once, and will come again, into this world, here follow precious promises of the salvation of the church, with which this prophecy concludes, as those of Joel and Amos did, which, however they might be in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of Babylon, notwithstanding the triumphs over them in their captivity, so if it were usual, or peculiar, are yet, doubtless, to have their full accomplishment in that great salvation wrought out by Jesus Christ, to which all the prophets bare witness. It is promised here,

1. That there shall be salvation upon mount Zion, that holy hill where God sets his anointed King; (Ps. ii. 8.) Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance; v. 17. There shall be those that escape to the margin.

A remnant of Israel, upon the holy mountain, shall be saved, v. 16. Christ said, Salvation is of the Jews, John iv. 22. God wrought deliverances for the Jews, typical of our redemption by Christ. But mount Zion is the gospel-church, from thence the New Testament law went forth, Isa. ii. 3. Their salvation shall be preached and prayed for to the gospel-church those are added, whose choice is preserved, and whose hope is in Zion. As he who hope to this mount Zion, deliverance shall be wrought from wrath and the curse, from sin, and death, and hell, while those who continue afar off, shall be left to perish.

2. That, where there is salvation, there shall be sanctification in order to it. And there shall be holiness, to prepare and qualify the children of Zion for this deliverance; for whenever God designs glory, he gives grace; temporal deliverances are then wrought for us in mercy, when with them there is holiness; when there is wrought in us a disposition to receive them with love and gratitude to God; when we are sanctified, they are sanctified to us. Holiness is itself a great deliverance, and an earnest of that eternal salvation which we look for. There, upon mount Zion, in the gospel-church, shall be holiness, for that is it which becomes God's habitation; however, and the great design of the gospel, and its grace, is to plant and promote holiness. There shall be the holy Spirit, the holy ordinances, the holy Jesus, and a select remnant of holy souls, in whom, and among whom, the holy God will delight to dwell.

Note. Where there is holiness, there shall be deliverance.

3. That this salvation and sanctification shall spread, and prevail, and get ground, in the world; The house of Jacob, even this mount Zion, with the deliverance and the holiness there wrought, shall possess their possessions; the gospel-church shall be set up among the heathen, and shall replenish the earth; the apostle of Christ by their preaching shall gain possession of the hearts of men, for him whose messengers and ministers they are; and therefore, as they shall possess their possessions, for those who have given up themselves to the Lord, give up all they have to him. When Lydia's heart was opened to Christ, her house was open to his ministers. When the Gentile nations became nations of them that were saved, were discipled, walked in the light of the Lord, and brought their glory to his name, it is now said, (11. xvi. 24.) that the house of Jacob possessed their possessions. This is in part fulfilled by the planting of the Christian religion in the world, and shall be fulfilled yet more and more by the setting up of Christ's throne there where Satan's seat is, and the erecting of the trophies of his victory upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom.

Now here is foretold, (1.) How this possession shall be gained, and the opposition given to it, got over; (v. 18.) The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, for their God is, and will be a refining and purifying fire, and the house of Esau shall be for stubble, easily devoured and consumed by this fire. This is fulfilled, (1.) In the conversion of multitudes by the grace of Christ; the gospel, preached in the house of Jacob and Joseph, and there owned and professed, shall be as a fire and a flame to melt and soften hard hearts, to burn up the dress of sin and corruption, that they may be purified and refined, and the house of Edom shall be as a refiner's fire, Mal. iii. 1, 2. (2.) In the confusion of all the impious, implacable enemies of the gospel of Christ, that oppose it, and do all they can to hinder the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah by it. The gospel-day is a day that burns like an oven, in which all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, Mal. iv. 1. Jacob and Joseph shall be as a fire and a flame; for those that meddle with them, to do them hurt, will find it is at their peril; they shall be to them as a torch of fire in a sheaf, Zech. xii. 6. The word of God in the mouth of his ministers is said to be like fire, and the people as wood to be devoured by it, Jer. v. 14. And the man of sin is to be consumed by the fire of the Lord's wrath, 2 Thess. ii. 8. Those that are not refined as gold by the fire of the gospel, shall be consumed as dust by it; for it will be a savour either of life or of death.

When idols and idolatry were abolished, and the wealth and power of the nations were brought into the service of Christ and his gospel, and the spoils of the strong man armed were divided by him that was stronger than the house, (7. 24.) Jacob devoured the house of Edom, so that there was none of them left remaining. This the Lord spoke by his prophets, and this he did by his apostles. (2.) How far this possession shall extend, v. 19, 20. This is described in Jewish language, which speaks the accession made to the land of Israel, after the return out of captivity in Babylon. The captivity of this host of Israel, this host of Israel that was brought into captivity, and, now they are come back, are still called the children of the captivity, these shall not only recover their own land, but shall gain ground upon their neighbours adorning to them, some of whom shall become proselites, and shall incorporate with the Jews, who, by possessing them in a holy community, possess their land. We must reckon ourselves truly enriched by the conversion of our neighbours to the fear of God, and the faith of Christ, and their coming to join with us in the worship of God. Such an accession to our Christian communion we must reckon to be more our wealth and strength than an accession to our estates. Or, the ancient inhabitants of these lands that were carried away into captivity being lost, and never returning to their own estate, and now their possession is in the possession of that which lies next them; for their numbers shall so increase, that their own land shall be too strait for them, and their neighbours' estates shall exchequer to them ob defectum sanguinis—through default of heirs. They shall enter upon that which is adjoining to them. The country of Edom shall be possessed by them of the second part, the country of Moab of the third, the country of the plain, on the west of Canaan, which was a champaign country, shall enter upon the land of the Philistines, their neighbours. They of Judah, which was the chief of the two returning tribes, shall possess the field of Ephraim and Samaria, which before belonged to the ten tribes; and Benjamin, the other tribe, shall possess Gilad on the other side.
Jordan, which had belonged to the two tribes and a half. The kingdom of Israel shall join with that of Judah, both in civil and sacred interests, and, as friends and brethren, shall mutually possess and enjoy one another; and both together shall possess the Canaanites, even to Zarephath, which belongs to Zidon; and Jerusalem shall possess the cities of the south, even to Sepharad. Thus did the Jews enlarge their borders on all sides. The modern rabbins teach their scholars by Zarephath and Sepharad to understand France and Spain, grounding upon this a foolish, groundless expectation, that, some time or other, the Jews shall be master of those countries; and they call and count the Christians Edomites, over whom they are to have dominion. But the promise here, no doubt, has a spiritual signification, and had its accomplishment in the setting up of the Christian church, the gospel Israel, in the world, and shall have its accomplishment more and more in the enlargement of it, and the additions made to it, till the mystical body is completed.

When ministers and Christians prevail with their neighbours to come to Christ, to yield themselves to the Lord, they possess them. The converts that Abraham made, are said to be the souls that he had gotten, Gen. xii. 5. The possession is gained, not vi et armis—by force and arms; for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual; it is by the preaching of the gospel, and the power of divine grace given along with it, that this possession is got and kept.

9. That the kingdom of the Redeemer shall be erected and maintained, to the comfort of his loyal subjects, and the terror and shame of all his enemies; (v. 21.) The kingdom shall be the Lord's, the Lord Christ's. God shall give it him, by putting all things into his hand, all power both in heaven and in earth; men shall give it him, by resigning themselves to him as his willing people, and appointing him their Head. Now the work of kings is to protect their subjects and suppress their enemies; and this Christ will do; he will both reward and punish. (1.) The mountain of Zion shall be saved; on it saviours shall come; the preachers of the gospel, who are called saviours, because their business is to save themselves and those that hear them; and in this they are workers together with Christ, but to little purpose, if he by his grace did not work together with them. (2.) The mountain of Esau shall be judged; and the same that come as saviours on mount Zion, shall judge the mountain of Esau; for the word of the gospel in their mouth, that saveth believers, judges unbelievers, convinces and condemns them. Christ's ministers are saviours on mount Zion, when they preach that he that believeth shall be saved; but they judge the mount of Esau, when they preach, that he that believeth not shall be damned, which they are not only commissioned, but commanded to do, Mark xvi. 16. And in the course of God's providence his scripture is fulfilled; when God raises up friends to the church in her distress, (as he raised up judges to deliver Israel of old, Judg. ii. 16.) then saviours come on mount Zion, to save it from being sunk and ruined; and when the enemies of the church are brought down, and their power broken, then is the mount of Esau judged; and this shall be done in every age in such a way as God thinks best; we may depend upon it, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, but the church shall prevail against them; for the kingdom shall be the Lord's, the kingdom of the world shall become his, and he has taken and will take to himself his great power and reign.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS

OF THE BOOK OF

JONAH.

This book of Jonah, though it be placed here in the midst of the prophetical books of scripture, is yet rather a history than a prophecy; one line of prediction there is in it, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown; the rest of the book is a narrative of the preface to, and the consequences of, that prediction. In the midst of the obscure prophecies before and after this book, wherein are many things dark, and hard to be understood, which are puzzling to the learned, and are strong meat for strong men, comes in this plain and pleasant story, which is entertaining to the weakest, and milk for babes. Probably Jonah was himself the penman of this book, and he, as Moses and other inspired penmen records his own faults, which is an evidence that in these writings they designed God’s glory, and not their own. We read of this same Jonah, 2 Kings xiv. 25, where we find that he was of Gath-hepher in Galilee, a city that belongs to the tribe of Zebulun; in a remote corner of the land of Israel: for the Spirit, which like the wind bloweth where it listeth, will as easily find out Jonah in Galilee as Isaiah at Jerusalem. We find also that he was a messenger of mercy to Israel, in the reign of Jeroboam the second; for the success of his arms, in the restoring of the coast of Israel, is said to be according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah the prophet. Those prophecies were not committed to writing, but this against Nineveh was, chiefly for the sake of the story that depends upon it, and that is recorded chiefly for the sake of Christ, of whom Jonah was a type; it contains also very remarkable instances of human infirmity in Jonah; and of God’s mercy, both in pardoning repenting sinners, witness Nineveh, and in bearing with repining saints, witness Jonah.

JONAH, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. A command given to Jonah to preach at Nineveh; v. 1, 2. II. Jonah’s disobedience to that command, v. 3. III. The pursuit and arrest of him for that disobedience by a storm, in which he was asleepe, v. 4–6. IV. The discovery of him, and his disobedience, to be the cause of the storm, v. 7–10. V. The casting of him into the sea, for the stilling of the storm, v. 11, 12. VI. The miraculous preservation of his life there in the belly of a fish, (v. 17;) which was his reservation for further services.

1. NOW the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, 2. Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

1. The honour God put upon Jonah, in giving him a commission to go and prophesy against Nineveh. Jonah signifies, a dove; a proper name for all God’s prophets, all his people, who ought to be harmless as doves, and to mourn as doves for the sins and calamities of the land. His father’s name was Amittai—My truth; for God’s prophets should be sons of truth. To him the word of the Lord came, to him it was, (so the word signifies,) for God’s
word is a real thing; men’s words are but wind, but God’s words are substance. He had been before acquainted with the word of the Lord, and knew him on several occasions before; but now, when he was given to him, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, x. 2. Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city, (Gen. x. 11.) a great city, that great city, forty-eight miles in compass; some make it much more: great is the number of the inhabitants, as appears by the number of infants; it is a city of wealth, there was no end of its store; (Nah. ii. 9.) great in power and dominion, it was the city that for some time ruled over the kings of the earth. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God’s government and judgment. A great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God. How many great cities and great nations are there, that sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death! This great city was a wicked city; Their wickedness is come up before me; (their malice, so some read it;) their wickedness was presumptuous, and they sinned with a high hand. It is said to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only sinners, but making one another sin in sin, and that is, it is come to a high degree, to the highest pitch, the measure of it is full to the brim; their wickedness is come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down. Or, The cry of their wickedness is come up, as that of Sodom, Gen. xviii. 20, 21. It is come up before me; to my face; (so the word is;) it is a bold and open sin before God, it is sinning against him in his sight, therefore Jonah must cry against it; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before, to proclaim war, and to sound an alarm, Cry aloud, spare not. He must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; he that has ears to hear, let him hear what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city; when the cry of sin comes up to God, the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot, against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbouring nations, and to call them to repentance; but particularly Nahum was sent against Nineveh; but Jonah must go, and carry the message himself; ‘Arise quickly, apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet, arise, and go to Nineveh. Those that go on God’s errands, must rise and go; must stir up themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the house of Israel, yet not to them only; they had the children’s bread, but Nineveh eats of the crumbs."

2. The discomfiture Jonah did to God in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent; (v. 3.) But Jonah, instead of rising to go to Nineveh, rose up to go to Tarshish, to the sea, not being for any particular desire to get away from the presence of the Lord; and if he might but do that, he cared not whether he went, not as if he thought he could go any whither from under the eye of God’s inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which, when it put him upon this work, he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of. Some think Jonah went up to it, (the opinion of some of the Jews, that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel;) (which in Ezekiel and Daniel) was effectually proved to be a mistake;) and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it, if he could but get out of the borders of that land. (1) Jonah would not go to Nineveh, to cry against it; either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, or (2) because, in a manner, it was against the will of the Lord; it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city; he consulted with flesh and blood, and declined the embassy, because he could not go with safety; or because he was jealous for the pugnitive benefits of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the benefits of divine grace: indeed it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews to another nation that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself, (ch. iv. 2.) that the reason of his aversion to this journey, was, because he foresaw that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them, and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, which had been long a peculiar people to God. (2) He therefore went to Tarshish; to Tarsus in Cilicia, (so some,) probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to abscond; he went to Joppa, a famous sea-port in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish; and there he found one. Providence seemed to favour his designs, and to make an arraignment to embroil him, that we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way; he found the ship just ready to weigh anchor, perhaps, and to set sail for Tarshish; and so he lost no time, but, perhaps, therefore he went to Tarshish, because he found the ship was going thither, and he wanted no other place where he could hide himself; he did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go. So he paid the fare thereof; for he did not regard the charge, so he could but gain his point, and get to a distance from the presence of the Lord; he went with them, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were that were going to Tarshish. Jonah, forgetting his dignity, as well as duty, herded himself with them, and went down into the ship, to go with them to Tarshish. See what the best of men are, when God leaves them to themselves, and what need we have, when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word, to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns that therefore he was not rebellious, neither turned away back, because God not only spake to him, but opened his ear, Isa. i. 5. Let us learn hence, to cease from man, and not to be too confident either of ourselves, or others, in a time of trial; but let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. 4. But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them: but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. 7. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us.
So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. 3. Then said they unto him, Tell us, why didst thou fleer, for whose cause is this evil come upon us? What is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? 9. And he said unto them, I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. 10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? (for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them.)

When Jonah was set on ship-board, and under sail for Tarshish, he thought himself safe enough; but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted, as a deserter from God, as one that had run his colours.

I. God sends a pursuer after him, a mighty tempest in the sea, v. 4. God has the winds in his treasures, (Ps. cxxxv. 7.) and out of these treasures God sent forth, he cast forth, (so the word is,) with force and violence, a great wind into the sea; even stormy winds fulfil his word, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he gath'rs the winds in his fist, (Prov. xxx. 4.) where he holds them, and whence he squeezes them when he pleases; for, though, as to us, the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs. The effect of this wind was a mighty tempest; for when the wind riled, the waves rose. Note, Sin brings tempests into the soul, into the family, into churches and nations; it is a disquieting, disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to that degree, that the ships were like to be broken, the mariners expected no other; that ship, (so some read it,) that and no other; other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet, it should seem, that ship in which Jonah was, was tossed more than any other, and was more in danger. This wind was sent after Jonah, to fetch him back again to God and to his duty; and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home, when we go astray, though it be by a tempest.

II. The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, v. 5. The mariners were affected with their danger, though they were not afraid; but God had this controversy; (1.) They were afraid; though, their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in this tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike terror upon the most daring, and make even great men and chief captains call for shelter from rocks and mountains. 2. They cried every man unto his god; this was the effect of their fear; many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. Every man of them prayed, they were not only praying and others reviling, but every man engaged; as the danger was general, so was the address to Heaven, there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself. They cried every man to his god, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelary deity; it is a testimony against atheism, that every man had a god, and had the belief of a god; but it is an instance of the folly of paganism, that they had gods many, every man the god he had a fancy for; whereas there can be but one God, there needs be no more. But though they had lost that dictate of the light of nature—that there is but one God, they still were governed by that direction of the law of nature—God is one, that God is the Gd, (Should not a people seek unto their God? Isa. xviii. 19.) and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger. Call upon me in the time of trouble. Is any afflicted? Is any faint ended? Let him pray. 3. Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and, having called upon their gods to help them, they did their utmost to help themselves. Note,第一ly, the performance of duty be brave, and lift up their hands to God, who granteth the victory. Secondly, the pursuit of a fool's errand, is not to the point. Help thyself, and God will help thee. They cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them; as Paul's mariners in a like case cast forth even the tackling of the ship, and the wheat, Acts xxviii. 18, 19, 38. These here were making a trading voyage, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and much merchandise, by which they hoped to get gain; but now they are content to suffer loss by throwing them all overboard, to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is; Skin for skin, and all that a man has, will he give for it; and shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life, the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot counterfeit the loss of the soul? See the vanity of worldly things, and the value of spiritual things. Note, Riches make themselves wings, and flee away; nay, and the case may be such, that we may be under a necessity of making them wings and driving them away, as here, when they could not be kept for the owners thereof, but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and sink that which otherwise would sink them through their own fault, and their disaffection to the concern of Riches make themselves wings, and flee away; nay, and the case may be such, that we may be under a necessity of making them wings and driving them away, as here, when they could not be kept for the owners thereof, but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and sink that which otherwise would sink them through their own fault, and their disaffection to the concern of others.

But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected him busier than any there, but we find him gone down into his cabin, nay, into the hold, between the sides of the ship, and there he lies, and is fast asleep; neither the noise without, nor the sense of guilt within, waked him. Perhaps for some time before he had been taken up with God's speaking to him again in a dream; and now that he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger, he slept so much the faster. Note, Sin is of a stupefying nature, and we are concerned to take heed lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the delicfulness of it. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from the true instinct of the heart, and the duty of security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to watch therefore.

III. The master of the ship called Jonah up to his prayers, v. 6. The shipmaster came to him, and bid him for shame get up, both to pray for the ship, and to prepare for death; he gave him, 1. A just reproof, for his unaccountable and unexcusable sloth; O sleeper! Here we commend the shipmaster, who gave him this reproof, for though he was a stranger to him, he was, for the present, as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul, we must help, as we can, to save it from death. We pity Jonah, who needed this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproducing the king of Ninevah, but being out of the way...
of his duty, he does himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry shipmaster. See how men by their sin and folly diminish themselves, and make themselves mean. Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first step toward his recovery; as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm, may well be asked what they mean. 2. A just word of advice:="Arise, call upon thy God; we are here crying every man to his god, why dost thou get up, and cry to thine? Art thou equally concerned with the rest, both in the danger dreaded, and in the deliverance desired?" Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy, ought in all respects to join in public prayer and supplications that are made for it. In times of public distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the public good. And the servants of God themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty. 3. A good reason for this advice; If so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not. It should seem that many gods they called upon were considered by them but as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him; for the shipmaster speaks of one God still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer, he suggests that the danger was very great and imminent; We are all likely to perish; there is not a you that is not to die, no one that is to be left alive. Yet he suggests that there was some hope remaining, that their destruction might be prevented, and we may not perish; while there is life, there is hope, and while there is hope, there is room for prayer. He suggests also it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. If he think upon us, and will not perish us, he will not be unmerciful to us before to us we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is ever so imminent.

IV. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1. The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon either in the storm itself, or in their own distress by it, that they concluded it was a messenger of their good God. "All the sea was troubled; the wind was high, and the storm was in that ship, as having been guilty of some enormity; judging as the barbarous people, Acts xxviii. 4. "No doubt, one of us is a murderer, or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus pursued by the vengeance of the sea, and it is for his sake that we all suffer." Even the light of nature teaches, that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven upon the heads of some extraordinary sins and sinners. Whatever evil is upon us at any time, we must conclude there is a cause for it; there is evil done by us, or else this evil would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot, which of all the seamen was the criminal that had occasioned this storm; "Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. None of them suspected himself, or said, Is it I, Lord? is it I? But they suspected one another, and would find out the man. Note, It is a desirable thing, when any evil is upon us, to know for what cause it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and, the grievance being redressed, the grief may be removed. In order to this, we must look up to Heaven, and pray, Lord, show me wherefore thou art contending with me; that which I see not, teach thou me. These mariners desired to know the person that was the dead weight in their ship, the accursed thing, that that one man might die for the people, and that the whole ship might not be lost; this was not only expedient, but highly just. In order to this, they cast lots, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, to whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secret is hid; agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination, and to take that for truth which he spoke; for they knew by the light of nature, what the scripture tells us, that the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord. Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a sacred thing, and to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians, if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to Providence.

3. The lot fell upon Jonah, who could have saved them this trouble, if he would but have told them that his crime was his sin; but he, instead of that, out, as is usual with criminals, he never confesses till he finds he cannot help it, till the lot falls upon him. We may suppose there were those in the ship, who, upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and yet he is the man that the tempest pursues, and that the lot pitches upon; for it is his own child, his own servant, that the parent, that the master of others, if they do amiss, ethers that and he leaves to the law. The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners, and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hid from the eyes of all living. God's right hand findeth out such sinners among the people, as all his enemies that have designs against his holy yea, though they flee to the utmost parts of the sea, or go down to the sides of the ship.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination, before the masters and mariners. He was a stranger, none of them could say that they knew the prisoner, or had any thing to lay to his charge, and therefore the shipmaster intimated, if they do amiss, ethers that and he leaves to the law. There is a compassion owing to offenders when they are discovered and convicted; they gave him no hard words, but, Tell us, we pray thee, what is the matter? Two things they inquire of, (1.) Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated; "Tell us for whose this evil is upon us; is it indeed for thy cause, and if so, for what cause? What is the offence for which thou art thus prosecuted?" Perhaps the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and behaviour made them suspect that the lot had missed its man, had missed its mark, and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore intimated that he had himself a thing to say on this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles, must not only begin, but pursue the inquiry, must descend to particulars, and accomplish a diligent search. (2.) What his character was, both as to his calling and as to his country. [1.] They inquire concerning his calling; What is thine occupation? This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon them; "Art thou a divine, a sorcerer, a student in the black art? Hast thou been conjuring for this wind? Or what business art thou now going on? Is it like Balaam's, to curse any of God's people, and is this wind sent to stop thee?" [2.] They inquire concerning his country; one asked, Whence concei
5. In answer to these interrogatories, Jonah makes a full discovery. (1.) Did they inquire concerning his country? He tells them he is a Hebrew, and not only of the nation of Israel, but of their religion, which they have received from their fathers. He is a Hebrew, and therefore is the more ashamed to own that he is a criminal; for the sins of Hebrews, that make such a profession of religion, and enjoy such privileges, are greater than the sins of others, and more exceeding sinful. (2.) Did they inquire concerning his calling, What is his occupation? In answer to that, he gives an account of his religion, for that was his calling, that was his occupation, that was it that he made a business of; "I fear the Lord Jehovah, that is the God I worship, the God I pray to, even the God of heaven, the sovereign Lord of all, that has made the sea and the dry land, and has the command of both." Not the god of one particular country, which they inquired after, as such the gods were, that they had been every man calling upon, but the God of the whole earth; who, having made both the sea and the dry land, makes what work he pleases in both, and makes what use he pleasing of both. This he mentions, not only as condemning himself for his folly in fleeing from the presence of this God, but as designing to bring these mariners from the worship and service of their many gods, to the knowledge and obedience of the only one living and true God. When we are among those that are strangers to us, we should do what we can to bring them acquainted with God, by being ready upon all occasions to own our relation to him, and our reverence for him. (3.) Did they inquire concerning his crime, for which he is now prosecuted? He owns that he fled from the presence of the Lord, that he was here running away from his duty, and the storm was sent to fetch him back. We have reason to think that he told them this with sorrow and shame, justifying God, and condemning himself, and intimating to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is, who could send such a messenger as this tempest was after a runaway servant.

6. What impression this made upon the mariners; The men were exceedingly afraid, and justly, for they perceive, (1.) That God is angry, even that God that made the sea and the dry land. This tempest comes from the hand of offended justice, and therefore they have reason to fear it will go hard with them. Judgments inflicted for some particular sin have a peculiar weight and horror. (2.) That God is a God of justice, that fears and works them, only for once running from his work in a particular instance; this made them afraid for themselves. "If a prophet of the Lord be thus severely punished for one offence, what will become of us that have been guilty of so many, and great and heinous offences? If the righteous be thus scarcely saved, and for a single sin, how much the more the ungodly and the sinner appear? 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. They said to him, "Why hast thou done this? If thou fearest the God that made the sea and the dry land, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldst flee from his presence? What an absurd, unaccountable thing it is!" Thus was he reproved, as Abraham by Abimelech; (Gen. xx. 16.) for if the professors of religion do a wrong thing, they must expect to hear of it from those that make no such profession. "Why hast thou done this to us? (So it may be taken.) Why hast thou involved us in the protestation?" Note: Those that commit a wilful sin, know not how far the mischievous consequences of it may reach, nor what mischief may be done by it.

11. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? (for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous.) 12. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. 13. Nevertheless, the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not; for the sea was wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14. Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. 15. So they took Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from her raging. 16. Then the men feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows. 17. Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

It is plain that Jonah is the man for whose sake this evil is upon them, but the discovery of him to be so was not sufficient to answer the demands of this tempest; they had found him out, but something more was to be done, for still the sea wrought, and was tempestuous, (v. 11.) and again, (v. 13.) it grew more and more tempestuous, so the margin reads it; for if we discover sin to be the cause of our troubles, and do not forsake it, we do but make bad worse. Therefore they go on with the prosecution.

1. They inquire of Jonah himself what he thought he must do with him; (v. 11.) What shall we do unto thee that the sea may be calm to us? What do they perceive that Jonah is a prophet of the Lord, and therefore will not do any thing, no, not in his own case, without consulting him. He appears to be a delinquent, but he appears also to be a penitent, and therefore they would not insult over him, or offer him any rudeness. Note, We ought to act with great tenderness toward those that are overtaken in some sin of which we have a cause to be scandalized. They would not cast him into the sea, if he could think of any other expedient by which to save the ship. Or, perhaps, thus they would show how plain the case was, that there was no remedy but he must be thrown overboard; let him be his own judge, as he had been his own accuser, and he himself will say so. "Note, When sin has raised a storm, and laid it under the displeasure of God's displeasure, let us be concerned to inquire what we shall do, that the sea may be calm; and what shall we do? We must pray and believe, when we are in a storm, and study to answer the end for which it was sent, and then the storm shall become a calm. But especially we must consider what is to be done to the sin that raised the storm; that must be discovered, and penitently confessed, that must be detected, disclaimed, and ut
terly forsaken. What have I to do any more with it? Crucify it, crucify it, for this evil it has done.

2. Jonah reads his own doom: (v. 12.) Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea. He is ready to thrust himself leap into the sea, but he puts himself into their hands, to cast him into the sea, assures them that then the sea would be calm, and not otherwise.

He proposed this, in tenderness to the mariners, that they might not suffer for his sake: "Let thy hand be upon me," (says David, 1 Chron. xxii. 17.) "who am guilty, let me die for my own sin, but let not me be judged of the Lord to eternal misery. Nor, Those who are truly humbled for sin, will cheerfully submit to the will of God, even in a sentence of death itself. If Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, he subjects himself to it, and justifies God in it. No matter though the flesh be destroyed, no matter how it is destroyed, so that the seas may be calmed by it. For in the story of the Jonah, 1 Cor. v. 5. The reason he gives, is, For I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. See how ready Jonah is to take all the guilt upon himself, and to look upon all the trouble as theirs: "It is purely for my sake, who have sinned, that this tempest is upon you; therefore cast me forth into the sea: for," (v. 13.) "I deserve it, I have wickedly departed from my God, and it is upon my account that he is angry with you; surely I am unworthy to breathe in that air which for my sake has been hurled with winds, to live in that ship which for my sake has been thus tossed; cast me into the sea after the waves which for my sake you have thrown into it; drowning is too good for me, a single death is punishment too little for such a complicated offence." (2.) "Therefore there is no other way of having the sea calm. If it is I that have raised the storm, it is not casting the waves into the sea, that will lay it again; no, you must cast me thither."

When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised there, nothing will turn it into a calm but parting with the sin that occasioned the disturbance, and abandoning that. It is not parting with our money that will bring back our fortune; no, it must be thrown overboard. Jonah is herein a type of Christ, that he gives his life a ransom for many; but with this material difference, that the storm Jonah gave himself up to still, was of his own raising; that storm which Christ gave himself up to still, was of our raising. Let as deliver himself up to be cast into a raging sea, that it might be calm, so did our Lord Jesus, when he died, that we might live.

3. The poor mariners did what they could to save themselves from the necessity of throwing Jonah into the sea, but all in vain; (v. 13.) They rowed hard to bring the ship to the land, that if they must part with Jonah, they might set him safe on shore; but they could not, all their pains were to no purpose, for the sea wrought harder than they could, and was tempestuous against them, so that they could by no means make the land; if they thought sometimes they had gained their point, they were quickly thrown off to sea again; still their ship was overladen, their lightening it of the waves made it never the lighter as long as Jonah was in it. And hence they cast him forth into the sea, the side of his counsels; and it is in vain to contend with God, in vain to think of saving ourselves any other way than by destroying our sins. By this it appears that these mariners were very bold to execute Jonah's sentence upon himself, though they knew it was for his sake that the tempest was upon them. They were very ready to cast him back to it, partly from a dread of bringing upon themselves the guilt of blood, and partly from a compassion they could not but have for poor Jonah, as a good man, as a man in distress, and as a man of sincerity. Note, The more sinners humble and abase themselves, judge and condemn themselves, the more likely they are to find pity both with God and man; and particularly if a man be forward, it was, Say, Cast me into the sea, the more backward they are to do it.

4. When they found it necessary to cast Jonah into the sea, they first prayed to God that the guilt of his blood might not lie upon them, or he laid to their charge, v. 14. When they found it in vain to row hard, they quitted their oars, and went to their prayers; Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, into Jehovah, the true and living God, and no more to the gods many, and lords many, that they cried to, v. 3. They prayed to the God of Israel, being now convinced, by the providence of God concerning Jonah, and the information he had given them, that he is God alone. Having determined to cast him into the sea, they first enter a protestation in the name of God, among the heavens, they very calmly, much less maliciously, or with any design to be revenged upon him, because it was for his sake that the tempest was upon them; no, His God forgive him, as they do! But they are forced to it, by themselves—in self-defence, having no other way to save their own lives; and they do it as ministers of justice, both God and himself having sentenced him to so great a death. They therefore present a humble petition to the God whom Jonah feared, that they might not perish for his life. See, (1.) What a fear they had of contracting the guilt of blood, especially the blood of one that feared God, and worshipped him, and had fellowship with him, as they perceived Jonah had, though in a single instance he had been faulty. Natural conscience cannot but have a dread of blood-guiltiness, and make men very earnest in prayer, as David was, to be delivered from it, Ps. li. 14. So they were here; We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, lay not upon us innocent blood. They are now as earnest in prayer to be saved from the peril of the sin as they were before in praying to be saved from the peril of the storm. Jonah, of the manjealous, who appeared to them to be no ordinary person, but a very great man, a man of God, a worshipper of the great Creator of heaven and earth, upon which account even these rude mariners conceived a veneration for him, and trembled at the thought of taking away his life. Innocent blood is precious, but saints' blood, prophets' blood, is much more precious, and so they would find to their cost, that as way bring them under the guilt of it. The mariners seeing Jonah pursued by divine vengeance, and yet could not without horror think of his executioners. Though his God has a controversy with him, yet, think them, Let not our hand be upon him. The Israelites were at this time killing the prophets for their duties, (witness Jezebel's late persecution,) and they feared they would be next, if they did not show their ruin. God's vengeance is gravitated by the tenderness these heathens had for one whom they perceived to be a prophet, though he was now out of the way of his duty. (2.) What a fear they had of incurring the wrath of God; they were jealous lest he should be angry, if they should be at the death of Jonah, for he had said, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm; it is at your peril if you do. "Lord," say they, let us not perish for this man's life. Let it not be such a fatal dilemma to us; we see we must perish if we
spare his life, O let us not perish for taking away his life." And their plea is good; "For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee, thou hast laid us under a necessity of doing it; the winds that pursued us, we feel, of God's fatherly direction, which we are herein governed by; we are but the instruments of Providence, and it is sorely against our will that we do it; but we must say, The will of the Lord be done." Note, When we are manifestly led by Providence to do things contrary to our own inclinations, and quite beyond our own intentions, it shall be improper to complain, as if we were forced to proceed thus, as those did. Thus, Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. And if God pleases himself, we ought to be satisfied, though he do not please us.

5. Having deprecated the guilt they dreaded, they proceeded to execution; (v. 13.) They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea. They cast him not of their ship, out of their company, and cast him into the sea, a raging, stormy sea, that cried, "Give, give; surrender the traitor, or expect no peace." We may well think what confusion and anguish poor Jonah was in, when he saw himself ready to be hurried into the presence of that God as a Judge, whose presence as a Master he was now fleeing from. Note, Those know not what ruin they run upon, that run away from God, Go unto them! for they have fled from me. When sin is the Jonah that is to be cast into the sea, we must abandon it, and be the death of it, must drown that which otherwise will drown us in destruction and perdition. And if we thus by a thorough repentance and reformation cast our sins forth into the sea, never to recall them, or return to them again, God will by pardoning mercy subdue our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea too. Mic. vi. 12.

6. The throwing of Jonah into the sea immediately put an end to the storm. The sea has what she came for, and therefore rests contented; she ceases from her raging. It is an instance of the sovereign power of God, that he can so turn the storm into a calm; and of the equity of his government, that when the end of an affliction is answered and attained, the affliction shall immediately be removed. He will not contend for ever, will not contend any longer than till we submit ourselves and give up the cause. If we turn from our sins, he will soon turn from his anger.

7. The mariners were hereby more confirmed in their belief that Jonah's God was the only true God; (v. 16.) Then the men feared the Lord, and said, Who hath wrought this wondrous thing before us? They were now convinced of the power of God for the God of Israel, and came to a resolution that they would worship him only for the future; for there is no other God that can destroy, that can deliver after this sort. When they saw the power of God in raising and laying the tempest, when they saw his justice upon Jonah his own servant, and when they saw his goodness to them in saving them from that great brink of destruction, they feared the Lord God God. Here is an instance of the power of religion, they offered sacrifice to him when they came ashore again in the land of Israel, and for the present made vows, that they would do so, in thankfulness for their deliverance, and to make atonement for their souls. Or, perhaps, they had something yet on board, which might be of a sacrifice to God immediately; or, it may be meant, the ship was filled with fish for food, which the mariners say, provokingly, with which God is better pleased than with that of an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs. See Ps. cv. 22, 26. We must make vows, not only when we are in the pursuit of mercy, but which is much more generous, when we have received mercy; as those that are still studying what we shall render.

Lastly, Jonah's life, after all, is saved by a miracle, and we shall hear of him again for all this. In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy; Jonah shall be worse frightened than hurt, not so much for his sin as reduced to his duty. Though he flees from the presence of the Lord, and seems to fall into his avenging hands, yet God has more work for him to do, and therefore has prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, v. 17. A while, our Saviour calls it, (Matt. xii. 40.) one of the largest sorts of whales, that have wider threts than others; in the belly of which has sometimes been found the dead body of men, and of Christians. Particular this fish is, taken, in the history of the creation of God's creating great whales, (Gen. i. 21.) and the leviathan in the waters made to play therein, Ps. civ. 26. But God finds work for this leviathan, has prepared him, has numbered him, (so the word is,) has appointed him to be Jonah's receiver anddeliverer. Note, God has command of all the creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people; even the fishes of the sea, that are most from under man's cognizance, even the great whales, that are altogether from under man's government. This fish was prepared, lay ready under water close by the ship, that he might keep Jonah from sinking to the bottom, and save him alive, though he deserves to die. Let us all stand still, and see this salvation of the Lord, and admire his power, that he could thus save a great fish and part of it, that he would thus save one that was running from him and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies, that Jonah was not now consumed. The fish swallowed up Jonah, not to devour him, but to protect him; Out of the eater comes forth meat; for Jonah was alive and well in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, not consumed by the heat of the animal, or soured by the liquids of the fish, but preserved in such a manner that to nature this was impossible, but not to the God of nature, with whom all things are possible. Jonah by this miraculous preservation was designed to be made, (1.) A monument of divine mercy, for the encouragement of those that have sinned, and gone away from God, to return and repent. (2.) A successful preacher to Nineveh; and this miracle wrought for his deliverance, if the tidings of it reached Nineveh, would contribute to his success. (3.) An illustrous type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the scriptures, (1 Cor. xv. 4;) according to this scripture, for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matt. xxvii. 53. Jonah's deliverance was a figure of Christ's, and Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained that he should make his grave with the rich, Isa. lxx. 9. Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? So was Christ's, one in which never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? So was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the fulfilling of God's decree, and preparing the Gentile world. Cor, see the place where the Lord lay.

CHAP. II.

We left Jonah in the belly of the fish, and had reason to think we should hear no more of him, if he were not destroyed by the waters of the sea, he would be consumed in the bowels of that leviathan, out of whose bowels go burning lamps, and sparks of fire, and whose breath kindles coals, Jon. iv. 11. It was a figure of Christ's being in the heart of the earth, in the fire and through water, (Ps. lxvi. 12;) and by his power, behold, Jonah the prophet is yet alive, and is heard of again. In this chapter, God hears from him, for we find him praying. Now, next to him, we find him preaching. We find him preaching. In his prayer, we have, I. The great distress and danger he was in, v. 2; 3, 5, 6. II. The despar he was thereby almost reduced to, v. 4; III. The encouragement he took to himself, in the Deplora
1. **Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord.** His God out of the fish's belly. 2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. 3. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all the waters compassed me about, and the deep wrapped me round about. 4. The waves of death compassed me about even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. 5. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. 6. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto thee, in thy holy temple. 7. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy. 8. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord. God and his servant Jonah had parted in anger, and the quarrel began on Jonah's side: he ran his country, that he might outrun his work: but we hope to see them both together again, and the reconciliation begins on God's side. In the close of the foregoing chapter, we found God returning to Jonah, in a way of mercy, delivering him from going down to the pit, having found a reason: in this chapter, we find Jonah returning to God in a way of duty; he was called up in the former chapter to pray to his God, but we are not told that he did so. The two was not how long he brought it to. Now observe here, 1. When he prayed; (v. 1.) Then Jonah prayed; then when he was in trouble, under the sense of sin, and the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin; then he prayed. Note, When we are in affliction, we must pray; then we have occasion to pray, then we have errors at the throne of grace, and business there. Then, if ever, we shall have a disposition to pray, when the heart is humbled and softened, and made serious; then God expects it. In their affliction they will seek me early, seek me earnestly; and though we bring our afflictions upon ourselves by our sins, yet, if we pray in humility and godly sincerity, we shall be welcome to the throne of grace, as Jonah was. Then when he was in a hopeless place, of deliverance, being preserved alive by a miracle, a plain indication that he was reserved for further mercy, then he prayed. An apprehension of God's good will to us, notwithstanding our offences, gives us boldness of access to him, and opens the lips in prayer, which were closed with the sense of guilt, and dread of wrath. 2. Where he prayed. He was in the fish's belly. No place is amiss for prayer. I will that men pray everywhere; wherever God casts us, we may find a way open heavenward, if it be not our own fault. Undique ad Caesam tantundem est visa—The heavens are equally accessible from every part of the earth. He that has Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, wherever he goes carries his altar along with him, that sanctifies the gift, and is himself a living temple. Jonah was here in confinement; the belly of the fish was his prison, was a close and dark dungeon to him, yet there he had freedom of access to God, and walked at liberty in communion with him. Men may shut us out from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. Jonah now was cast into the bottom of the sea, and in the depths he cries to God; as Paul and Silas prayed in the prison in the stocks. 3. What his prayer was: he afterward recollected the substance of it, and left it upon record. He reflects upon the workings of his heart toward God, when he was in his distress and danger, and the conflict that was then in his breast between faith and sense, between hope and fear. 1. He reflects upon the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer; (v. 2.) He reflects upon the reason of his affliction, and God's. Note, Many that prayed not at all, or did but whisper prayer, when they were in prosperity, are brought to pray, may, are brought to cry, by reason of their affliction; and it is for this end that afflictions are sent, and they are in vain if this end be not answered. These heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them, Jer. xxxvi. 13. Out of the belly of hell, and the grave, cried I. The fish might well be called a grave, and as it was a prison to which Jonah was condemned for his disobedience, and in which he lay under the wrath of God, it might well be called the belly of hell. This is good man was cast, and yet thence he cried to God, and it was not in vain; God heard him, heard the voice of his affliction, the voice of his supplication. There is still the voice of God, and that voice, where there is no crying to God with any hope of being heard; but whatever hell we may be in, in the belly of, in this world, we may from thence cry to God. When Christ lay, as Jonah, three days and three nights in the grave, though he prayed not, as Jonah did, yet his very lying there cried to God for poor sinners, and the cry was heard. 2. He reflects upon the very deplorable condition that he was in, when he was in the belly of hell; which, when he lay there, he was very sensible of, and made particular remarks upon. Note, If we would get good by our troubles, we must take notice of our troubles, and of the hand of God in them. Jonah observes here, (1.) How low he was thrown: (v. 3.) Thou hast cast me into the deep. The mariners cast him there; but he looked above them, and saw the hand of God casting him there. Whatever depths we are cast into, it is God that casts us into them, and he it is, who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell. He was cast into the midst of the seas, the heart of the seas, (so the word is,) and from thence Christ bore up his head. Hebrew phrase, when he applies it to his own lying so long, as the heart of the earth. For he that is laid dead in the grave, though ever so ebb, is cut off as effectually from the land of the living as if he were laid in the heart of the earth.
JONAH, II.

(2.) How terribly he was beset; *The floods compassed me about.* The channels and springs of the waters of the sea, these surrounded him on every side; it was always high-water with him. God's dear saints and servants are sometimes compassed with the floods of affliction, with troubles that are very forcible and violent, that bear down all before them, and that run constantly upon them, as the waters of a river in a continual succession, one trouble upon the neck of another, as Job's messengers of evil tidings: these enclosed them on all sides, as the church complains, Lam. iii. 7. He has hedged me about, that I cannot get out, nor see which way I may flee for safety. *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.* Observe, He calls them God's billows and his waves, not only because he made them, *The sea is his, and he made it*; but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and limited them, had ordered them to afflict and terrify him, but not to destroy him.

These words are plainly quoted by Jonah from Ps. xlii. 7, where, though the translations differ a little, in the original David's complaint is the same verbatim with this of Jonah's, *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.* What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically, Jonah applies to himself as literally fulfilled. For the reconciling of ourselves to our afflictions, it is good to search precedents, that we may have a clear sense of the same kind of trouble, which is as common to men. If ever any man's case was singular, and not to be paralleled, surely Jonah's was, and yet, to his great satisfaction, he finds even the man after God's own heart making the same complaint of God's waves and billows going over him, that he has now occasion to make. When God performs the thing that is appointed for us, we shall, like Jonah, hearken to his voice, and though our path of trouble is no unred path, and that God deals with us no otherwise than as he uses to deal with those that love his name. And therefore for our assurance in our addresses to God, when we are in trouble, it is good to make use of the complaints and prayers which the saints that have been before us made use of in the like case. See how good it is to be ready in the scriptures; Jonah, when he could make no use of his bible, by the help of his memory furnished himself from the scripture with a very proper representation of his case; *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.* To the same purport, v. 5. *The waters compassed me about even to the soul:* they threatened his life, which was hereby brought into imminent danger; or they made an impression upon his spirit; he saw them to be tokens of God's displeasure, and in them the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him; this reached to his soul, and put that into confusion. And this also is borrowed from David's complaint, (Ps. lxxix. 1.) *The waters are come in unto my soul.* When without are fightings, it is a marvel that within are fears. Jonah, in the fish's bowels, was afraid, yet that in which he was would never let him out, nor yet that he would get out of his prison, yet he must unavoidably perish in the waters. He feels the seaweed (which the fish sucked in with the water) wrapt about his head, so that he had no way to help himself; nor hope that any one else could help him. There are the people of God sometimes perplexed and entangled, that they may learn not to trust the floodwater, but in God that raises the dead, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

(3.) How fast he was held; (v. 6.) He went down to the bottom of the mountains, to the rocks in the sea, upon which the hills and promontories by the sea-side seem to be bottomed; he lay among them, may, he lay under them; the earth with her bars was about him, so close about him, that it was likely to be about him for ever. The earth was so shut and locked, so barred and bolted, against him, that he was quite cut off from any hope of ever returning to it. Thus helpless, thus hopeless, did Jonah's case seem to be. Those whom God contends with, the whole creation is at war with.

He reflects upon the very black and melancholy conclusion he was then ready to make concerning himself, and the relief he obtained against it, v. 4, 7. (1.) He began to sink into despair, and to give up himself for gone and undone to all intents and purposes. When the waters compassed him about even to the soul, no marvel that his soul fainted within him, so far away, so that he had not any comfortable enjoyment or expectations; his spirits quite failed, and he looked upon himself as a dead man. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, and the apprehension of that was the thing that made his spirit faint within him. He thought God had quite forsaken him, would never return in mercy to him, nor show him any token for good again. He had no example before him of any that were brought alive out of a fish's belly; if he thought of Job upon the dunghill, Joseph in the pit, David in the cave, yet these did not come up to his case. Nor was there any visible way of escape open for him but by miracle; and what reason had he to expect that a miracle of mercy should be wrought for him, who was now made a monument of justice. His own case was the case of Jonah, *See* what is the presence of the Lord, and therefore he might justly cast him away from his presence, and, in token of that, take away his holy Spirit from him, never to visit him more. What hopes could he have of deliverance out of a trouble which his own ways and doings had procured to himself? Observe, When Jonah would say the worst he could of his own case, he might tell us, that he had no help, and those only, are miserable, whom God has cast out of his sight, whom he will no longer own and favour. What is the misery of the damned in hell but this, that they are cast out of God's sight? For what is the happiness of heaven but the vision and fruition of God? Sometimes the condition of God's people may be such in this world, that they may think themselves quite excluded from God's presence, so as no more to see him, or to be regarded by him. Jacob and Israel said, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgments are passed over from my God, Isa. xl. 27. *Zion said,* The Lord has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me, Isa. xlix. 14. But it is only the surmise of unbelief, for God has not cast away his people whom he has chosen. (2.) Yet he recovered himself from sinking into despair, with some comfortable prospects of deliverance. Faith corrected and controlled the surmises of fear and distrust. Here was a fierce struggle between sense and faith, but faith had the last word, and came off a conqueror. In trying times, the issue will be good at last, provided our faith do not fail; it was therefore the continuance of his faith, that in the midst of his despair he says, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, Luke xxii. 32. David had fainting if he had not believed, Ps. xxvii. 13. Jonah's faith said, Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. Thus, though he was perplexed, yet not in despair; in the depth of the sea he had this hope in him, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. They that cast themselves down to hell, say, that he shall yet look again toward God's holy temple. [1.] That he shall live; he shall look again heavenward, shall again see the light of the sun, though now he seems to be cast into utter darkness; thus against hope he believed in hope. [2.] That he shall live, and praise God; and a good man does not desire to live for any other purpose, Ps. cxxvii. 15.
enjoy communion with God again in holy ordinances, shall look toward, and go up to, the holy temple; for I desire to inquire, there to behold the beauty of the Lord, and the remembrance of it was his comfort, that, when he had opportunity, he was no stranger to the holy temple. But now he could not so much as look towards it; in the fish's belly he could not tell which way it lay, but he hopes he shall be again able to look towards it, to look on it, to look into it. Observe, He modestly excuses himself of guilt and unworthiness, he dares not speak of dwelling in God's house, as David, knowing that he is no more worthy to be called a son, but he hopes he may be admitted to look towards it. He calls it the holy temple, for the holiness of it was, in his eye, the beauty of it, and that for the sake of which he loved and looked towards it. The temple is called his house, because himself that though, being now a captive exile, he should never be lost, but die in the pit, yet he should look towards the heavenly temple, and be brought safe thither; though he die in the fish's belly, in the bottom of the sea, yet from thence he hopes his soul shall be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Or, these words may be taken as Jonah's vow when he was in the fish's belly, and he speaks (v. 9.) of paying what he vowed; his vow is, that if God deliver him, he will praise him in the gates of the daughter of Zion, Ps. lx. 13, 14. His sin for which God pursued him, was, fleeing from the presence of the Lord, the folly of which he is now convinced of, and promises, not only that he will never again look toward Tarshish, but that he will go again toward the temple, and will go from strength to strength till he appear before God there. And thus we see how faith and hope were his relief, in his desponding condition; to this he added prayer to God; (v. 7.) "When my soul fainted within me, then I remembered the Lord, I betook myself to that cordial. He remembered what is, how nigh to those that seem to be thrown at distance from himself, and yet are near, and of those that seem to have thrown themselves at a distance from him by sin. He remembered what he had done for him, what he had done for others, what he could do, what he had promised to do; and this kept him from fainting. Remembering God, he made his addresses to him; "My prayer came in unto thee; I sent it in, and expected to receive an answer to it. Note, Our devotions should put us in mind of God, and thereby put us upon prayer to him. When our souls faint, we must remember God; and when we remember God, we must send up a prayer to him, a pious ejaculation at least; when we think on his name we should call on his name."

4. He reflects upon the favour of God to him, when thus in his distress he sought to God and trusted in him. (1.) He graciously accepted his prayer, and gave admission and audience to it; (v. 7.) "My prayer, being sent to him, came in unto him, even into his holy temple; it was heard in the highest heavens, though it was prayed in the lowest depths." (2.) He wonderfully wrought deliverance for him, and when he was in the depth of his pit, gave him the earnest and assurance of it; (v. 6.) "Yet hath thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God." Some think he said this when he was vomited out on dry ground; and then it is the language of his thankfulness, and he sets over against the great difficulty of his case, that the power of God might be the more magnified in his deliverance; The earth with her bars was about me for ever, and yet thou hast brought up my life from the pit, from the bars of the pit; or, rather, we may suppose it spoken while he was yet in the fish's belly, and then it is the language of his faith; "Thou hast kept me alive here, in the pit, and therefore thou wilt, bring up my life from the fish, and he speaks of it with as much assurance as if it were done already; Thou hast brought up my life. Though he has not an express promise of deliverance, he has an earnest of it, and on that he depends; he has life, and therefore believes his life shall be brought up from corruption; and this assurance he addresses to God; Thou hast done it, O Lord my God. Thou art the Lord, and therefore wilt do it for me; my God, and therefore wilt do it. Note, If the Lord be our God, he will be to us the Resurrection and the Life, will redeem our lives from destruction, from the power of the grave.

5. He gives warning to others, and instructs them to keep close to God; (v. 8.) "They that observe lying vanities, even all their hopes, they forsake their own mercy." (1.) They that worship other gods, as the heathen mariners did, and call upon them, and expect relief and comfort from them, they forsake their own mercy, they stand in their own light, they turn their backs upon their own happiness, and go quite out of the way of all good. Note, Idols are lying vanities, and those that pay that homage to them, which is due to God only, disprove thereby their interest in their duty. Or, (2.) They that follow their own inventions, as Jonah himself had done, when he fled from the presence of the Lord to go to Tarshish, they forsake their own mercy, that mercy which they might find in God, and might have such a covenant-right and title to it, as to be able to call it their own, if they would but keep close to God and their duty. That they think to go anywhere, to be from under the eye of God, as Jonah did, that think to mend themselves by deserting his service, as Jonah did, and that grudge his mercy to any poor sinners, and pretend to be wiser than he in judging who are fit to have prophets sent them, and who not, as Jonah did, they observe lying vanities, are led away by foolish, groundless fancies, and like him, they forsake their own mercy, which they might have come of it. Note, They that forsake their own duty, forsake their own mercy; they that run away from the work of their place and day, run away from the comfort of it.

6. He solemnly binds his soul with a bond, that if God work deliverance for him, the God of his mercies shall be the God of his praises; v. 9. He covenants with God, (1.) That he will honour him in his devotions with the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and God has said, for the encouragement of those that do so, that they that offer praise, glorify him. He will, according to the law of Moses, bring a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will offer that according to the law of nature, with the voice of thanksgiving. The love and thankfulness of the heart to God are the life and soul of this duty; without it neither the sacrifice of thanksgiving, nor the voice of thanksgiving, will avail any thing; but it was then, by a divine appointment, to be expressed by a sacrifice, in which the offering presented the best shain to God, not in lieu of himself, but in token of himself; and it is now to be expressed by the voice of thanksgiving, the eulogium of the soul over all. (Hos. xiii. 8.) The fruit of my life, (Heb. xiii. 15.) speaking forth, singing forth, the high praises of our God. This Jonah here promises, that with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, to his
glory, and the encouragement of others. (2.) That he will honour him in his conversation by a punctual performance of his vows which he made in the fish's belly. Some think it was some work of charity that he vowed, or such a vow as Jacob's was, Of all that thou hast given me, I will give a tenth unto thee. More probably, his vow was, that if God would save him, he would discharge the work he should please to send him, though it were to Nineveh. When we smart for deserting our duty, it is time to promise that we will adhere to it, and abound in it. Or, perhaps, the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the thing he vowed, and that is it which he will pay, as David, Ps. cxvi. 17.—19.

7. He concludes with an acknowledgment of God as the Saviour; Salvation is of the Lord; it belongs to the Lord, Ps. iii. 8. He is the God of salvation, Ps. lxviii. 19, 20. He only can work salvation, and he can do it, be the danger and distress ever so great; he has promised salvation to his people that trust in him. All the sufferings of his church in general, and of particular saints, were wrought by him; he is the Saviour of them that believe. Salvation is of the Lord, as it has always been: from him alone it is to be expected, and on him we are to depend for it. Jonah's experience shall encourage others, in all ages, to trust in God, as the God of their salvation; all that read this story, shall say it with assurance, say it with admiration, that salvation is of the Lord, and is sure to all that belongs to him.

10. And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land.

We have here Jonah's discharge from his imprisonment, and his deliverance from that death which there he was threatened with; his return, though not to life, for he lived in the fish's belly, yet to the land of the living, for from that he seemed to be quite cut off; his resurrection, though not from death, yet from the grave, far surely never man was so buried alive as Jonah was in the fish's belly. His enlargement may be considered:

1. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures; God spake to the fish, gave him orders to return him, as before he had given him orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures and it is done; they are all his ready, obedient servants; but to make his work appear the more wonderful, he makes him pass through and experience it not, regards it not, but turns a deaf ear to what he says. Note, God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleases of them, and serves his own purposes by them.

2. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, that in his distress prays to him. Jonah had sinned, had done foolishly, very foolishly; his own backsliding did now correct him, and it appears by his after-conduct that his foolishness was not quite driven from him, no, not by the rod of this correction; and yet, upon his praying, and humbling himself before God, here is a miracle in nature wrought for his deliverance, to intimate what a miracle of grace, free grace, God's reception and entertainment of returning sinners are. When God had him at his backsliding, he showed him mercy, and did not contend for ever.

3. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. He died and was buried, to lay the storm which our sin had raised, and lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three nights, a prisoner for our debt; but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers to preach repentance, and remission of sins, to the Gentiles. This was another scripture fulfilled, After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up, Hos. vi. 2.

2. The earth trembled as if full of her burden as the fish of Jonah.
Jonah had resisted and rebelled against, depart from him, with a resolution never to return to him any more. One would have expected that though his life was spared, yet he should be hid under a disability and incapacity ever to serve the government again in the character of a prophet. But Joneh, his repentance, resolution, and preaching, although he was not pardoned, and we have the good will of God towards us; does his good word come unto us, and do we experience his good work in us? If so, we have reason to admire the riches of free grace, and to own our obligations to the Lord Jesus, who received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell even among them, and employ them in his work, Ps. lxviii. 18.

2. By this it appears that Jonah was well reconciled to God, that he was not now, as he had been before, disobedient to the heavenly vision, did not flee from the presence of the Lord, as he had done; he neither endeavoured to avoid hearing the command, nor did he declare obeying it, he made no objections, as he had done, that the journey was long, difficult, tedious, and dangerous. The Lord did not leave him, and, if the threatened judgment did not come, he should be reproached as a false prophet, and the impenitence of his own nation would be upbraided, which he had objected, ch. iv. 2. But now, without murmuring and disputing, Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord, v. 3. See here, (1.) The nature of repentance; it is the expression not turning, but a turning away, yet it was good, very good for me, that I was afflicted. (2.) The benefit of affliction; it reduces those to their place, that had deserted it. Jonah might truly say with David, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word; and therefore, though it was dreadful, though it was painful to me, and for the present not easy, yet it was good, very good for me, that I was afflicted." (3.) See the power of divine grace working with affliction, for otherwise affliction of itself would rather drive men from God than bring them to him; but God by his grace can turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make those willing in the day of his power, freely willing to come under his yoke, whose neck had been an iron yoke. (4.) See the duty of all those to whom the word of the Lord comes; they must in all points conform themselves to it, and yield a cheerful, faithful obedience to the orders God gives them; Jonah arose, and did not sit still in sloth or suilleness; he went directly to Nineveh, though it was a great way off, and a place where it is likely he never was before; yet that he bore his journey, and was obedient to the word of the Lord. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; whatever appears to be the word of the Lord, we must conscientiously do according to it.

Let us now see what were the command and commission given him, and what he did in prosecution of it.

1. He was sent as a herald at arms, in the name of the God of heaven, to proclimb war with Nineveh; (v. 2.) Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, that metropolis, and preach unto it, preach against it; so the Chaldee. What is against us, is preached to us, that we may hear it, and take warning; and what is preached to us, if we do not give ear to it, and mix faith with it, will prove to be against us. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, which was at this time the chief city of the Gentile world, as an indication of God's gracious intentions in process of time to make the light of divine revelation to shine in those dark regions. God knew that if Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, had had the means of grace, they would have repented, and yet he deni ed them those means, Matt. xi. 21, 23. He knew that if Nineveh had now the means of grace, they would repent, and he gave them those means, sent Jonah, though not to preach repentance to them expressly, (for we find not that he had that in his commission,) yet he gave him the means of grace, to be the happy effect of what he had in commission. If God thus in dispensing his favours, in giving the means of grace to some places and not to others, and the Spirit of grace to some persons and not to others, acts by prerogative and in a way of sovereignty, who may say unto him, What doest thou? May he not do what he will with his own? He is Debor to no man. Go, and preach (says God) the preaching that I bid thee. That is, 1. "The preaching that I did bid thee when I first ordered thee to go thither; (ch. i. 2.) go, and cry against it, denounce divine judgments against it, tell the men of Nineveh that their wickedness is come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them." This was the message Jonah was then very loth to deliver, ch. i. 1. But when he is brought to it the second time, God does not at all alter the message, to gratify him, or make it the more passable with him, no, he must now preach the very same that he was then ordered to preach and would not. Note, The word of God is an unalterable thing, and will not be made to bend to the humours either of its preachers or of its hearers; God would have the word of grace and truth, parables and fancies, but they must comply with its truths and laws. See Jer. xv. 19. Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. Or, 2. "The preaching that I shall bid thee, when thou comest thither." This was an encouragement to him in his undertaking, that God would go along with him, that the Spirit of prophecy should abide upon him, and he ready upon him, when he went to Nineveh, to give him all the further instructions that were needful for him. This intimated that he should hear from him again, which would be his great support in this hazardous expedition; as when God sent Abraham to offer up Isaac, he gave him a like intimation, by telling him he must do it upon one of the mountains which he would afterward direct him to. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, he leads his people step by step, and so he expects they should follow him. Jonah must go with an implicit faith, though he knows whither he goes; he shall not know, till he comes thither, what message he must deliver, but, whatever it is, he must deliver it, be it pleasing or displeasing. Thus God will keep us in a continual dependence upon him, and in such a dependence that we are not left to do what he does, and what he will have us to do, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. Admirals, sometimes, when they are sent abroad, are not to open their commission till they are got so many leagues off at sea; so Jonah must go to Nineveh, and, when he comes there, shall be told what to do. 2. If he faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. When he came to Nineveh, he found his diocese large, it was an exceeding great city of three days journey; (v. 3.) a city great to God, so the Hebrew phrasing is, meaning no more than as we render it, exceeding great; this honour that language does to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him. The greatness of Nineveh
consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon; such a city, says Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built; it was 150 furlongs long, and ninety broad, and 480 in compass; the walls 100 feet high, and so thick, that three chariots might go abreast upon them; on them were 1300 towers, each of them 200 feet high. It is here said to be of three days' journey; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was 480 furlongs, which, allowing eight hours each day, made it a mile, more than twice as much as any which may well be reckoned three days' journey for a footman, twenty miles a day. Or, walking slowly and gravely as Jonah must when he went about preaching, it would take him up at least three days, to go through all the principal streets and lanes of the city, to proclaim his message, that all might have notice of it. When he came thither, he knew not what, or how, God had set him up to be a preacher. He did not understand what it was he had to say, or how he was to say it, as it were, coming against them the controversy God had with them, and how provoking their wickedness was, and what reason they had to expect destruction, and to give credit to this warning, or whether he only repeated these words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message. 1. He must tell them that this great city shall be overthrown; he meant, and they understood him, that it should be overthrown, not by war, but by some immediate stroke from heaven; either by an earthquake, or by fire and brimstone as Sodom was. The wickedness of cities ripens them for destruction, and their wealth and greatness cannot protect them from destruction, when the measure of their iniquity is full, and the day of vengeance is come. Great cities are easily overthrown when the great God comes to reckon with them. 2. He must tell them that it shall shortly be overthrown; at the end of forty days. It has a reprieve granted; so long God will wait to see if, upon this alarm given, they will humble themselves, and amend their doings, and so prevent the ruin threatened. See how slow God is to wrath: though Nineveh's wickedness cried for vengeance, yet it did not at once fall on them; for God gave them space to repent, and meet God in the way of his judgments. But he will wait no longer; if in that time they turn not, they shall know that he has what his sword, and made it ready. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to defer his judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in, and so turn away the judgments coming. The journey of the day thus, with heaven's patience, would help to convince them that it was a message from God, for no man durst be so positive in prefiguring a time, however he might foreground the thing itself; it would also startle them into a preparation for it. It may justly awaken sincere sinners by a sincere conversion to prevent their own ruin, when they see they have but a little time to repent. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that the thing itself is certain, and the time fixed in the counsel of God, but that we are therefore kept in the dark and at uncertainty about it, that we may be always ready? We cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days as Nineveh now was that it should stand forty days; Nay, I say, we cannot be so sure that we shall live within thirty or forty days than that we should live thirty or forty years; and so many years in the day of our security we are apt to promise ourselves.

5. So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh, (by the decree of the king and his nobles,) saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.

Here is,

1. A wonder of divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, upon the warning given them of their destruction approaching. Verily I say unto you, we have not found such a great instance of it, no, not in Israel; and it will rise up in judgment against the men of the gospel-generation, and condemn them; for the Ninevites repeated at the preaching of Jonas, but, behold, a greater than Jonas is here, Matth. xii. 41. Nay, it did condemn the impertinence and obstinacy of Israel at that time. God sent many prophets to Israel, and those well known among them to be mighty in word and deed; but to Nineveh he sent only one, and him a stranger, whose aspect was mean, we may suppose, and his life a presence cracky, especially after the fatigue of so long a journey; and yet they repented, but Israel repented not. Jonah preached but one sermon, and we do not find that he gave them any sign or wonder, by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed; and yet they were wrought upon, while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words whereby to reason with them, and confirmed them by signs following. Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin; we do not find that he gave them any calls to repentance, or directions how to repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, and yet they repented; but Israel persisted in impenitence, though the prophets sent to them, drew them with cords of a man, and with bands of love, and confirmed them by signs, which God would do for them if they did repent and reform.

Now let us see what was the method of Nineveh's repentance, what were the steps and particular instances of it.

1. They believed God; they gave credit to the word which Jonah spoke to them in the name of God; they believed that though they had made that they called gods, yet there was but one living and true God; the sovereign Lord of all; that to him they were accountable; that they had sinned again,
him, and were become obnoxious to his justice; that this notice sent them of ruin approaching came from him, and, consequently, that the ruin itself would come from him at the time prefixed, if it were not prevented by a timely repentance; that he is a "merciful God," and there might be some hopes of the turning away of the wrath threatened, if they did turn away from the sins for which it was threatened.

Note. They that come to God, that come back to him after they have revolted from him, must believe, must believe that he is, that he is reconcilable, that he will be theirs if they take the right course. And observe what great faith God can work by very small means; he can bring even Ninevites by a few these words, "be obedient to the faith." Some think the Ninevites heard, from the mariners, or others, or from Jonah himself, of his being cast into the sea, and delivered thence by miracle, and that this served for a confirmation of his mission, and brought them the more readily to believe God speaking by him. But of this we have no certainty; however, Christ's resurrection, typified by that of Jonah's, served for the confirmation of his gospel, and contributed abundantly to their great success, who in his name preached repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

2. They brought word to the king of Nineveh, who, some think, was at this time Sardanapalus, others Hadad, king of Gilead. He received them, and sent to go to him first, in respect to his royal dignity; crowned heads, when guilty heads, are before God upon a level with common heads; and therefore Jonah is not sent to the court, but to the streets of Nineveh, to make his proclamation. However an account of his errand is brought to the king of Nineveh, not by way of information against Jonah, as a distress note. Those kings are happy, we may have such about them as will give them notice of the things that belong to the kingdom's peace, of the warnings both of the word and of the providence of God, and of the tokens of God's displeasure which they are under; and those people are happy, who have such kings over them as will take notice of those things.

3. The king set them a good example of humiliation; (v. 6.) When he heard of the word of God sent to him, he rose from his throne; as Eagen king of Moab, who, when Ehud told him he had a message to him from God, rose up out of his seat. The king of Nineveh rose from his throne, not only in reverence to a word from God in general, but in fear of a word of wrath in particular, and in sorrow and shame for sin, by which he and his people were become obnoxious to the wrath, and laid aside his royal robe, the badge of his imperial dignity, as an acknowledgment that, having not used his power, as he ought to have done, for the restraining of violence and wrong, and the maintaining of right, he had forfeited his throne and robe to the justice of God, had rendered himself unworthy of the honour put upon him, and the trust reposed in him. This it was just with God to take it from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, in token of his humiliation for sin, and his dread of divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

4. The people conformed to the example of the king, nay, it should seem, they led the way, for they first began to put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them, v. 5. The least of them, that had least to lose in the overthrow of the city, did not think themselves unacquainted in the alarm; and the greatest of them, that had used to live at ease, and live in state, did not think it below them to put on the marks of humiliation.

The wearing of sackcloth, especially to those who were used to fine linen, was a very uneasy thing, and they would not have done it, if they had not had a deep sense of their sin, and their danger by reason of sin, which hereby they designed to express. Note. Those that would not be renewed, must be hardened; those that would not destroy their souls, must afflict their souls; when God's judgments threaten us, we are concerned to humble ourselves under his mighty hand; and through holy exercise alone profits nothing, and a man's spreading sackcloth and ashes under him, if that be all, is but a jest, (it is the heart that God looks at, Isa. li. 5.) yet on solemn days of humiliation, when God in his providences calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth, we must by the outward expressions of inward sorrow, glorify God with our bodies; at least, by laying aside the ornaments.

5. A general fast was proclaimed and observed throughout that great city, v. 7.—9. It was ordered by the decree of the king and his nobles; the whole legislative power concurred in appointing it, and the whole people concurred in observing it, and both these ways it became a national act, and it was necessary that it should be so when it was to prevent a national ruin. We have here the contents of this proclamation, and it is very observable. See here,

(1.) What it is that is required by it. [1.] That the fast (properly so called) be very strictly observed; on the least appointed for solemnity, let neither man nor beast taste any thing; let them not take the least refreshment, no, not so much as drink water; let them not plead that they cannot fast so long without prejudice to their health, or that they cannot bear it, let them try for once. What if they do feel it an un easiness, and feel from it for some time afterwards, it is better to submit to that than be wanting in the public duty or interest, which is necessary to save a sinking city. Let them make themselves uneasy in body by putting on sackcloth, as well as by fasting, to show how uneasy they are in mind, through sorrow for sin, and the fear of divine wrath. Even the beasts must do penance as well as man; because they had been subject to vanity, as instruments of man's sin; and that, either by their complainers, or their silent crying for want of meat, they might stir up their owners, and those that attended them, to the expressions of sorrow and humiliation. Those cattle that were kept within doors, must not be fed and watered as usual, because no meat must be stirring on that day. Things of that kind must be forgotten, and not mentioned. It was not enough that it was just with God to take it from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, in token of his humiliation for sin, and his dread of divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

(2.) With their fasting and mourning they must join prayer and supplication to God; for the fasting is designed to fit the body for the service of the soul in the duty of prayer, which is the main matter, and to which the other is but preparatory, or subservient. Let them cry mightily
to God; let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity, let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God, as the cries of the young ravens are, (Job xxxviii. 41.) and of the young lions, Ps. civ. 21. But especially let the men, women, and children, cry to God; let them cry mightily for the pardon of the sins which only a few can, or ought to cry against. It is our hope, and our confidence in the clemency which were by Jonah cried against them.

It was time to cry to God, when there was but a step between them and ruin—high time to seek the Lord. In prayer we must cry mightily, with a fixness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervour of pious and devout affections. By crying mightily we wrestle with God, who take hold of him; and waken his heart. Let us not only departing from us as a Friend, but coming forth against us as an Enemy. It therefore concerns us in prayer to stir up all that is within us. Yet this is not all; [3.] They must to their fasting and praying add reformation and amendment of life. Let them turn every one from his evil way, the evil way he has chosen, the evil way he is addicted to and walks in, the evil way of his heart, and the evil way of his conversation, and particularly from the violence that is in their hands; let them restore what they have unjustly taken, and make reparation for what wrong they have done, and let them not any more oppress those they have power over, or defraud those they have dealings with; let the men in authority, at the court end of the town, turn from their usual way of living in their own persons, and to respect and guard against of unrighteous decrees, or give wrong judgment upon appeals made to them. Let the men of business, at the trading end of the town, turn from the violence in their hands, and use no unjust weights or measures, nor impose upon the ignorance or necessity of those they trade with.

Note, It is not enough to fast for sin, but we must fall full for sin, and their orders to the success of our prayers, must no more regard iniquity in our hearts, Ps. lxvi. 18. This is the only fast that God has chosen, and will accept, Isa. lvi. 6. Zech. vii. 5, 9. The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; nor the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not return with the dog to his vomit. It is a common observation what inducements this fast is proclaimed and recommended to; (z. 9.) When God will return and repent? Observe, [1.] What it is that they hope for; that God will, upon their repenting and turning, change his way toward them, and revoke his sentence against them; that he will turn from his fierce anger, which they own they deserve, and yet humbly and earnestly deprecate; and that thus their ruin will be prevented, and they shall be saved.

They cannot object against the equity of the judgment, they pretend not to set it aside by appealing to a higher court, but hope in God himself, that he will repent, and that his own mercy (to which they fly) shall rejoice against judgment. They believe that God is justly angry with them, that, their sin being very heinous, his anger is very fierce, and that, if he proceed against them, there is no remedy, but they die, they perish, they all perish, and are undone; for who knows the power of his anger? It is not therefore the threatened overthrow that they pray for the prevention of, but the anger of God that they pray for the turning away of. As when we pray for the favour of God, we pray for all the immediate effects of it, so when we pray against God, we pray against all evil. [2.] What day of hope they had of it; Who can tell if God will turn to us? Jonah had not told them, they had not among them any other prophets to tell them, so that they could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance, as we may be, who have the promise and oath of God to depend upon, and especially the merit and mediation of Christ to trust to, for pardon upon repentance. Yet they had a general notion of the goodness of God's nature, his mercy to man, and his being pleased with the repentance and conversion of sinners; and from this they raised other hopes and expectations of pardon, though not precise, but they will not despair. Note, Hope of mercy is the great encouragement to repentance and reformation; and though there be but some glimmerings of hope mixed with great fears arising from a sense of our own sinfulness, and unworthiness, and long abuse of divine patience, yet they may serve to quicken and engage our serious repentance and reformation. Let us boldly cast ourselves at the footstool of free grace, resolving that, if we perish, we will perish there; yet who knows but God will look upon us with compassion?

II. Here is a wonder of divine mercy in the sparing of these Ninevites, upon their repentance; (v. 10.) God saw their words; he not only heard their good words, by which they professed repentance, but saw their good works, by which they brought forth fruit meet for repentance; he saw that they turned from their evil way, and that was the thing he looked for and required; if he had not seen that, their fasting and sackcloth would have been as nothing in his account; he saw there was among them a general conviction of their sins, and a general resolution not to return to, and that for some days past they had lived a different life from what they lived before. Now the Lord had set his heart upon the city; and this he was well pleased with. Note, God takes notice of every instance of the reformation of sinners, even those instances that fall not under the cognizance and observation of the world. He sees who turn from their evil way, and who do not, and meets those with favour, that meet him in a sincere conversion; when they repent of the evil of which they are committed by them, he repents of the evil of judgment pronounced against them. Thus he spared Nineveh, and did not the evil which he said he would do against it. Here were no sacrifices offered to God, that we read of, to make atonement for sin, but the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, such as the Ninevites now had, is what he will not despise, it is what he will give countenance to, and put honour upon.

CHAP. IV.

We read, with a great deal of pleasure, in the close of the fine-going story, of the remarkable reproof of Nineveh, but in this chapter, we read, with a great deal of un easiness, concerning the sin of Jonah; and as there is joy in heaven and earth for the conversion of sinners, so there is grief for the follies and infirmities of saints. In all the book of God we scarcely find a servant of the Lord (and such a one we are sure Jonah was, for the scripture calls him so) so very much out of temper as he is here, so very peevish and pouty, and so very himself. In the first place, he had nothing to lose by his displeasing from the face of God; but here we have him, in effect, flying in the face of God: and, which is more grievous to us, there we had an account of his repentance, and return to God; but here, though no doubt he did repent, yet, as of old, Solomon's case, no account is left us of his recovering himself; but while we read with wonder of his perverseness, we read with no less wonder of God's pardon and sparing him, by whom he was preserved when he had not cast him off. Here is, I. Jonah's repenting at God's mercy to Nineveh, and the fret he was in about it, v. 1. 3. 11. The gentle reproof God gave him for it, v. 4. II. Jonah's discontent at the withering of the president, and his justifying of himself in that discontent, v. 5. 9. IV. God's improving of it for his conviction, that he ought not to be angry at the sparing of Nineveh, v. 10, 11. Man's baseness and God's goodness serve here for a faire example, and the former may appear the more exceeding sinful, and the latter the more exceeding gracious.
1. **But** it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. 2. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me: for it is better for me to die than to live. 4. Then said the Lord, Doest thou well to be angry?

See here,

I. How unjustly Jonah quarrelled with God for his mercy to Nineveh, upon their repentance. This gives us occasion to suspect that Jonah had only delivered the message of wrath against the Ninevites, and had not at all assisted or encouraged them in their repentance, as one would have thought he should have done; for, when they did repent, and found mercy,

1. Jonah grudged them the mercy they found.

   (1.) It displeased Jonah exceedingly; and (2.) we find an arrogant and very angry spirit in a great heat about it. It was very wrong, (1.) That he had so little government of himself as to be displeased and very angry; he had no rule over his own spirit, and therefore, as a city broken down, lay exposed to temptations and snares. (2.) That he had so little reverence of God as to be displeased and angry at what he did; as David was when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza; whatever pleases God, should please us, and though we cannot account for it, yet we must acquiesce in it.

   (3.) That he had so little affection to men as to be displeased and very angry at the conversion of the Ninevites, and their reception into the divine favour.

   This was the sin of the scribes and Pharisees, who murmured at our Saviour because he entertained publicans and sinners; but is our eye evil, because his is good? But why was Jonah so uneasy at it, that the Ninevites repented, and were spared? It cannot be expected that we should give any good reason for a thing so very absurd and unreasonable; no, nor anything that has the face or colour of reason; but we may reason that, as the nation was hot, so were the spirits; their hearts were fiery; only by pride comes contention both with God and man.

   It was a point of honour, that Jonah stood upon, and that made him angry. [1.] He was jealous for the honour of his country; the repentance and reformation of Nineveh shamed the obstinacy of Israel that repented not, but hated to be reformed; and the fervour God showed to these Gentiles, upon their repentance, was an ill omen to the Jewish nation, as if they should be as or as they were rejected and cast out of the church, and the Gentiles substituted in their room.

   When it was intimated to St. Peter himself, that he should make no difference between Jews and Gentiles, he startled at the thing, and said, *Vet sa, Lord!* no marvel then that Jonah looked with regret that Nineveh should become a favourite. Jonah herein had a zeal for God as the God of Israel in a particular manner, but not according to knowledge. Note, Many are displeased with God, under pretence of concern for his glory. [2.] He was jealous for his own honour; fearing lest, if Nineveh was not destroyed within forty days, he should be accounted a false prophet, and stigmatized accordingly; whereas he needed not be under any discontent about that, for in the threatening of ruin it was implied that, for the preventing of it, they should repent, and if they did it should be prevented. And no one will complain of being deceived by a sign that is better done by the word; and he would rather gain honour among them, by being instrumental to save them, than fall under any disgrace. But melancholy men, (and such a one Jonah seems to have been,) are apt to make themselves uneasy, by fancying evils to themselves that are not, nor are ever likely to be. Most of our frets, as well as our nights, come upon the back of the divine word; and there are to be pitted as perfect hand-shaves, that are under the power of such a tyrant.

2. He quarrelled with God about it; when his heart was hot within him, he spoke unadvisedly with his lips; and here he tells us what he said; (v. 2, 3.) He prayed unto the Lord, but it is a very awkward prayer, not like that which he prayed in the fish's belly; for affliction teaches us to pray submissively, which Jonah now forgot to do. Being in discontent, he applied himself to the duty of prayer, as he used to do in his troubles, but his corruptions got head of his graces, and when he should have been praying for benefit by the mercy of God himself, he was complaining of the benefit others had by that mercy. Nothing could be spoken more unbecomingly.

   (1.) He prays as if he were fleeing from the presence of the Lord when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh, for which he had before, with good reason, condemned himself; "Lord," said he, "was not this my saying when I was in my own country? Did I not foresee that if I went to preach at Nineveh, they would repent, and thou wouldest forgive them, and then thy word would not be confirmed in heaven and earth as thy word?"

   What a strange sort of man was Jonah, to dread the success of his ministry! Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they have disapproved of doing good by it, but Jonah declined preaching because he was afraid of doing good by it; and still he persists in the same corrupt notion, for it seems the whale's belly itself could not cure him of it. It was his saying when he was in his own country, but it was a bad saying; yet here he stands to it; and, very unlike the other prophets, desires the awful day which he had foretold, and grieves because it does not come. Even Christ's disciples knew not what manner of spirit they were of; they did not, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did not receive them, much less the apostles, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did receive him, Luke ix. 55.

   Jonah thinks he has reason to complain of that, when it is done, which he was before afraid of; so hard is it to get a root of bitterness plucked out of the mind, when once it is fastened there. And why did Jonah expect that God would spare Nineveh? Because I knew that thou wast a gracious God, indignant, and zealous of all sinners, and angry and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. All this is very true; and Jonah could not but know it by God's proclamation of his name, and the experiences of all ages; but it is strange and very unaccountable, that that which all the saints had made the matter of their joy and praise, Jonah should make the matter of his charge upon God; as if what we may reason that it is the expression of the divine nature, which is indeed the greatest glory of it—that God is gracious and merciful. The servant that said, I knew thee to be a hard man, said that which was false, and yet, had it been true, it was not the proper matter of a complaint; but Jonah, though he says what is true, yet, speaking it by way of reproach, speaks very absurdly.

   Those have a spirit of contention and contradic-
JONAH, IV.

1. Do I well to be angry? When passion is up, let it meet with this check, "Do I well to be so soon angry, so often so long angry, to put myself into such a heat, and to give others such ill language in my anger? Is this well, that I suffer these headstrong passions to get dominion over me?"

2. "Do I well to be angry at the mercy of God to repenting sinners?" That was Jonah's crime. Do we well to be angry at that which is so much for the interest of God, and the advancement of his kingdom among men? To be angry at that which angels rejoice in, and for which abundant thanksgivings will be rendered to God? We do ill to be angry at that grace which we ourselves need, and are undone without: if room were not left for repentance, and hope given of pardon, upon repentance, what would become of us? let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of Heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

5. So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. 6. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. 7. But God prepared a worm, when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. 8. And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. 9. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. 10. Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: 11. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Jonah persists here in his discontent: for the beginning of strife both with God and man is as the letting forth of waters, the breach grows wider and wider, and, when passion gets head, bad is made worse; it should therefore be silenced and suppressed at first. We have here,

1. Jonah's sullen expectation of the fate of Nineveh. We may suppose that the Ninevites, giving credit to the message he brought, were ready to be converted, and the reformation brought about, and to show him respect, that they would have bid him welcome to the best of their houses and tables; but Jonah was out of humour; would not accept their kindness, nor behave toward them with common civility; which one might have feared would have prejudiced them against him and his words; but when there is not only the treasure put into earthen vessels, but the trust lodged with men subject to passions as we are, and yet the point gained, it must
be owned that the excellency of the power appears so much the more to be of God, and not of man.

Jonah retires, goes out of the city, sits alone, and keeps silence, because he sees the Ninevites repent and reform, v. 5. Perhaps he told those about him, that he went out of the city for fear of perishing in the ruins of it; but he went to see what would become of the fruit of his own unbelief. He was not to be without some knowledge of what would become of Sidom, Gen. xix. 27. The forty days were now expiring, or expired, and Jonah hopes that if Nineveh be not overthrown, yet that some judgment or other shall come upon it, sufficient to save his credit; however, it is with great uncer

sity that he waits the issue. He will not sojourn in a house, expecting the worst. A shelter, a fold, a booth of the boughs of trees, and sit in that, though there he would lie exposed to wind and weather. Note, It is common for those that have fretful, uneasy spirits, industriously to create inconveniences themselves, that, resolving to complain, they may still have something to complain of.

2. God’s gracious provision for his shelter and refreshment, when he thus foolishly afflicted himself, and was still adding yet more and more to his own affliction, v. 6. Jonah was sitting in his booth, fretting at the cold of the night and the heat of the day, which were both grievous to him, and God might have said, It is his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it; but he looked on him with compassion, as he would become a gourd, in a booth of the boughs of trees, and sit in that, though there he would lie exposed to wind and weather. Note, How tender God is of his people in their afflictions, yea, though they are foolish and frivorous, nor is he extreme to mark what they do amiss.

God had before prepared a great gourd for his comfort, and here a great gourd to secure him from the injuries of the air, for he is the Protector of his people against evils of every kind, has the command of plants as well as animals, and can soon prepare them, to make them serve his purposes, can make their growth sudden, which, in a course of nature, is slow and gradual. A gourd, one would think, was but a slender fortification at the best, yet Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd for;

1. It was really at that time a great comfort to him. A thing in itself small and insignificant, yet, coming seasonably, may be to us a very valuable blessing. A gourd in the right place may do us more service than a cedar. The least creatures may be great plagues, (as flies and lice were to Pharaoh and his house;) and the greatest comforts, (as the gourd to Jonah,) according as God is pleased to make them.

2. He being now much under the power of imagination, took a greater complacency in it than there was cause for. He was exceeding glad of it, was proud of it, and triumphed in it.

Note, Persons of strong passions, as they are apt to be cast down with a thing that crosses them, so they are apt to be lifted up with a thing that favours them. A small toy will serve sometimes to pacify a child, as the gourd did Jonah. But wisdom and grace would teach us both to weep for our troubles as though we wept not, and to rejoice in our comforts as though we rejoiced not. Creature-comforts we ought to enjoy and be thankful for, but we need not be exceeding glad of them, it is God only that must be our exceeding joy, Ps. cxlvii. 4.

3. The sudden loss of this provision which God had made for his refreshment, and the return of his trouble, v. 7, 8. God that had provided comfort for him, provided also an affliction for him in that very thing which was his comfort; the affliction did come by chance, but by divine direction and appointment.

1. God prepared a worm to wither the gourd. He that gave, took away, and Jonah ought to have blessed his name in both; but because, when he took the comfort of the gourd, he did not give God the praise of it, God deprived him of the benefit of it, and justly. See what all our creature-comforts are, and what we may expect them to be: they are gourds, have their root in the earth, are but a thin and slender defence compared with the rock of ages; they are withering things, they perish in the using, and we are soon deprived of the comfort of them. The gourd withered the next day after it sprang up; our comforts come forth like flowers, and are soon cut down; when we please ourselves most with them, from others most from them, we are disappo

inted. A little thing withers them, a small worm at the root destroys a large gourd. Something unseen and undiscovered does it; our gourds wither, and we know not what to attribute it to. And perhaps those wither first that we have been exceeding glad of; that proves least safe that is most dear.

2. The gourd did not return to its former growth. Jonah’s gourd, but sent a worm to wither it; there it grew still, but it stood him in no stead. Perhaps our creature-comforts are continued to us, but they are imobittered; the creature is continued, but the comfort is gone; and the remains, or ruins of it rather, do but enwrap us with our folly in being exceeding glad of it.

3. He prepared a wind to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd, v. 8. It was a vehement eastward, which drove the heat of the rising sun violently upon the head of Jonah. This wind was not as a fan to abate the heat, but as bellows to make it more intense. Thus poor Jonah lay open to sun and wind.

4. The further fret that this put Jonah into; v. 9. He fainted and withered himself that he might die. "If the gourd be killed, if the gourd be dead, kill me too, let me die with the gourd." Foolish man, that thinks his life bound up in the life of a weed!

Note, It is just that those who love to complain, should never be left without something to complain of, that their folly may be manifested and corrected, and, if possible, cured. And see how the passions that run into an extreme one way, commonly run into an extreme the other way. Jonah, who was in transports of joy when the gourd flourished, is in pangs of grief when the gourd is withered. Inordinate affection lays a foundation for inordinate affecti

tion; what we are over-fond of when we have it, we are apt to over-grieve for when we lose it, and we are more sorry for the loss of a gourd than we should be for the loss of our own gourds.

5. The rebuke God gave him for this; he again reasoned with him; v. 10. Note, The withering of a gourd is a thing which it does not become us to be angry at; when afflictions provide deprive us of our relations, possessions, and enjoyments, we must bear it patiently: must not be angry at God, must not be angry for the gourd, it is comparatively but a small loss, the loss of a shadow, that is the most we can make of it. It was a gourd, a withering thing, we could expect no other than that it should wither. Our being angry for the withering of it will not recover it; we ourselves shall shortly wither like it. If one gourd be withered, another gourd may spring up; the gourd was to strengthen Jonah, this was to strengthen us; and it is the mind of God that we should imitate the Prophet; we should be pilgrims and strangers here below, and our comfort be like that which the gourd was to Jonah; it should be passing and mortal, abiding and everlastin
up in the room of it; but that which should especially silence our discontent, is, that though our gourd be gone, our God is not gone, and there is enough in him to make up all our losses.

Let us therefore own that we do ill, that we do very ill, to be angry for the gourd; and let us under such circumstances quiet ourselves as a child that is weaned from his mother.

6. His justification of his passion and discontent; and it is very strange, v. 9. He said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. It is bad to speak anath; yet if it be in haste, if what is said amiss be immediately recalled and unsaid again, it is the more excusable; but to speak anath and stand to it, is bad not only in itself, but to think that Jonah had himself rebuked him, and by appealing to his conscience expected he should have rebuked himself.

See what brutish things ungodly passions are, and how much it is our interest, and ought to be our endeavour, to chain up these roaring lions, and restraining bears. Sin and death are two very dreadful things, yet Jonah, in his heat, makes light of them both.

(1.) He has so little regard for God, as to fly in the face of his authority, and to say that he did well in that which, God said, was ill done. Passion often overrules conscience, and forces it, when it is appealed to, to give a false judgment, as Jonah here did.

(2.) He has so little regard to himself, as to abandon his own life, and to think it no harm to indulge his passion even to death, to kill himself with fretting. We read of wrath that kills the foolish man, and envy that slays the silly one; (Job v. 2.) and foolish, silly ones indeed they are, that cut their own throats with their own passions, that fret themselves into consumptions and other weaknesses, and put themselves into fevers with their own incontinent heat.

7. The improvement of it against him for his conviction, that he did ill to murmur at the sparing of Nineveh. Out of his own mouth God will judge him; and we have reason to think it overcame him; for he made no reply, but, we hope, returned to his right mind, and recovered his temper, though he could not keep it, and all was well.

Now let us see how God avenged on him; (v. 10, 11.) Thou hast had pity on the gourd; hast spared it, (so the word is,) didst what thou couldst, and wouldest have done more, to keep it alive, and saistest, What pity it is, that this gourd should ever wither? and should not I then spare Nineveh? Should not I have as much compassion upon that as thou hadst upon the gourd, and forbid the earthquake which would run that, as thou wouldst have forbidden the worm that withered the gourd? Consider, (1.) The gourd thou hadst pity on, was but one; but the inhabitants of Nineveh, whom I have pity on, are numerous. It is a great city and very populous, as appears by the number of the infants, suppose from two years old and under; there are a hundred and twenty thousand such in Nineveh, that are not come to so much use of understanding, as to know their right hand from their left, for they are yet but babes. These are taken notice of, because the age of infants is commonly looked upon as the age of innocence. So many there were in Nineveh, that had not been guilty of any actual transgression, and, consequently, had not themselves contributed to the common guilt; and yet, if Nineveh be overthrown, will all be involved in the common calamity, and shall not I spare Nineveh then, with an eye to them? God has a tender regard to little children, and is ready to pity and succour them, nay, here a whole city is spared for their sakes; which may encourage parents to present their children to God by faith and prayer, that though they are not capable of doing him any service, (for they cannot discern between their right hand and their left, between good and evil, sin and duty,) yet they are capable of participating of his favours, and of obtaining salvation.

The great mercy which God has discovered, a particular kindness for the children that were brought to him, when he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Nay, God took notice of the abundance of cattle too, that were in Nineveh, which he had more reason to pity and spare than Jonah had to pity and to spare the gourd, insomuch as the animal life is more excellent than the vegetation.

(2.) The gourd which Jonah was concerned for was none of his own, it was that for which he did not labour, and which he made not to grow; but the persons in Nineveh, whom God had compassion on, were all the work of his own hands, whose beings he was the Author of, whose lives he was the Preserver of, whom he planted and made to grow; he made them, and his they were, and therefore he had much more reason to have compassion on them, for he cannot despise the work of his own hands; (Job x. 3.) and thus Jehovah argues with him; (v. 8, 9.) Thy hands have made me, and fashioned me, have made me as the clay; and wilt thou destroy me, wilt thou bring me into dust again? And thus he here argues with himself.

(3.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on, was of a sudden growth, and therefore of less value, it came up in a night, it was the son of a night; (so the word is;) but Nineveh is an ancient city, of many ages standing, and therefore cannot be so easily given up; the persons I spare have been many years in growing up, not so soon reared as the gourd; and shall not I then have pity on them that have been so many years the care of my providence, so many years my tenants?

(4.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on, perished in a night, it withered, and there was an end of it; but the precious souls in Nineveh, that God had pity on, are not so short-lived, they are immortal, and therefore to be carefully and tenderly considered. One soul is of more value than the whole world, and the gain of the world will not counterbalance the loss of one soul, a soul of so much value than many gourds, of more value than many sparrows; so God accounts, and so should we, and therefore have a greater concern for the children of men than for any of the inferior creatures, and for our own and others' precious souls than for any of the riches and enjoyments of this world.

From all this we may learn, [1.] That though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will take a course effectually to show them their error, and to bring them to themselves, and to their right mind again. We have reason to hope that Jonah, after this, was well reconciled to the sparing of Nineveh, and was as well pleased with it as ever he had been displeased.

[2.] That God will justify himself in the methods of his grace toward repenting, returning sinners, as well as in the course his justice takes with them that persist in their rebellion; though there are those that murmur at the mercy of God, because they do not understand it, (for his thoughts and ways therein are as far above ours as heaven above the earth,) yet he will make it evident that therein he acts like himself, and will be justified when he speaks. See what pains he takes with Jonah, to convince him that it was very fit that Nineveh should be spared: Jonah had said, I do well to be angry, but he could not prove it; God says it, and proves it, I do well to be merciful; and it is a great encouragement to poor sinners to hope that
they shall find mercy with him, that he is so ready to justify himself in showing mercy, and to triumph in those whom he makes the monuments of it, against those whose eye is evil because his is good. Such murmurers shall be made to understand this doctrine, that, how narrow soever their souls, their principles, are, and how willing soever they are to engross divine grace to themselves and those of their own way, there is one Lord over all, that is rich in mercy to all that call upon him, and in every nation, in Nineveh as well as in Israel, he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him; he that repents, and turns from his evil way, shall find mercy with him.
EXPOSITION,
WITH
PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,
OF THE PROPHECY OF
MICAH.

We shall have some account of this prophet, in the first verse of the book of his prophecy; and therefore shall here only observe, that being contemporary with the prophet Isaiah, (only that he began to prophesy a little after him,) there is a near resemblance between that prophet's prophecy and this; and there is a prediction of the advancement and establishment of the gospel-church, which both of them have, almost in the same words, that out of the mouth of two such witnesses so great a word might be established. Compare Isa. ii. 2, 3, with Mic. iv. 1, 2. Isaiah's prophecy is said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem, but Micah's concerning Samaria and Jerusalem; for though his prophecy be dated only by the reigns of the kings of Judah, yet it refers to the kingdom of Israel, the approaching ruin of which, in the captivity of the ten tribes, he plainly foretells and sadly laments. What we find here in writing, was but an abstract of the sermons he preached during the reign of three kings. The scope of the whole is,

I. To convince sinners of their sins, by setting them in order before them, charging both Israel and Judah with idolatry, covetousness, oppression, contempt of the word of God; and their rulers especially, both in church and state, with the abuse of their power; and also by showing them the judgments of God ready to break in upon them for their sins.

II. To comfort God's people with promises of mercy and deliverance, especially with an assurance of the coming of the Messiah, and of the grace of the gospel through him. It is remarkable concerning this prophecy, and confirms its authority, that we find two quotations out of it, made publicly upon very solemn occasions, and both referring to very great events. 1. One is, a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, (ch. iii. 12.) which we find quoted in the Old Testament, by the elders of the land, (Jer. xxxvi. 17, 18.) in justification of Jeremiah, when he foretold the judgments of God coming upon Jerusalem, and to stay the proceedings of the court against him. Micah (say they) foretold that Zion should be ploughed as a field, and Hezekiah did not put him to death; why then should we punish Jeremiah for saying the same? 2. Another is a chief prediction of the birth of Christ, (ch. v. 2.) which we find quoted in the New Testament, by the chief priests and scribes of the people, in answer to Herod's inquiry, where Christ should be born; (Matth. ii. 5, 6.) for still we find that to him bear all the prophets witness.

MICAH, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter we have, I. The title of the book, (v. 1.) and a preface demanding attention, v. 2. II. Warning given of desolating judgments, hastening upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, (v. 3, 4.) and all for sin, v. 5. III. The particulars of the destruction specified, v. 6, 7. IV. The greatness of the destruction illustrated, 1. By the prophet's sorrow for it, v. 8, 9. 2. By the general sorrow that should be for it, in the several places that must expect to share in it, v. 10, 11. 2. These prophecies of Micah might well be called his laments.

1. THE word of the Lord that came to 
Micah the Morasthite, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of 
Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. 2. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. 3
For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. 4. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. 5. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem? 6. Therefore I will make Samaria as a heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. 7. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burnt with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of a harlot, and they shall return to the hire of a harlot.

Here is, 1. A general account of this prophet and his prophecy, v. 1. This is prefixed for the satisfaction of all that read and hear the prophecy of this book, who will give the more credit to it, when they know the author and his authority. 1. The prophecy is the word of the Lord, it is a divine revelation. Note, What is written in the Bible, and what is written in the hearts of God's people, is divine, and what is written there must be heard and received, not as the word of dying men, which we may be judges of, but as the word of the living God, which we must be judged by, for so it is. This word of the Lord came to the prophet, came plainly, came powerfully, came in a preventing way, and he saw it, saw the vision in which it was conveyed to him, saw the things themselves which he foretold would be as much clearness and certainty as if they had been already accomplished. 2. The prophet is Micah the Morashite; his name Micah is a contraction of Micaiah, the name of a prophet some ages before, in Ahab's time; (1 Kings xxii. 8.) his surname, the Morashite, signifies that he was born or lived at Morasheth, which is mentioned here, v. 14, or Mareshah, which is mentioned, v. 15, and Josh. xv. 44. The place of his abode is mentioned, that any one might inquire in that place, at that time, and might find there was, or had been, such a one there, who was generally reputed to be a prophet. 3. The date of his prophecy is in the reigns of three kings of Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Ahaz was one of the worst of Judah's kings. In his time God's ministers were surprised and afraid, times pass over God's ministers, times that frown and times that smile, to each of which they must study to accommodate themselves, and to arm themselves against the temptations of both. The promises and threatenings of this book are interwoven, by which it appears that even in the wicked reign he preached comfort, and said to the righteous, you shall be well with them; and that in the fines reign he preached conviction, and said to the wicked, then, that it should be ill with them; for, however the times change, the word of the Lord is still the same. 4. The parties concerned in this prophecy; it is concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the head-cities of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, under the influence of which the kingdoms themselves were. Though the ten tribes have deserted the houses both of David and Aaron, yet God is pleased to send prophets to them. 5. A very solemn introduction to the following prophecy, v. 2. In which, 1. The people are summoned to draw near and gather to his presence, as upon a court of judicature, Hear, all ye people. Note, Where God has a mouth to speak, we must have an ear to hear; we all must, for we are all concerned in what is delivered. "Hear, ye people," (all of them, so the margin reads it,) "all ye that are now within hearing, and all others that hear it at second hand. It is an unusual construction; but those words with which Micah begins his prophecy, are the very same in the original with those where-with Micaiah ended his, 1 Kings xxii. 28. 2. The earth is called upon, with all that therein is, to hear what the prophet has to say; Hearken, O earth. The earth shall be made to shake under the stroke and weight of the judgments coming; sooner will the earth hear, than this stupid, senseless people; but God will be heard when he pleads. If the church, and those in it, will not hear, the earth, and those in it, shall, and shame them. 3. God himself is appealed to, and his omniscience, power, and justice, are vouchèd in testimony against this people; "Let the Lord God be Witness against you; a Witness that you had fair warning given you, that your prophets did their duty faithfully, as well as you, not take the warning; let the accomplishment of the prophecy be a witness against your contempt and disbelief of it, and prove, to your conviction and confusion, that it was the word of God, and that no word of his shall fall to the ground." Note, God himself will be a Witness, by the judgments of his hand, against those that would not receive his testimonies in this prophecy. God was a Witness from his holy temple in heaven, when he comes down to execute judgment (v. 3.) against those that turned a deaf ear to his oracles, wherein he witnessed to them, out of his holy temple at Jerusalem. 6. A terrible prediction of destroying judgments, which should come upon Judah and Israel, which had its accomplishment soon after in Israel, and at length in Judah; for it is fulfilled, 1. The Lord God himself will appear against them, v. 3. They boast of themselves and their relation to God, as if that would secure them; but though God never deserts the faithful, yet he will dispassion the hypocrites, for behold, the Lord comes forth out of his place, quits his mercies, where they thought they had safe shelter, and prepares his throne for judgment; his glory, departing for them drive it from them. God's way toward this people had long been a way of mercy; but now he changes his way, he comes out of his place, and will come down. He had seemed to retire, as one regards of what was done, but now he will show himself, he will rend the heavens, and will come down; not, as sometimes, in surprising power, but as an ordinary appearance of judgment, against them, but against them, which they looked not for. Isa. lxiv. 1.—xxvi. 21. 2. That when the Creator appears against them, it shall be in vain for any creature to appear for them. He will tread with contempt and disdain upon the high places of the earth, upon all the powers that are advanced in competition with him, as upon a court of judicature, and will not tread upon them, as to tread them down, and level them. High places, set up for the worship of idols, or for military fortifications, shall all be trodden down, and trampled into the dust. Do men trust to the height and strength of the mountains and rocks, as if they were sufficient to bear up their hopes, and bear off their fears. They shall be molten under him, melted down as wax before the
MICAH, I.

2. Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the valleys, and their products? They shall be cleft, or rent, with those fiery streams that shall come pouring down from the mountains when they are melted; they shall be ploughed and washed away, as they plough and wash the waters that are laid down a deep place. God is said to cleave the earth with rivers, Hab. iii. 9. Neither men of high degree, as the mountains, nor men of low degree, as the valleys, shall be able to secure either themselves or the land from the judgments of God, when they are sent with commission to lay all waste, and, like a scorching rain, to leave no food, Prov. xxviii. 8. This is applied particularly to the heathen then as the most rebellious part of mankind, and to the stones which were to be protection to the kingdom; (v. 6.) I will make Samaria, that is now a rich and populous city, as a heap of the field, as a heap of dung, laid there to be spread, or as a heap of stones gathered together to be carried away, and as plantings of a vineyard, as hillocks of earth raised to plant vines in. God will make of that city a heap, of that deserted city a ruin, Is. xxv. 2. Their altars had been as heaps in the furrows of the field, (Hos. xii. 11.) and now their houses shall be so, as ruinous heaps. The stones in the city are poured down into the valley by the fury of the conqueror, who will thus be revenged on those walls that so long held out against him. They shall be quite pulled down, so that the very foundations shall be discovered, that had been covered by the glittering picture; and not one stone shall be left upon another.

IV. A charge of sin upon them, as the procuring cause of these desolating judgments; (v. 5.) For the transgression of Jacob is all this. If it be asked, Why is God so angry, and why are Jacob and Israel thus brought to ruin by his anger? The answer is ready; Sin has done all the mischief, sin has laid all waste; all the calamities of Jacob and Israel are owing to their transgressions; if they had not gone away from God, he had never appeared thus against them. Note, External privileges and professions will not secure a sinful people from the judgments of God. If sin be found in the house of Israel, if Jacob be guilty of transgression and rebellion, God will not spare them; no, he will punish them first, for their sins are of all others most provoking to God. When God in anger asks, What is the transgression of Jacob? Note, When we feel the smart of sin, it concerns us to inquire what is the sin which we smart for, that we may particularly war against that which wars against us. And what is it? 1. It is idolatry, it is the high places, that is, the transgression, the great transgression, which reigns in Israel, that is spiritual whoredom, the violation of the marriage covenant, which merits more war. Even in the high places of Judah, though not so bad as the transgression of Jacob, were yet offensive enough to God, and a remaining blemish upon some of the good reigns; howbeit the high places were not taken away. 2. It is the idolatry of Samaria and Jerusalem, the royal cities of those two kingdoms; those were the most populous places, and where there were more people, the riches, and they were most wickedness, and they made one another worse; these were the most inimical places, there men lived most in wealth and pleasure, and they forgot God. These were the places that had the greatest influence upon the country, by authority and example: so that from them idolatry and fiery streams went forth throughout all the land, Jer. xxiii. 13. Note, Spiritual distempers are most contagious; they spread their contagious places they spread contagious. If the head-city of a kingdom, or the chief family in a parish, be vicious and profane, many will follow their pernicious ways, and write after a bad copy, when great ones set it them. The vices of leaders and rulers are leading, ruling ways; and therefore shall be surely and sorely punished. Those have a great deal to answer for indeed, that not only sin, but make Israel to sin. Those must expect to be made examples, that have been examples of wickedness. If the transgression of Jacob is Samaria, therefore shall Samaria become a heap. Let the ringleaders in sin hear this, and fear.

V. The punishment made to answer the sin, in the particular destruction of the idols, v. 7. 1. The gods they worshipped shall be destroyed; the graven images shall be beaten to pieces by the army of the Assyrians, and all the idols shall be laid desolate: Samaria and her idols were ruined together; by Sennacherib, 2 Kings xvii. 24. The stones set into the fire, for they were no gods; (Isa. xxxvii. 19.) and this was the Lord's doing; I will lay the idols desolate. Note, If the law of God prevail not to make men in authority destroy idols, God will take the work into his own hands, and will do it himself. (2.) The gifts that passed between them, and their gods shall be destroyed; for all the hire thereof shall be burnt with fire, which may be meant, either of the presents they made to their idols for the replenishing of their altars, and the adornment of their statues and temples, these shall become a prey to the victorious army, they shall rifle not only private houses, but the houses of their gods; or, of the corn, and wine, and oil, which they called the rewards, or hire, which their idols, their gods, gave them, (Hos. ii. 12.) these shall be taken from them by him whom (by ascribing them to their dear idols) they had defrauded of the honour due to him. Note, That cannot prosper, by which men either are hired to sin, or hire others to sin; for the wages of sin will be death. She gathered it of the hire of the harlot, and it shall return to the hire of a harlot. They enriched themselves by their leagues with the idolatrous nations who gave them advantages, to court them into the service of their idols, and their idols' temples were enriched with gifts by those who went a whoring after them. And all this wealth shall become a prey to the idolatrous nations, and so be the hire of an harlot again; wages to an army of idolaters, which shall take it as a reward given them by their gods. It shall be a present to king Darch, Hos. x. 6. What they have received from the Gentiles, and thought they got by them, shall be as the hire of an harlot; the curse of God shall be upon it, and it shall never prosper, or do them any good. It is common that what is squeezed out by one lust, is squandered away upon another.

8. Therefore I will wash and howl. I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. 9. For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah: he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem. 10. Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust. 11. Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked; the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel; he shall receive of you his standing. 12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good; but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem. 13. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the camlet to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the
daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee. 14. Therefore shall thou give presents to Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lie to the kings of Israel. 15. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel. 16. Make thee bale, and poll thee, for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

We have here a long train of mourners attending the funeral of a ruined kingdom.

1. The prophet is himself chief mourner; (v. 8-9.) I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked, as a man distracted with grief. The prophets usually expressed their own grief for the public grievances, partly to mollify the predictions of them, and to make it appear it was not out of ill will that they denounced the judgments of God—so far were they from desiring the woful day, that they dreaded it more than any thing; partly to show how very dreadful and mournful the calamities would be, and to stir up in the people a holy fear of them. The prophet reproduce their own grief, as a very great passion of God.

Note. We ought to lament the punishment of sinners as well as the sufferings of saints in this world; the weeping prophet did so, (Jer. ix. 1.) so did this prophet, he makes a wailing like the dragons, or rather the jackals, ravenous beasts, that in those countries used to meet in the night, and howl; and make hidden noises; he mourns as the ox, the seventh-calf, his calve, as some read it. Two things the prophet here thus dolefully laments. 1. That Israel's case is desperate; Her wound is incurable, it is ruin without remedy; man cannot help her, God will not, because she will not by repentance and reformation help herself. There is indeed balm in Gilgal, and a Physician there; but they will not apply themselves to the Physician, nor apply the balm to themselves, and therefore the wound is incurable. 2. That Judah likewise is in danger. The cup is going round, and is now put into Judah's hand; The enemy is come to the gate of Jerusalem. Soon after the destruction of Samaria and the ten tribes, the Assyrian army, under Sennacherib had siege to Jerusalem, came to the gate, but could not force their way through it. Thus was this great and main calamity of the prophet foreseen the fright, so deeply did he love the peace of Jerusalem.

II. Other places are here brought in mourning, and are called upon to mourn; but with this proviso, that they should not let the Philistines hear them; (v. 16.) Declare it not in Gath; this is borrowed from the Philistines, whose war was with Saul, and Jonathan; was not enough, neither could it be, that they should keep it to themselves and their companions merry with the sins or with the sorrows of God's Israel. David was silent, and stifled his griefs, when the wicked were before him, Ps. xxxix. 1. But though it may be prudent to keep it from the Philistines, yet God's people, who shall speak it so as herein to admit a silent one, when the church of God is in distress. Roll thyself in the dust, as great mourners used to do, and so let the house of Judah and every house in Jerusalem become a house of Ashrah, a house of dust; covered with dust, crumled into dust. When God makes the house dust, it becomes us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and to put our mouths in the dust. Thus accommodating ourselves to the providences that concern us. Dust we are; God brings us to the dust, that we may know it, and own it.

Divers other places are here named, that should be sharers in this universal mourning; the names of some of them were designated by familiar epithets, thence it is conjectured that they are names ficti upon them by the prophet, the signification of which might either indicate or aggravate the miseries coming upon them; thereby to awaken this secure and stupid people to a holy fear of divine wrath. We find Sennacherib's invasion thus described, in the prediction of it, by the immediate foretelling of the several cities that fall in his way, Isa. x. 28, 29, &c. Let us observe the particulars here.

1. The inhabitants of Saphir, which signifies near and beautiful, (Thou that dwellest fairly, so the margin reads it,) shall pass away into captivity, or be forced to flee, stripped of all their ornaments, and having their shame naked. Note, Those who appear ever so fine and delicate, know not what contempt they may be exposed to; and the more grievous will the shame be to those who have been inhabitants of Saphir.

2. The inhabitants of Zaanann, which signifies the country of flocks, a populous country, where the people are as numerous and thick as flocks of sheep, shall yet be so taken up with their own calamities, felt or feared, that they shall lose all way and method of safety in the coming of Beth-zeezil, which signifies a place near, shall not conde with, or bring any succour to their next neighbours in distress; for he shall receive of you his standing; the enemy shall encamp among you, O inhabitants of Zaanann, shall take up a station there, shall find footing among you. They may well think themselves excused from helping their neighbours, who have been so unkind and unwise as to help themselves and to hold their own. 3. As for the inhabitants of Maroth, which, some think, is put for Ramoth; others, that it signifies the rough places; they waited carefully for good, and were grieved for the want of it, but were disappointed; for evil came from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem, when the Assyrian army besieged it, v. 12. The inhabitants of Maroth might well overlook their own particular grievances, when they saw the holy city itself in danger; and might well overlook the Assyrian, that was the instrument, when they saw the evil coming from the Lord. 4. Lachish was a city of Judah, which Sennacherib laid siege to, Isa. xxxvi. 1, 2. The inhabitant of that city is called to bind the chariot to the swift beast, to prepare for an enemy that is very swift, and very strong, and very hard to secure themselves and their families; or, it is spoken ironically; You have had your chariots and your swift beasts, but where are they now? God's quarrel with Lachish is, that she is the beginning of the sin, probably the sin of idolatry, to the daughter of Zion; (v. 13.) they had learned it from the ten tribes, their near neighbours, and so infected the two tribes with it. Note, Those that help to bring sin into a country, do but thereby prepare for the throwing of themselves out of it. They must expect to be first in the punishment, who have been ringleaders in sin. The transgressions of Israel were found in thee; when they came to be traced up to their original, they were found to take rise very much from that city. God knows at whose hands the seeds are sown, and whom to find guilty. Lachish, having been so much necessary to the sin of Israel, shall certainly be reckoned with; Thou shalt give presents to Moresheth-gath, a city of the Philistines, which perhaps had a dependence upon Gath, that famous Philistine city; thou shalt send to court those of that city to assist thee, but it shall be in vain; for, (v. 14.) the houses of Achzib (a city which joined to Mareshah, or Moresheth, and is mentioned with it,
Josh. xv. 44.) shall be a lie to the kings of Israel; though they depend upon their strength, yet they shall fail them; here is an allusion to the
Achish signifies a lie, and so it shall prove to those that trust in it. 5. Maresah, that could not, or would not, help Israel, shall herself be made a prey; (v. 15.) "I will make an heir an enemy, that shall take possession of thy lands, with as much assurance as if he were heir-at-law to them, and he shall come to Adullam, and to the glory of Israel, to Jerusalem the head city;" or, "The glory of Israel shall come to Adullam, a poor despica- 
dle place;" or, "The king of Assyria, whom Israel had gloried in, shall come to Adullam, in laying the country waste." 6. The whole land of Judah seems to be spoken to, (v. 16.) and called to weeping and mourning; "Make thee bald, by tearing thy hair and shaving thy head; pull thee for thy delicate children, that had been tenderly and nicely brought up;" charge thy baldness as the eagle when she shall lead her followers, and is all over bald, for they are gone into captivity from thee, and are not likely to return; and their captivity will be the more grievous to them, because they have been brought up delicately, and have not been inured to hardship." Or this is directed particularly to the inhabitants of Maresah, as v. 15. That was the prophet's own city, and yet he denounces the judgments of God against the iniquity of his sin, that it had such a prophet, and knew not the day of its visitation. Its being thus privileged, since it improved not the privilege, shall not procure favour for it either with God or with his prophet.

CHAP. II.
In this chapter, we have, I. The sins with which the people of Israel are charged, covetousness and oppression, fraudulent and violent practices, (v. 1, 2.) dealing bar-
barously, even with women and children, and other helpless people, v. 3. Opposition of God's prophets, and silencing them, (v. 6, 7.) and delighting in false prophets, v. 11. II. The judgments with which they are threatened for those sins, that they should be humbled and impoverished, v. 1. 11. a. Gracious promises of comfort, reserved for the good people among them, in the Messiah, v. 12, 13. And this is the sum and scope of most of the chapters of this and other prophecies.

1. WO to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2. And they covet fields, and take them by vio-
lence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. 3. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks: neither shall ye go 
haughtily: for this time is evil. 4. In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled; he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields. 5. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord.

Here is, 1. The injustice of man contriving the evil of sin, v. 1, 2. God was coming forth against this people to destroy them, and here he shows what was the ground of his controversy with them, it is that which is often mentioned as a sin that hastens the ruin of nations and families as much as any other, the sin of oppression. Let us see the steps wherein he diligently desire that which is not their own—that is the root of bitterness, the root of all evil; (v. 2.) They cover fields and houses, as Ahab did Naboth's vineyard. "O that such a one's field and house were mine! It lies convenient for me, and I would manage it better than he does; it is fitter for me than for him." 2. They set their wits on work, to devise iniquity; (v. 3.) not so, but they devise iniquity with a great deal of cursed art and policy, they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves, or bring them-

selves into danger, or under reproach by it. This is called working evil; they are working it in their heads, in their families, and are as intent upon it, and with as much pleasure, as if they were doing it, and are as confident of their success (so wisely do they think they have laid their scheme) as if it were assuredly done. Note, It is bad to do mischief upon a sudden thought, but much worse to devise it, to do it with design and deliberation; when the craft and subtility of the old serpent appears with his poison and venom, it is wickedness in perfection. They devised it upon their beds, when they lay down to rest; which perhaps, and which is a very liceous design held their eyes waking; upon their beds, where they should have been remembering God, and meditating upon him, where they should have been communing with their own heart, and ex-
amining them, they were devising iniquity. It is of great consequence to improve and employ the hours of our retirement and solitude in a proper manner.

3. They employ their power in executing what they have designed and contrived; they practise the iniquity they have devised, because it is in the power of their hands; they find that they can compass it by the help of their wealth, and the authority and in-
rest they have, and that none dare centre them, or call them to an account for it; and this, they think, will justify them, and bear them out in it. Note, It is the mistake of many, to think that as they can, they may do, whereas no power is given for destruction, but all for edification. 4. They are industrious and very expeditions in accomplishing the iniquity they have devised; when they have settled the matter in their thoughts, in their beds, they lose no time, but, as soon as the morning is light, they practise it; they are early up in the prose-
cution of their designs, and what ill their hand finds going to the work, with all the force of their power, and their slothfulness and dilatoriness in doing good, and should shame us out of it. In the service of God, and our generation, let it never be said that we left that to be done to-morrow, which we could do to-day. 5. They stick at nothing, to compass their designs; what they covet they take away, if they can, and, (1.) They care not what wrong they do, if they can; they bring in and set up for their own measure, and thus they cause a man's fields by violence; not only by fraud, and underhand practices, and colour of law, but by force and with a high hand. (2.) They care not how they do wrong to, nor how far the iniquity extends, which they devise; they oppress a man and his house, they rob and ruin those that have numerous families to maintain, and are not con-
strained, that as a man could, he makes them work as children a begging. They oppress a man and his heritage; they take away from men that which they have in unquestionable title to, having received it from their ancestors, and which they have but in trust to transmit it to their posterity; but those op-
pressors care not how many they impoverish, so they may but enrich themselves. Note, If covet-
ousness reigns in the heart, commonly all compos-
son is banished from it; and if any man love this world, as the love of the Father, so the love of his neighbour, is not in him. 11. The justice of God covering the evil of punishment (for this sin) 3. Therefore thus saith the Lord, the righteous God, that judges between man and man, and is an Avenger on them that do wrong; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, against the whole kingdom, the house of Israel, and particularly those families in it that were cruel and oppressive: they unjustly devise evil against their brethren, and God will justly devise evil against them. 4. For all iniquity of God's righteous commands, but broke those bonds asunder, and cast away those cords from them; and therefore God will lay upon them the heavy yoke of his righteous judgments, and they shall not be able to withdraw their necks from that; those that will not be overruled shall be overcome. 2. He finds them very proud and seditiously, and therefore he tells them that they shall not go haughtily with stretched-forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go; (Isa. iii. 16.) for this time is evil, and the events of it were very humbling and mortifying, and such as will bring down the stoutest spirit. 3. He found them very merry and jovial, and therefore tells them their note shall be changed, their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness; (v. 4.) In that day, when God comes to punish you for you oppression, shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, with a lamentation of lamentations, (so the word is,) a most lamentable lamentation; as a song of songs is a most pleasing song. Their enemies shall insult over them, and make a jest of their griefs, for they shall take up a parable against them; 4. If a man, walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine, and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people. Here are two sins charged upon the people of Israel, and judgments denounced against them for each, such judgments as exactly answer the in Persecuting God's prophets, and oppressing God's enemies. 1. Persecuting God's prophets; suppressing and silencing them is a sin that provokes God as much as any other, for it not only spits in the face of his authority over us, but spurns at the bowels of his mercy to us; for his sending prophets to us is a sure and valuable token of his good will. Now observe here, 1. What the obstruction and opposition were, which this people gave to God's prophets. They said to them that prophesy, Prophecy ye not, as Isa. xxx. 10. They said to the seers, "See not; do not trouble us with accounts of what you have seen, nor bring us any such frightful messages." They must not prophesy at all, or they must prophesy only what they please. The word for prophesying, here, signifies dropping, for the words of the prophets dropped from heaven as the dew. Now those that hate to be reformed, hate to be reproved, and do all they can to silence faithful ministers. Amos was forbidden to prophesy, Amos vii. 10, 12. Therefore persecutors stop their breath, because they have no other way to stop their mouths, and therefore prophesy, as if they were already in his possession of our estates, he has confirmed them in the possession of them, that have taken them from us." Note, It is just with God, that those who have dealt fraudulently and violently with others, should themselves be dealt fraudulently and violently with. (2.) God shall ratify what they say in their despair; (v. 5,) so it shall be: Thou shalt have none to cast a cord by lot, in the congregation of the Lord, to divide inheritances, but there shall be no inheritances to divide, no courts to try titles to lands, or determine controversies about them, or cast lots upon them, as in Joshua's time, for all shall be in the enemy's hand. This land, which should be taken from them, they had not only an unquestionable title to, but a very comfortable enjoyment of, for it was in the congregation of the Lord; or, rather, the congregation of the Lord was in it; it was God's land, it was a holy land, and therefore it was the more grievous to them to be turned out of it. Note, Those are to be reckoned the most calamities, which cut us off from the congregation of the Lord, or cut us short in the enjoyment of the privileges of it.

6. Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them that they shall not take shame. 7. O thou that art named The house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? 8. Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war. 9. The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever. 10. Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction. 11. If a man, walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine, and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

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these prophesy. Let not those prophesy, that tell us of our faults, and threaten us, but let these prophesy, that will flatter us in our sins, and cry peace to us. They will not say that they have no ministers at all, but they will have such a sum, a sum of corruption, as what they would have them, and go their way. This they are charged with, v. 11. that when they silenced and frowned upon the true prophets, they contumence and encouraged pretenders, and set them up, and made an interest for them, to confront God's faithful prophets; If a man walk in the spirit of falsehood, pretend to have the Spirit of God; but that will have such a sum, a sum of corruption, and delusion, and he himself knows that he has no commission, no instruction, from God, yet, if he says, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and strong drink, if he will but assure them that they shall have wine and strong drink enough, that they need not fear the judgments of war and famine, which the other prophets threatened them with, that they should always have plenty of the delights of sense, and never know the want of them; and if he will but tell them that it is lawful for them to drink as much as they please of their wine and strong drink, and they need not scruple being drunk, and they shall have peace, though they go on, and add drunkenness to thirst, such a prophet as this is a man after their own heart, who will tell them that there is not a word spoken against them that is not for their convenience, for that they lead, he shall even be the prophet of this people; such a man they would have to be their prophet, that will not only associate himself with them in their rioting and revellings, but will pretend to consecrate it by his prophecies, and so harden them in their sin and sensuality. Note, It is not strange if people that are vicious and debauched, court to have ministers that will go on with them, and in the same way, for they are willing to believe God is so too, Ps. 1. 21. But how are sacred things profaned, when they are prostituted to such base purposes, when prophecy itself shall be pressed into the service of a lewd and profane crew! But thus that servant who said, My Lord delays his coming, by the spirit of falsehood, smote his fellowservants, and ate and drank with the drunkards.

2. How they are here expostulated with upon this matter; (v. 7.) "O thou that art named the house of Jacob, does it become thee to say and do thus? Wilt thou silence them that prophesy, and forbid them to speak in God's name?" Note, It is an honour and privilege to be named of the house of Jacobs; Thou art called a Jew, Rom. ii. 17. But when those who are called by that worthy name degenerate, they commonly prove the worst of men themselves, and the worst enemies to God's prophets. The Jews who were named of the house of Jacob, were the most violent persecutors of the first preachers of the gospel. Upon this, the prophet here argues with the opposers of the word of God, and shows us, (1.) What an affront they hereby put upon God, the God of the holy prophets; "Is the Lord, a God of false prophets?" or, "Are the false prophets, you do what you can to silence his Spirit too; but do you think you can do it? Can you the Spirit of God your Prisoner and your Servant? Will you prescribe to him what he shall say, and forbid him to say what is displeasing to you? If you silence the prophets, yet cannot the Spirit of the Lord find out other ways to reach your consciences? Can you be better guides than the prophets, you, who are not named of the house of Jacob, and yet are Israel, and the son of God?"

(2.) What a scandal it was to their profession as Jews; "You are named the house of Jacob, and it is your honour; but are these his doings? Are these the doings of your father Jacob? Do you herein tread in his steps? No; If you were indeed his children, you would do his works; but now you seek to kill and silence a man that tells you the truth, in God's name; This did not Abraham," John viii. 59. 40. This did not Jacob. Or, "Are these God's doings? Are these doings that will please him? Are these the doings of his people? No, you know the words, if they be not, however some may be so to a certain kind of men, and bigoted as to kill God's ministers, and think that therein they do him service," John xvi. 2. (3.) Let them consider how unreasonable and absurd the thing was in itself; Do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly? Yes, certainly they do; it is an appeal to the experiences of the generation of the upright. "Call now if there be any of you who will hear me, will I not hear them? say I, the Lord. Herein you are wrong, God, who owns the words of the prophets to be his words, (they are my words,) and who by them aims and designs to do good to mankind, (Ps. cxix. 68.) And will you hinder the great Benefactor from doing good? Will you put the light of the world under a bushel? You might as well say to the sun, Shine not, as say to the stars, See not. Herein you wrong the souls of men, and deprive them of the benefit designed them by the word of God." Note, Those are enemies not only to God, but to the world, they are enemies to God's ministers; and thus they, by putting down one set of men, and conse-"
God will leave them to themselves to hearken to such; since they will be deceived, let them be deceived; since they will not admit the truth in the love of it, God will send them strong delusions, to believe a lie. 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. They shall have prophets that will prophesy to them for wine and strong drink, (so some read it,) that they will give a cast of their lots, or throw a bottle of wine, or a flagon of ale; and soothsiers in their sins, if they will but feed them with the gratification of their lusts; to have such prophets, and to be ridden by them, is as a judgment as any people can be under, and as bad a preface of ruin approaching as it is to a particular person to be under the influence of a debauched conscience.

10. Oppressing God’s poor is another sin they are charged with, as before; (v. 1, 2) for it is a sin doubly hateful and provoking to God. Observe, 1. How the sin is described; (v. 8, 9,) when they contemned God’s prophets and opposed them, they broke out into all other wickedness; what bonds will hold those that have no reverence for God’s word? They who formerly rose up against the enemies of the nation and defence of the country, and therein behaved themselves bravely, now of late rose up as enemies of the nation, and, instead of defending it, destroyed it, and did it more mischief (as usually such vipers in the bowels of a state do) than a foreign enemy could do. They made a prey of men, women, and children. (1.) Of men, that were true, that were called; and were set before, as men worse from war, that were far from any bad designs, but went peaceably about their lawful occasions; those they set upon, as if they had been dangerous, obnoxious people, and pulled off the robe with the garment from them, stripped them both of the upper and the inner garment, took away their cloak, and would have their coat also; thus brought they the use the that were given in the land, who, being harmless, were fearless, and so the more easily made a prey of. (2.) Of women, whose sex should have been their protection; (v. 9.) The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; they devour widows’ houses, (Matt. xxiii. 14,) and so turn them out of the possession of them, because they were pleasant houses, and being pillars of support and assisted those that were asked to deal thus barbarously with women; but that which especially aggravated it was, that they were the women of God’s people, whom they knew to be under his protection. (3.) Of children, whose age entitles them to a tender usage; From their children have you taken away my glory for ever. It was the glory of the Israelites’ children, that they were free, but they enslaved them; that they were born in God’s house, and had a right to the privileges of it, but they sold them to strangers, sent them into idolatrous countries, where they were deprived for ever of that glory, at least, the oppressors designed their captivity should be perpetual.

Note. The righteous God will certainly reckon for injuries done to the widows and fatherless, who, being helpless and friendless, cannot otherwise expect to be righted.

2. What the sentence is, that is passed upon them for it; (v. 10,) “Arise ye, and depart; prepare to quit this land, for you shall be forced out of it, as you have forced the women and children of my people out of their possessions; it is not, it shall not, be your rest, as it was intended that Canaan should be, Ps. xcviii. 12. You shall have neither contentment nor continuance in it, because it is polluted by your wickedness.” Sin is defiling to a land, and sinners cannot expect to rest in a land which they have polluted, but it will spue them out, as this land spued out the Canaanites of old, when they had polluted it with their abominations, Lev. xviii. 27, 28.

“Nay, you shall not only be obliged to depart out of this land, but it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction; you shall either be turned out of it, or (which is all one) you shall be ruined in it.” We may apply this to our state in this present world; it is polluted, there is a great deal of corruption in this world, through lust, and therefore we should arise, and depart out of it, keep at a distance from the corruption that is in it, and keep ourselves unspotted from it; it is not our rest, it was never intended to be so; it was designed for our passage, but not for our portion, our inn, but not our home; here we have no continuing city; let us therefore arise and depart, let us sit loose to it, and live above it, think of leaving it, and seek a continuing city above.

12. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold; they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. 13. The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their King shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

After the threatenings of wrath, the chapter here concludes, as is usual in the prophets, with promises of mercy, which were in part fulfilled when the Jews returned out of Babylon, and had their full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah. Their grievances shall be all redressed.

1. Whereas they were dispersed, they shall be brought together; and shall in due time receive the tokens of God’s favour to them, and shall have communion with each other, and comfort in each other; (v. 12.) “I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee, all that belong to thee, all that are named of the house of Jacob, (v. 7,) that are now expelled your country, v. 10. I will bring you together again, and not one of you shall be lost, not one of you shall be lacking. In the remembrance of Israel, that remnant that is designed and reserved for salvation, they shall be brought to incorporate in one body; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah.” Sheep are inoffensive and sociable creatures; they shall be as the flock in the midst of their fold, their own fold, where they are safe under the shepherd’s eye and care; and they shall make great noise, as numerous flocks and herds do, and in their bleating and lowing, by reason of the multitude of men, (for the sheep are men, as the prophet explains this comparison, Ezek. xxxiv. 31,) not by reason of their stripes and contentions, but by reason of their great numbers. This was accomplished, when Christ by his gospel gathered together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad, and united both Jews and Gentiles into one fold, and under one Shepherd; when all the complaint was, that the place was too strait for them—that was the noise, by reason of their multitude; (Isa. xlix. 19, 20,) when there were some added to the church from all parts of the world, and all men were drawn to Christ by the attractive power of his cross; which shall be done yet more, and more, and perfectly done, when he shall send forth his angels to gather in his elect from the four winds.

2. Whereas God had seemed to desert them, and cast them off, now he will own them, and head them, and help them through all the difficulties that are in the way of their return and deliverance;
Micah, pray it to know of all their plans, and under his guidance have broken up, and have passed through the gate, the door of escape out of their captivity, and are gone out by it with courage and resolution, having Omnipotence for their Vanguard. Their King shall pass before them to lead them the way, even Jehovah, (he is their King) on the head of them, as he was on the head of the armies of Israel, when they followed the pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness, and when he appeared to Joshua, as Captain of the Lord's hosts. Christ is the church's King; he is Jehovah; he heads them; passes before them; brings them out of the land of their captivity; brings them into the land of their inheritance; before his face; and takes, broke in upon the powers of darkness, and broke through them; first rent the vail, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The learned Bishop Pearson applies it to the resurrection of Christ, by which he obtained the power and became the Pattern of our resurrection. The Breaker is gone up before us out of the grave, and has carried away its gates, as Symon did Ola's, bar and all, and by that breach we go out. The learned Dr. Pocock mentions it as the sense which some of the ancient Jews give of it, that the breaker is Elias, and their King the Messiah, the Son of David; and he thinks we may apply it to Christ and his forerunner John the Baptist. John was the breaker, he broke the ice, prepared the way of the Lord by the baptism of repentance, in him the gospel began, from his time the kingdom of heaven suffered violence; and so the Christian church is introduced, with Messiah the Prince before it, on the head of it, going forth conquering and to conquer.

Chap. III.

What the apostle says of another of the prophets, is true of this, who was also his contemporary. Enos is very bold, Rom. x. 20. So, in this chapter, Micah is very bold, in reproving and threatening the great men that were the ringleaders in sin; and he gives the reason, (v. 5.) why he was so bold, because he had commission and instruction from God to say what he said, and was carried out in it by a higher spirit and power than his own. Magnificacy and ministry are two great ordinances of God, for God to his own ends; and these are the great corruptions of the world, and the intentions of them perverted; and upon those that abused them, and so abused the church with them, the prophet is very severe, and justly so. 1. He gives them the heads, the princes, the high and low, threatening princes, (v. 1-4.) and false and flattering prophets, v. 5. 7. If. He gives them their lesson jointly, putting them together, as acting in conjunction for the ruin of the kingdom, which they should see the ruins of, v. 9.-12.

1. And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know judgment? 2. Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; 3. Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. 4. Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them; he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have betrayed themselves ill in their doings. 5. Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: 6. Therefore might shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. 7. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded; yea, they shall all cover their lips: for there is no answer of God.

Princes and prophets, when they faithfully discharge the duty of their office, are to be highly honoured above other men; but, when they betray their trust, and act contrary to it, they should hear of their faults as well as others, and shall be made to know that there is a God above them, to whom they are accountable; at his bar, the prophet here, in his name, arraigns them.

1. Let the preacher hear their charge and their doom. The heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel, are called upon to hear what the prophet has to say to them, v. 1. The word of God has respect for the greatest of men, which the ministers of that word ought to apply as there is occasion. The prophet here has comfort in the reflection upon it, that, whatever the success was, he had not to know faces, (as the Hebrew phraseth,) "as princes and as heads, princes. He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had not shrunk from his duty, for fear of the face of men. He tells them, 1. What was expected from them; Is it not for you to know judgment? He means, to do judgment, for otherwise the knowledge of it is of no avail. "Is it not your business to administer justice impartially, and not to know faces, (as the Hebrew phraseth,) "but to know judgment, and the merits of every cause?" Or, it may be taken for granted, that the heads and rulers are well acquainted with the rules of justice, whatever others are; for they have these means of knowledge, and have not those excuses for ignorance, which some others have, that are poor and foolish; (v. 4.) And so, they have no excuse. Their business is the more provoking to God, for they sin against knowledge. "Is it not for you to know judgment? Yes, it is; therefore stand still, and hear your own judgment, and judge, if it be right, whether any thing can be objected against it."

2. How wretchedly they had transgressed the rules of judgment, though they knew what they were. Their principle and disposition are bad, they hate the good, and love the evil; they hate God in others, and hate it should have any influence on themselves; they hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good, and do good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief, and in those that do mischief. This being their principle, their practice was accordingly; they are very cruel and severe to those that are under their power; and whoever lies at their mercy, will find that they have no mercy. They barbarously devour those whom they should protect, and, as unfaithful shepherds, fleece the flock they should feed; nay, instead of feeding it, they feed upon it, Ezek. xxxiv. 2. It is fit indeed that he who feeds a flock, should eat of the milk of the flock, (1 Cor. ix. 7.) but that will not content them. They eat the flesh of your flock; it is said, (v. 3.) but they are feeble minded; they should be hearted with the word; but that will not serve, they flay the skin from off them, (v. 3.) by imposing heavier taxes upon them than they can bear, and exacting them with rigour; by mock and fines, and corporal punishments, for
pretended crimes, they ruined the estates and families of their subjects, took away from some of their lives, from others their livelihoods, and were to their subjects as beasts of prey, rather than shepherds. They break their homes to come to the marrow, and chop the fleshly faces as for the pot. This shall we them to be. (1.) Very rasous and greedy for themselves, indulging themselves in luxury and sensuality. (2.) Very barbarous and cruel to those that were under them, not caring whom they aggred, so they could but enrich themselves; such evil is the love of money the root of. 3. How they might expect that God should deal with them, who had done so to his subjects: the rule is this: They shall have judgment without mercy, that have showed no mercy; (v. 4.) They shall cry to the Lord, but he will not hear them, in the day of their distress, as the poor cried to them in the day of their prosperity, and they would not hear them. There will come a time, when the most proud and scornful sinners will cry to the Lord, and see for that mercy, which they once neither valued nor copied out; but it will then be in vain, God will even hide his face from them at that time, that time when they need his favour, and see themselves undone without it. At another time they would have turned their buck upon him; but at that time he will turn his back upon them, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. Note, Men cannot expect to do ill any longer; but it is not so easy to break as to make; as Bezzeck did, that done to them, which they did to others, for he is righteous who takes vengeance; with the forward God will show himself forward, and he often gives up cruel and unmerciful men into the hands of those who are cruel and unmerciful to them, as themselves have formerly to others. This agrees with Prov. xxii. 13. Thou shalt smite his stock the crown of the just, he shall be cut off, and shall not be heard; but the merciful have reason to hope that they shall obtain mercy.

III. Let the prophets hear their charge too, and their doom; they were such as prophesied falsely, and the princes bare rule by their means. Observe,

1. What was their sin. (1.) They made it all their business to flatter and deceive the people: They make my people err, lead them into mistakes, both concerning what they should do, and concerning what God would do with them; it is ill with a people, when their leaders cause them to err, and those draw them out of the way, that should guide them, and go before them, in it. They make them to cry by praying peace, by telling them that they do well, and that all shall be well with them; whereas they are in the paths of sin, and within a step of ruin. They cry peace, but they bite with their teeth; which perhaps is meant of their biting their own lips, as we are apt to do, when we would suppress something which we are ready to speak; when they cried peace, their own hearts gave them the lie, and their own teeth were in them, and to contradict themselves, but they bit with their teeth, and kept it in. They were not blind leaders of the blind, for they saw the ditch before them, and yet led their followers into it. (2.) They made it all their aim to glorify themselves, and serve their own belly, as the seducers in St. Paul's time; (Rom. vii. 18.) for their god is their belly, Phil. iii. 19. They be blind leaders of the blind: they will flatter and compliment those that will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those that put not into their mouths, that are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies, to them they do not cry peace, as they do to those whom they look upon as their benefactors, but they even prepare war against them; against them they denounce the judgments of God; they preach either comfort or terror to men, not according as they are to God, but as they are to them: as the crafty priests of the church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or frown upon the offerer, according as his offering is. Jastly is it insisted on as a necessary qualification of a minister, (1 Tim. iii. 3. and again, Tit. i. 7.) that he be not greedy of filthy lucre.

2. What is the sentence passed upon them for this sin, v. 6, 7. It is threatened, (1.) That they shall be involved in troubles and miseries with those to whom they had cried peace; Night shall be upon them, a dark, cold night of calamity, such as they, in their flattery, led the people to hope would never come; It shall be dark unto you, darker to you than to others; the sun shall go down over the prophets, shall go down at noon; all comfort shall depart from them, and they shall be deprived of all hope of it. The day shall be dark over them, in which they promised themselves light. Nor shall they only be surrounded with outward troubles, but their minds shall be full of confusion, and they shall be brought to their wits' ends; their heads shall be clouded, and their own thoughts shall trouble them; and that is trouble enough. They kept others in the dark, and now God will bring them into the dark. (2.) That thereby they shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophecy for ever shamed. They never had any true vision; and now, the event disproving the prophets' speeches, it shall be made to appear that they never had any, that there never was an answer of God to them, but it was all a sham, and they were cheats and imposters. Their reputation being thus quite sunk, their confidence would of course fail them. And their spirits being ruffled and confused, their invention would fail them too; and by reason of this darkness both within and without, they shall not have so much as a counterfeit vision to produce, they shall be ashamed and confounded, and cover their lips, as men that are quite baffled, and have nothing to say for themselves. Note, Those who deceive others, are but preparing confusion for their own faces.

3. But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. 9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. 10. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11. The heads thereof of judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us! none evil can come upon us. 12. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field; and Jerusalem shall become heaps; and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Here,

1. The prophet experiences a divine power going along with him in his work, and he makes a solemn profession and protestation of it, as that which would justify him, and bear him out, in his plain dealing with the princes and rulers. He would not, he durst not, make thus bold with the great men, but that he was carried out to do it by a prophetical impulse and impression. It was not he that said it, but God by him, and he could not but speak the word that
God put into his mouth. It comes in likewise by way of opposition to the false prophets, who were full of shame when they lived to see themselves proved liars, and who never had courage to deal faithfully with the people, but fluctuated them in their sins; they were weekly, not having the Spirit, but truly (ver. 11.) They had no spirit of truth, or of order and of might: he had an ardent love to God and to the souls of men, a deep concern for his glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had likewise courage to reprove it, and witness against it, not fearing the wrath either of great men or of great multitudes; whatever difficulties or discouragements he met with, they did not deter him or drive him from his work; none of these things moved him; and all this was guided by judgment and discretion; he was a man of conduct as well as courage; in all his preaching there was light, as well as heat, and a spirit of wisdom as well as of zeal; thus was this man of God thoroughly furnished for every good work he had to say, and every good work he had to do. Those he preached to, convince their hearts of the greatness of the order and judgment, for they found both their understandings opened, and their hearts made to burn within them; with such evidence and demonstration, and with such power, did the word come from him. 2. Whence he had these qualifications; not from and of himself, but he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord. Knowing that it was indeed the Spirit of the Lord that was in him, a full make to say, that it was a divine revelation that he delivered, he spake it boldly, and as one having authority, set his face as a flint, knowing he should be justified and borne out in what he said, Isa. 1. 7. 8. Note, Those who act honestly, may act boldly; and those who are sure that they have a commission from God, need not be afraid of opposition from men. Nay, he had a heart that was in the highest degree bold, but the Spirit of sanctification enabed him with the boldness and wisdom which were requisite for him. It was not in any strength of his own that he was strong; for who is sufficient for these things? But in the Lord, and in the power of his might; for from him all our sufficiency is. Are we full of power at any time, for that which is good? It is purely by the Spirit of the Lord, for of ourselves we are weak as water; it is the God of Israel that gives strength and power both to his people and to his ministers. 3. What use he made of these qualifications—this judgment and this power; he declared to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. If transgression be found in Jacob and Israel, they must be told of it, and it is the business of God’s prophets to tell them of it; to cry aloud, and not to spare, Isa. viii. 1. Those who would hear the word of God, must be willing to be told of their faults, and must not only give their ministers leave to deal plainly and faithfully with them, but take it kindly, and be thankful; but because few have meekness enough to receive reproach, those have need of a great deal of boldness, who are to give reproach, and must pray for a Spirit both of wisdom and of meekness.

II. The prophet exerts this power in dealing with the heads of the house of Jacob, both the princes and the prophets, whom he had drawn up a high charge against, in the former part of the chapter, he repeats the summons of their attendance and attendance, (v. 9.) the same that we had, v. 1. direct ing himself to the princes of the house of Israel, yet he means those of Judah; for it appears (Jer.xxxvi. 18, 19. where v. 12. is quoted) that this was spoken in Hezekiah’s kingdom; but, the ten tribes being gone into captivity, Judah is all that is now left. The princes of Jacob is the same as the princes of the Lord, v. 8. Having in himself an assurance of the truth of what he said, he said it with assurance. Compare him with those false prophets, and you will say, there is no comparison between them, What is the chaff to the wheat? Jer. xxiii. 28. What is painted fire to real fire? Observe here, 1. The great wickedness that these heads of the house of Jacob were guilty of, princes, priests, and prophets, and the people were fed on false prophecies, they were so blind to the eyes and ears of God, that they abhorred all judgment; they would not be governed by any of its laws, either in their own practice or in passing sentence upon appeals made to them; they perverted all equity, and scorned to be under the direction or correction of justice, when it could not be made pliable to their secular interests. When without pretence of doing right, they did the most palpable wrongs, then they gave up equity, and made it serve a purpose contrary to the intention of the Founder of magnificence and of power. It is laid to their charge, (v. 10.) that they build up Zion with blood. They pretend, in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they build up Zion and Jerusalem, they add new edifices and enrichments to these sacred places, to them: they establish and advance the public interests both in church and state, and think that therein they do God and Israel good service. But it is with blood and with iniquity, and therefore it cannot prosper; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God justify their contradictions to the law of God. They mistake, who think that a burning, flaming zeal for the holy place, and the propagating of the faith, will serve to conserve, conquer, robbers and tyrants, massacres and depredations; no Zion’s walls owe those no thanks, that build them up with blood and iniquity. The sin of man works not the righteousness of God. The office of the princes is to judge upon appeals made to them; but they judge for reward, (v. 11.) they give judgment on their side; they would have the most righteous cause shall not be carried without a fee, and for a fee the most unrighteous cause shall be carried. Miserable is the people’s case, when the judge’s inquiry upon a cause, is not, “What is to be done in it?” but “What is to be got by it?” (2.) The priests’ work was to teach the people, and for that the law had provided them a very honourable, comfortable maintenance; but that will not content them, they teach for hire over and above, and will be hired to teach anything, as an oracle of God, which they know will please, and gain them an interest. (3.) The prophets, it should seem, had honorary fees given them by way of gratuity, 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8. But these prophets govern themselves in their prophesying by the prospect of temporal advantage, and that was the main thing they had in their eye; They done for money, their tongues were mercenary, they would either prophesy, or let it alone, according as they found it most for their advantage; and a man might have what oracle he would from them, if he would but pay them for it; the successors of Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Note, Though that which is wicked can never be consecrated by a zeal for the church, yet that which is wicked may be, and often is, consecrated, by the love of the world. When men do that which in itself is good, but do it for filthy lucre, it loses its excellency, and becomes an abomination both to God and man.

2. Their vain presumption and carnal confidence, notwithstanding; They lean upon the Lord, and
because they are, in profession, his people, they think there is neither harm nor danger in these their wicked practices. Faith builds upon the Lord, rests in him, and relies upon him, as the soul's Foundation; presumption only feals upon the Lord as a Prop, makes use of him to serve a turn, while still the world is the foundation that is built upon. They speak with a great deal of confidence, (1.) Of their honour; "Is not the Lord among us? Have we not tokens of his presence with us, his temple, his ark, his lively oracles?" They are high and mighty because of the holy mountain, and its dignities, (Zeph. iii. 11.) as if their church-prileges would palliate the worst of practices; or as if God's presence with them were intended to make the priests and people rich with the sale of their performances. It was true that the Lord was among them by his ordinances, and this puffed them up with pride; but if they imagined that he was among them by his favour and love, they were mistaken; but it is a cheat the children of men often put upon themselves, to think they have God with them, when they have by their sin provoked him to depart from them. (2.) They are confident of their own safety; No evil can come upon us. Many are rocked asleep in a fatal security by their church-prileges, as if those would protect them in sin, and shelter them from punishment, which are really, and will be, the greatest aggrava-
tions both of their sin and of their punishment. Not the name of the Lord will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their impiety will be their impiety.

3. The doom passed upon them for their real wickedness, notwithstanding their imaginary protection; (v. 12.) This shall be in a field of rocks, or he ploughed as a field. This is that passage which is quoted as a bold word spoken by Micah, (Jer. xxvi. 18.) which yet Hezekiah and his princes took well, though in another reign it might have gone near to cost him his head; nay, they repeated and reformed, and so the execution of this threatening was prevented, and did not come in those days. (3.) The places that were foretold, places that had been highly honoured with the tokens of God's presence, and the performances of his worship; it is Zion that shall be ploughed as a field, the building burnt to the ground, and levelled with it. Some observe that this was literally fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when the ground was ploughed up, on which the city stood, in token of its utter desolation, and that no city should be built upon that ground without the emperor's leave. Even Jerusalem, the holy city, shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built, shall be overgrown with briers and thorns, as the high places of the forest. If sacred places be polluted by sin, they must expect to be wasted and ruined by the rage of God. (2.) It is the wickedness of those who preside in them, that brings the ruin; "It is for your sake, that Zion shall be ploughed as a field; you pretend to build up Zion, but doing it by blood and iniquity, you pull it down." Note, The sin of priests and princes is often the ruin of states and churches. Deiurant reges, plebuitur Achivi—The kings are bemaddened, and the people suffer for it.

CHAP. IV.

Comparing this chapter with the close of the foregoing chapter, the comfortable promises here with the terrible threatenings of that, is evident, (1.) toward the Jewish church, which fell, severity, when Zion was ploughed as a field; but toward the Christian church, which was built upon the ruins of it, goodness, great goodness; for it is here promised, 1. That it shall be advanced and enlarged by the accession of the nation to it, v. 1. 2. That it shall be protected in tranquility and peace, v. 3. 4. 3. That it shall be kept close, and constant, and faithful to God, v. 5. 4. That, under Christ's dispensation, the same blessings should be enjoyed in the church of the Gentiles, as were intended to be in the church of the Jews, v. 6—7. V. That it shall have an ample and flourishing dominion, v. 3. VI. That its troubles should be brought to a happy issue at length, v. 9—10. VII. That its enemies should be disquieted, nay, that they should be destroyed in and by their attempts against it, v. 11—13.

1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall exalt itself above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. 2. And many nations shall come and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 3. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4. But they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. 5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever. 6. In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; 7. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

It is very comfortable but with which this chapter begins, and very reviving to those who lay the interests of God's church near their heart, and are concerned for the welfare of it. When we sometimes see the corruptions of the church, especially of church-rulers, princes, priests, and prophets, seeking their own things, and not the things of God; and when we soon after see the desolations of the church, Zion, for their sakes, ploughed as a field, we are ready to fear that it will one day perish between both, that the name of Israel shall be no more in remembrance; we are ready to give up all for gone, and to conclude the church will have neither root nor branch upon earth: but let not our faith fail in this matter; out of the ashes of the church another phoenix shall arise. In the last words of the foregoing chapter, we left the mountain of the house as it were, and went to the high places of the forest; and is it possible that such a wilderness should ever become a fruitful field again? Yes, the first words of this chapter bring in the mountain of the Lord's house as much dignified by being frequented, as ever it had been disgraced by being deserted. Though Zion be ploughed as a field, yet
God was not cast off his people, but by the fall of the Jews salvation is come to the Gentiles, so that it proves to be the riches of the world, Rom. xi. 11, 12. This is the mystery which God by the prophet here shows us, and he says the very same in the three last verses of this chapter, which are another prophet said by the word of the Lord at the same time, (Is. ii. 2-4.) that out of the mouth of these two witnesses these promises might be established; and very precious promises are, relating to: the gospel-church, which have been in part accomplished, and will be yet more and more, for he is faithful, and sure of promise.

1. That there shall be a church for God set up in the world, after the defection and destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days; that is, some of the rabbins themselves acknowledge, in the days of the Messiah. The people of God shall be incorporated by a new charter, a new spiritual way of worship shall be enacted, and a new institution of offices to attend it; better privileges shall be granted by this new charter, and better provision made for enlarging and establishing the kingdom of God among men, than had been made by the Old Testament constitution; The mountain of the house of the Lord shall again appear firm ground for God's faithful worshippers to stand, and go, and build upon, in their attendance on him, v. 1. And it shall be a centre of unity to them; a church shall be established, and the people shall be led by the Lord to be daily adding such as shall be saved.

2. That this church shall be firmly founded and well built; It shall be established in the top of the mountains; Christ himself will build it upon a rock, it shall be an immoveable fort upon an immovable foundation, so that the gates of hell shall neither overthrow the one, nor undermine the other; (Matt. xvi. 18.) its foundations are still in the holy mountains, (Ps. lxxxvi. 1.) the everlasting mountains, which cannot, which shall not be removed. It shall be established, not, as the temple, upon one mountain, but upon many; for the foundations of the church, as they are sure, so they are large.

3. That it shall be highly advanced, and become eminent and conspicuous; It shall be exalted above the hills, observed with wonder for its growing greatness, and farther advancement, and near approaching to the state of perfection. Christ shall shine with greater lustre than ever any of the kingdoms of the earth did. It shall be as a city on a hill, which cannot be hid, Matt. v. 14. The glory of this latter house is greater than that of the former, Hag. ii. 9. See 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, &c.

4. That there shall be a great accession of converts to it, and succession of converts in it. People shall flow unto it as the waters of a river are continually flowing; there shall be a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple, while it was standing, to worship there. Then many tribes came to the mountain of the house, to inquire of God's temple; but in gospel-times many nations shall flow into the church, shall flock to the church, and shall be drawn by the word of the gospel. Ministers shall be sent forth to disciple all nations, and they shall not labour in vain; for multitudes being wrought upon to believe the gospel and embrace the Christian religion, they shall excite and encourage one another, and shall say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord now raised among us, even to the house of the God of Jacob, the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains; there shall the Lord give it's; the Lord shall give a signal place of remission.' (Ps. xxxix. 19.) They shall be people made willing in the day of his power, (Ps. cxvi. 3.) and shall do what they can to make others willing, as Andrew invited Peter, and Philip Nathanael, to be acquainted with Christ. They shall call the people to the mountain (Deut. xxxii. 19.) for there is in Christ enough for all, enough for each. Now observe what it is, (1.) Which these converts expect to find in the house of the God of Jacob; they come thither for instruction: 'He will teach us of his ways, and what is in his heart in the right way; we will walk with him, and in which we may depend upon him to meet us graciously.' Note, Where we come to worship God, we come to be taught of him. (2.) Which they engage to do when they are thus taught of God; We will walk in his paths. Note, Those may comfortably expect that God will teach them, who are firmly resolved by his grace to do as they are taught.

5. That, in order to this, a new revelation shall be published to the world, on which the church should be founded, and by which multitudes should be brought into it; For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is here called the word of the Lord, for the Lord gave the word, and great was the company of them that published it, Ps. lxxvi. 11. It was of a divine original, a divine authority, it began to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself, Heb. ii. 3. And it is a law, a law of faith, we are under the law to Christ; this was to go forth from Jerusalem, from Zion, the metropolis of the Old Testament dispensation, where the temple and altars and oracles were, and whither the Jews went to worship from all parts; thence was the law given, to show the connection between the Old Testament and the New, that the gospel is not set up in opposition to the law, but is an explication and illustration of it, and a branch growing out of its root. It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached and wrought miracles, there he died, rose again, and ascended, there the Spirit was poured out, and those that were to preach repentance and remission of sins, to all nations, were first to begin at Jerusalem, so that hence flowed the streams that were to water the desert world.

6. That a convincing power should go along with the gospel of Christ, in all places where it should be preached; (v. 2.) He shall judge among many people. Messiah, the Lawgiver, (v. 3.) is here the Judge, for to him the Father committed all judgment, that all men should honour him. In the former times, when the word, the word of his gospel, that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the golden sceptre by which he shall rule and judge, when he sits as King on the holy hill of Zion, Ps. ii. 6. By it he shall rebuke strong nations afar off; for the Spirit working with the word, shall reprove the word, John xvi. 8. It is promised to the Son of David that he shall judge among the heathen, (Ps. cxv. 6.) which he does when in the chariot of his everlasting gospel he goes forth, and goes on, conquering and to conquer.

7. That a disposition to mutual peace and love should be the happy effect of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah; They shall beat their swords into ploughshares; angry, passionate men, that have been fierce and furious, shall be wonderfully sweetened, and made mild and patient, v. 4, 5. They who, before their conversion, did injuries, and would bear none, after their conversion, can bear injuries, but will do none. As far as the gospel prevails, it makes men peaceable, for such is the wisdom from above, it is gentle and easy to be entreated. And if nations were but levied by it, there would be universal peace. When Christ was in the world, there was, and was in, peace in the Roman dominion; those that were first brought into the gospel-church, were all of one heart and of one soul, Acts vii. 32. And it was observed of the primitive Christians, how well they loved one another; in heaven this will have its accomplishment. It is promised, (1.) That none shall be quarrelsome; the art of
war, instead of being improved, (which some reckon the glory of a kingdom,) shall be forgotten and hid aside as useless; they shall not learn near any more as they had done, for they shall have no need to defend themselves, nor any inclination to offend their neighbours; a nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation; not that the gospel will make men cowardly but it will make men pacific. (2.) That all shall be quiet, both from evil and from the fear of evil; (v. 4.) They shall sit safely, and none shall disturb them; they shall sit securely, and shall not disturb themselves, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, enjoying the fruit of them, and needing no other shelter than the leaves of them. None shall make them afraid; not out of fear of another people, nor shall they be afraid from fear of God, but they shall not be disposed to fear; under the dominion of Christ, as that of Solomon, there shall be aubundance of peace. Though his followers have trouble in the world, in him they enjoy great tranquillity.

If this seem unlikely, yet we may depend upon it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, and no word of his shall fall to the ground; what he has spoken by his word, he will do by his providence and grace. He that is the Lord of hosts, will be the God of peace; and those may well be easy, whom the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, undertakes the protection of.

8. That the churches shall be constant in their duty, and so shall make a good use of their tranquillity, and shall not provoke the Lord to deprive them of it, nor they which are in them. The church of God shall be edified, confirmed, and comforted, and shall be resolved to be as firm to their God, as other nations are to theirs, though they be no gods. Where we find the foregoing promises, Isa. ii. 2, &c. it follows, (v. 5.) O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord, and here, we will walk in the name of the Lord our God. Note, Those persons in most danger of apostasy, when it strengthens our resolution to cleave to the Lord, Observe, (1.) How constant other nations were to theirs; All people will walk every one in the name of his god, will own their god, and cleave to him, will worship their god, and serve him, will depend upon him, and put confidence in him. Whatever men make a god of they will make use of, and take his name along with them in all their actions and affairs. The Medes in a storm, cried every man to his god, Job i. 5. And no instance could be found of a nation's changing their gods, Jer. ii. 11. If the hosts of heaven were their gods, they loved them, and served them, and walked after them, Jer. viii. 2.

(2.) How constant God's people now resolve to be to him; We will walk in the name of the Lord our God, we will acknowledge him in all our ways, and govern ourselves by a continual regard to him, doing nothing but what we have warrant from him for, and openly professing our relation to him. Observe, Their resolution is Jeremical, it is not a thing that needs be disputed; We will walk in the name of the Lord our God; it is just and reasonable; He is our God; and it is a resolution for a perpetual duration, We will walk for ever and ever, and will never leave him. He will be ours for ever, and therefore so we will be his, and never repent our choice.

9. That, notwithstanding the dispersions, distresses, and infirmities of the church, it shall be formed and established, and made very considerable, v. 6. 7. (1.) The state of the church of old was love and weak, and they were divided, in the latter times of the Old Testament, partly through the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and partly through the oppressions under which they groaned. They were like a flock of sheep that were maimed, worried, and scattered, Ezek. xxxiv. 16. Jer. i. 6. 17. The good people among them, and in other places, that were well inclined, were dispersed, were very infirm, and in a manner lost and cast off far. (2.) It is promised that all these grievances shall be redressed, and the discontent healed. Christ will come himself, (Matt. xvi. 24.) and send his apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Matt. x. 6. From among the Jews that hated, or that by want of strength, could not go upright, God gathered a remnant, (v. 7.) that remnant according to the election of grace, which is spoken of in Rom. xi. 7. which embraced the gospel of Christ.

And from among the Gentiles that were cast off far, (so the Gentiles are described to be, Eph. ii. 13. Acts ii. 39.) he raised a strong nation; greater numbers of them were to be converted to Christ, than the Jews, Gal. iv. 27. And such a strong nation the gospel-church is, that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. The church of Christ is more numerous than any other nation, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

10. That the Messiah shall be the King of this kingdom, shall protect and govern it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, and this to the end of time. The Lord Jesus shall reign over them in mount Zion by his word and Spirit in his ordinances, and this from henceforth and for ever, for the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. 9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud is there no king in thee Is thy counsellor perished For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. 10. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now shalt thou go forth of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. 11. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. 12. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. 13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

These verses concern Zion and Jerusalem, here called the tower of the flock, or the tower of Edar; we read of such a place, (Gen. xxxiv. 21.) near Bethlehem; and some conjecture it is the same place where the shepherds were keeping their flocks when the angels brought them tidings of the birth of Christ, and some think Bethlehem itself is here meant, that the same place that was the place of that gate of Jerusalem which is called the sheep-gate, (Neh. iii. 22.) and conjecture that through that gate Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem. However, it seems to be put for Jerusalem itself, or for Zion the tower of David; all the sheep of Israel flocked thither three times a year; it was the strong
hold (Ophel, which is also a name of a place in Jerusalem, Neh. iii. 27.) or castle, of the daughter of Zion. Now here, I. We have a promise of the glories of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel-church, which is the tower of the flock, that one fold in which all the sheep of Christ are protected under one Shepherd; Unto thee shall it come, that which thou hast long waited and travailed for, and which is of equal dignity and power equal to that of David and Solomon, by whom Jerusalem was first raised; that kingdom shall again come to the daughter of Jerusalem, which it was deprived of at the captivity. It shall make as great a figure, and shine with as much lustre among the nations, and have as much influence upon them, as ever it had; this is the first or chief glory which was promised to David, with the establishment in Zerubbabel, was nothing like the first kingdom, either in respect of splendour and sovereignty at home, or the extent of power abroad; and therefore it must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah, (and to that the Chaldee Paraphrase refers it,) and had its accomplishment when God gave to our Lord Jesus the throne of his father David, (Luke i. 32.) set him King upon the holy hill of Zion, and has given him a kingdom to rule over all nations (Ps. ii. 6.) made him his First-born, higher than the kings of the earth, Ps. lxxiii. 27. Dan. vii. 14. David, in spirit, called him Lord, and (as Dr. Pocock observes) he witnessed of himself, and his witness was true, that he was greater than Solomon, none of their dominions being like his for extent and duration. The common people welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with basons to the son of David, to show that it was the first dominion that came to the daughter of Zion; and the evangelist applies it to the promise of Zion’s king coming to her, Matt. xxii. 5. Zech. ix. 9. Some give this sense of the words to Zion, and Jerusalem that tower of the flock; To the nation of the Jews came the first dominion; that is, the kingdom of Christ was first set up, the gospel of the kingdom was first preached. (Luke xiv. 7.) there Christ was first called King of the Jews. II. This is illustrated by a prediction of the calamities of the literal Jerusalem, to which some favour and relief should be granted, as a type and figure of what God would do for the gospel-Jerusalem in the last days, notwithstanding its distresses. We will advert to these: 1. Jerusalem put in pain by the providences of God; she cries out aloud, that all her neighbours may take notice of her griefs. Because there is no king in her, none of that honour and power she used to have, instead of ruling the nations, as she did when she sat a queen, she is ruled by them, and become a captive; her counsellors are perished, she is no longer at her own disposal, but is given up to the will of her enemies, and is governed by their counsellors; Pangs have taken her. (1.) She is carried captive to Babylon, and there is in pangs of grief; she goes forth out of the city, and is constrained to dwell in the field, exposed to all manner of inconveniences; she goes even to Babylon, and there wears out seventy tedious years in a miserable captivity, all that while in pain, as a woman in travail, waiting of her enemies, and being the time very long. (2.) When she is delivered out of Babylon, and redeemed from the hand of her enemies there, yet still she is in pangs of fear, the end of one trouble is but the beginning of another; for now also, when Jerusalem is in the rebuilding, many nations are gathered against her; (v. 11.) they were so in Ezra and Nehemiah’s time, and did all they could to obstruct the building of the temple and the wall; they were so in the time of the Maccabees, they said, Let her be defiled, let her be looked upon as a place polluted with sin, and be forsaken and abandoned both of God and man; let her holy places be profaned, and all her honours laid in the dust; let our eye look upon Zion, and pledge itself with the sight of its ruins, as it is said of Edom, (Obad. 12.) Thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brethren; let our eyes see our desire upon Zion, the day we have long wished for. When they hear the enemies threaten thee, God shall avenge them against them, and insult over them, as well as that the whole of this old earth shall cry aloud; Without are fightings, within are fears. 2. Jerusalem made easy by the promises of God, “Why dost thou cry out aloud? Let thy griefs and fears be silenced, indulge not thyself in them, for though things are bad with thee, they shall end well; thy pangs are great, but they are like those of a child;” (v. 9.) that labour to bring forth, (v. 10.) that is, the time shall be at last.” Jerusalem’s pangs are not as dying agonies, but as travelling throes, which after awhile will be forgotten, for joy that a child is born into the world. Let the literal Jerusalem comfort herself with this, that, whatever straits she may be reduced to, she shall continue until the coming of the Messiah, for there his kingdom must be first set up; and she shall not only not die in her travail, but shall come forth with joy, and when at length she is ploughed as a field, and become heaps, (as is threatened, ch. iii. 12.) yet her privileges shall be resigned to the spiritual Jerusalem, and in that the promises made to her shall be fulfilled. Let Jerusalem be easy then, for, (1.) Her captivity in Babylon shall have an end, a happy end; (v. 16.) There shall thou be delivered, (v. 17.) and the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies there. This was done by Cyrus, who acted therein as God’s servant; and that deliverance was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the release from our spiritual bondage, which is proclaimed in the everlasting gospel, that acceptable year of the Lord, in which Christ himself preached liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, Luke iv. 18, 19. (2.) The designs of her enemies against her after-ward shall be baffled, nay, they shall turn upon themselves, v. 12, 13. They promise themselves a day of it, but it shall prove God’s day. They are gathered against Zion, to destroy it, but it shall prove to their own destruction, which Israel and his God shall have the glory of. [1.] Their coming together against Zion shall be the occasion of their destruction. They have set against themselves that they may break Jerusalem in pieces, but it shall prove that they shall be broken in pieces, Isa. viii. 9. They know not the thoughts of the Lord. When they are gathering together, and Providence favours them in it, they little think what God is designing by it, nor do they understand his counsel, they know what they aim at, in coming together, but they know not what God aims at, in bringing them together; they aim at Zion’s ruin, but God aims at theirs. Note, When men are made use of as instruments of Providence in accomplishing its purposes, it is very common for them to intend one thing, and for God to intend quite the contrary. The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God’s hand for the correction of his people, in order for their reformation; but they know not that God’s hand is at heart think so, Isa. x. 7. And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God gathers them as sheaves into the floor, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually destroyed, if they had not gathered together against Zion. Note, The designs of enemies for the ruin of the church often prove ruinous to themselves; and thereby they prepare themselves for destruction, and put themselves in the way of it; they are ensnared in the work of
their own hands. [2.] Zion shall have the honour of being victorious over them, v. 13. When they are gathered as sheep to the shepherd, to be taken down, as the corn then was by the oxen, then "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; instead of fearing them, and fleeing from them, boldly set upon them, and take the opportunity Providence favours thee with of trampling upon them. Plead not thine own weakness, and that their art not a match for so many confederate enemies, God will make up for it by pushing them before thee like white waves in the sea, and those brass, to tread upon them when they are down; and thus thou shalt beat in pieces many people, that have long been beating thee in pieces." Thus when God pleases, the daughter of Babylon is made a threshing-floor, (it is time to thresh her, Jer. ii. 33.) and the storm Jacob is made a threshing instrument with which God will thresh the mountains, and make them as chaff, Isa. xxi. 14, 15. How strangely, how happily, are the tables turned, since Jacob was the threshing-floor, and Babylon the threshing-instrument! Isa. xxi. 10. Note, When God has conquering work for his people to do, he will furnish them with strength and ability for it, will make the horn iron, and the hoofs brass; and when he does so, they must exert the power he gives them, and execute the mission even the daughter of Zion must arise, and thresh. [3.] The glory of the victory shall redound to God. Zion shall thresh these sheaves in the floor, but the corn threshed out shall be a meat-offering at God's altar; I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, (I will have it consecrated,) and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. The spoils gained by Zion's victory shall be brought into the sanctuary, and devoted to God, either in part, as those of Midian, Numb. xxxi. 28.) or in whole, as those of Jericho, Josh. vi. 17. God is Jehovah, the Fountain of being, he is the Lord of the whole earth, the Fountain of power; and therefore needs not any of our gain or substance, but may challenge and demand it all if he pleases; and with ourselves we must devote all we have to his honour, to be employed as he directs. Thus far all we have must have holiness to the Lord written upon it, all our gain and substance must be consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth, Isa. xxiii. 18. And extraordinary successes call for extraordinary acknowledgments, whether they be of spoils in war or gains in trade. It is God that gives us power to get wealth, which way soever it is laid out in, is for his glory, and is employed for what we get. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the success of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr. Pocock and others think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it. The nations thought to have ruined Christianity in its infancy, but it was victorious over them; those that persisted in their enmity, were broken to pieces, (Matt. xxi. 44.) particularly the Jewish nation: but multitudes by divine grace were gained to the church, and they and their substance were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, the Lord of the whole earth.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter, we have, I. A prediction of the troubles and distresses which shall befall the Messiah, in a time of his greatest prosperity, A. 1. A prophecy of the Messiah, and of his kingdom, to support the people of God in the day of these troubles. 1. Of the birth of the Messiah, v. 2, 3. 2. Of his advancement, v. 4, 5. 3. Of his rejection by his people, v. 6. 4. Of their enmity, v. 6, 7. 5. Of the great increase of the treasures, and the blessings that shall come to the world by it, v. 7. 5. Of the destruction of the enemies of the church, both those without, that attack it, and those within, that expose it, v. 8, 12.

1. NOW gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose going forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. 4. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. 5. And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and, when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. 6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

Here, as before, we have,

I. The abasement and distress of Zion, v. 1. The Jewish nation, for many years before the captivity, dwindled, and fell into disgrace; Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops. It is either a summons to Zion's enemies, that had troops at their service, to come, and do their worst against her, God will suffer them to do it; or a challenge to Zion's friends, that had troops too at command, to come, and do their best for her, let them gather in troops, yet it should be to no purpose; for, says the prophet, in the name of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, He has laid siege against us; the king of Assyria has, the king of Babylon has, and we know not which way to defend ourselves; so that the enemies may either gain or lose, and prevail so far as they please, to the judge of Israel, the king, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges, with a rod upon the cheek, in contempt of them and their dignity; having made them prisoners, they shall use them as shamefully as any of the common captives. Complaint had been made of the judges of Israel, (ch. iii. 11.) that they were corrupt, and took bribes, and this disgrace came upon them; and prevail so far as to write the king of Babylon, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges, with a rod upon the cheek, which way soever it is laid out in, is for his glory, and is employed for what we get. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the success of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr. Pocock and others think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it. The nations thought to have ruined Christianity in its infancy, but it was victorious over them; those that persisted in their enmity, were broken to pieces, (Matt. xxi. 44.) particularly the Jewish nation: but multitudes by divine grace were gained to the church, and they and their substance were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, the Lord of the whole earth.
God's people, who might be tempted now to think that his covenant with David and his house was abrogated, (comp. Psa. lxxvi. 19; xxxvi. 59,) he adds an illustrative prediction of the Messiah and his kingdom, in whom that covenant should be established, and the honours of that house should be revived, advanced, and perpetuated. Now let us see,

1. How the Messiah is here described; it is he that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, from the law of eternity, and hence David. It was

(1.) His existence from eternity, as God; His goings forth, or emanations, as the going forth of the beams from the sun were, or have been, of old, from everlasting; which (says Dr. Pocock) is so signal a description of Christ's eternal generation, or his going forth as the Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, that this prophecy must belong only to him, and could never be verified of any other. It certainly speaks of a going forth that was now past, when the prophet spake, and cannot but be read as we read it, his goings forth have been; and the putting of both these words together, which severally are used to denote eternity, plainly shows that they must here be taken in the strictest sense, the same with Ps. xc. 2. From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, who changest not, and whose name is called for ever. The Jews objected, that our Lord Jesus could not be the Messiah, for he was so far from being Ruler in Israel, that Israel ruled over him, and put him to death, and would not have him to reign over them; but he answered that himself, when he said, My kingdom is not of this world, John xviii. 36. And it is a spiritual Israel that he reigns over, the children of promise, all the followers of believing Abraham and praying Jacob; in the hearts of these he reigns by his Spirit and grace; and in the society of these by his word and ordinances. And was not he Ruler in Israel, whom winds and seas obeyed, and legions of devils were forced to trudge to, and who commanded away diseases from the sick, and called the dead out of their graves? None, except him whose goings forth were from of old, from everlasting, was fit to be Ruler in Israel, to be Head of the church, and Head over all things to the church.

2. What is here foretold concerning him.

(1.) That Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, v. 2. This was the scripture which the scribes went upon, when with the greatest assurance they told the Herod, where Christ should be born; (Matt. ii. 6.) it is the place where he was born among the Jews, that Christ should come out of the town of Bethlehem where David was, John vii. 42. Bethlehem signifies the house of bread, the fittest place for him to be born in, who is the Bread of life. And because it was the city of David, by a special providence it was ordered that he should be born in it, Ps. lxxxiv. 9. Among the names of the same city, as appears, Gen. xxxv. 19. It was little among the thousands of Judah, not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants, or the figure they made; it had nothing in it worthy to have this honour put upon it, but God in that, as in other instances, chose to exalt them of low degree, Luke i. 33. Christ would give honour to the place of his birth, and not derive honour from it; Though thou be little, yet shall thou bring forth much; as some read it, Thou art not the least among the princes of Judah, but upon this account art really honourable above any of them. A relation to Christ will magnify those that are little in the world.

(2.) That in the fulness of time he should be born of a woman; (v. 3.) Therefore will he give them up, he will give up his people Israel to distress and trouble, and will defer their salvation, which has been so long looked for, to the time, that she who travails has brought forth, or, as it should be read, that she who shall bring forth, shall have brought forth; that the blessed virgin, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, shall have brought him forth at Bethlehem, the place appointed. This Dr. Pocock thinks to be the most genuine sense of the words. Though the outgoings of the Messiah were from everlasting, yet the redemption in Jerusalem, the consolation of Israel, must be waited for, (Luke ii. 25, 38,) until the time that she who should bring forth, (so the Virgin Mary is called, as Christ is himself called, He that shall come,) shall bring forth; and in the mean time he will give them up. Divine savings must be waited for until the time fixed for the bringing of them forth.

(3.) That the remnant of his brethren shall then return to the children of Israel. The remnant of the Jewish nation shall return to the spirit of the true, genuine children of Israel, a people in covenant with God; the hearts of the children shall be turned to the fathers, Mal. iv. 6. Some understand it of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews, they shall all be incorporated into the communion of Israel; and thus the same prophecy, (which he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Heb. ii. 11. ) (4.) That he shall be a glorious prince, and his subjects shall be happy under his government; (v. 4.) He shall stand and feed, he shall both teach and rule, and shall continue to do so, as a good Shepherd, with wisdom, and care, and love; so it was foretold, He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the good Shepherd that goes before the sheep, and presides among them. He shall do this, not as an ordinary man, but in the strength of the Lord, as one clothed with a divine power, to go through his work, and break through the difficulties in his way, so as not to fail or be discouraged; he shall do it in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, so as plainly to shew, that his name was in him, as Exod. xxxii. 21. the majesty of his name, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. The prophets prefaced their message with, Thus saith the Lord; but Christ spake, not as a Servant, but as a Son; Verily, verily, I say unto you. This was feeding in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, all power was given him in heaven and in earth, a power above all flesh, a name by which he was named in the highest sense the name of the Lord his God, a name above every name. Christ's government shall be, [1.] Very happy for his subjects, for they shall abide; they shall be safe and easy, and continue so for ever; because he lives, they shall live also. They shall lie down in the green pastures to which he shall lead them; shall abide in a Green tabernacle of grace for ever, Ps. lxxiii. 4. His sheep shall abide, and the way in it, and with it, always, even to the end of the world. [2.] It shall be very glorious to himself; Now shall he be great to the ends of the earth. Now that he stands, and feeds his flock, now shall he be great. For Christ reckons it his greatness to do good. Now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, for the uttermost parts of the earth shall be
given him for his possession, and the ends of the world shall see his salvation.

(5.) That he shall secure the peace and welfare of his church and people against the attempts of his and their enemies (v. 5.) This man, as King, shall be the Peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land. This refers to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom from the power of Sennacherib, who invaded them, in the type; but, under the shadow of that, is a promise of the safety of the gospel-church and all believers from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness, Satan and his ministers, the people of the world, angels, that seek to devour the church of the firstborn, and all that belong to it. Observe, [1.] The peril and danger which Christ's subjects are supposed to be in; The Assyrian, a potent enemy, comes into their land, (v. 5, 6.) treads within their borders, nay, prevails so far as to tread in their palaces; it was a time of treading down and of perplexity, when Sennacherib made a descent upon Judah, took all the defended cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem, Isa. xxxvi. 1.—xxxvii. 3. This represented the gates of hell fighting against the kingdom of Christ, compassing the camp of the saints and of the holy city, and threatening to bear down all before them. When the terrors of the law set themselves in array against a convinced soul, when the temptations of Satan assail the people of God, and the troubles of the world threaten to rob them of all their comforts, then the Assyrian comes into their land, and treads in their palaces; without are fightings, within are fears. [2.] The protection and defence which his subjects are then sure to be under; First, Christ will himself be their Peace. When the Assyrian comes with such a force into a land, can there be any other peace than a true commission and an unreserved desolation? Yes, even then the church's King will be the Conservator of the church's peace, will be for a hiding-place, Isa. xxxiii. 1, 2. Christ is our Peace as a Priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God; and he is our Peace as a King, conquering our enemies, and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; he creates the fruit of the lips, peace. Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress and danger, and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet this man may be the Peace. In me, says Christ, you shall have peace, when in the world you have tribulation; at such a time our souls may dwell at ease in him. Secondly, He will find out proper instruments employed for his own work; instruments of deliverance, and the defeat of their enemies; Then shall we raise up against him seven shepherds and eight principal men, a competent number of persons, proper to oppose the enemy, and make head against him, and protect the church of God in peace; men that shall have the care and tenderness of shepherds, and the courage and authority of principal men, or captains in war, to effect the designs of God for his church's deliverance, and the defeat of their enemies.

7. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarryth not for man, nor waited for the sons of men. 3. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. 9. Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. 10. And it shall come to pass that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots: 11. And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds: 12. And I will cut off witcheries out of thy hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:

Glorious things are here spoken of the remnant of Jacob, that remnant which was raised up by the hand of God, and that reigned in the earth through the Spirit of the Lord, and that was preserved, and sheltered in the great day of trouble, that shall be saved, Rom. ix. 27. Note, God's people are but a remnant, a small number, in comparison with the many that are left to perish; a little flock; but they are the remnant of Jacob, a people in covenant with God, and in his favour.

Now concerning this remnant it is here promised, 1. That they shall be as dew in the midst of the earth; For God's church is dispersed all the world over; it is in the midst of many people, as gold in the ore, wheat in the heap. Israel, according to the flesh, dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations; but the spiritual Israel lies scattered in the midst of many people, as salt in the earth, as seed sown in the ground, here a grain and there a grain, Hos. ii. 23. Now this remnant shall be as dew from the Lord. (1.) They shall be as a heavenly extraction, as dew from the Lord, who is the Father of the rain, and has begotten the drops of the dew, Job xxxviii. 28. They are born from above, and are not of the earth, swarming the things of the earth. (2.) They shall be numerous as the drops of dew in a summer's morning; (Ps. cx. 3.) Thou hast the dew of thy youth. (3.) They shall be pure and clear, not muddy and corrupt but
Go! will cut off their horses, and destroy their chariots. (v. 10.) As David houghed the chariot-horses 2 Sam. viii. 4. They shall not have them, lest they should be tempted to trust in them. (2.) They depended upon their strong holds, and fortified cities, for their security; but God will take care that they shall be demolished; (v. 11.) I will cut off the cities of thy land, I will throw down thy strong holds. They shall have them for habitations, but not for garrisons, for God will be their only Place of defence, their high Tower, and their Deliverer. (3.) Many of them depended much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurers, diviners, and fortune-tellers; and those God will cut off not only as frauds and fictions, and insufficient to relieve them, but as wicked things and sufficient to ruin them; (v. 12.) "I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand, that thou shalt no more take hold of them, and stay thyself upon them, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers, for thou shalt be convinced that all their pretensions are a cheat." The justice of the nation shall cut them off according to the law, Lev. xx. 27. The preaching of the gospel brought men off from using curious arts, Acts xix. 19. (4.) Many of them had said to the work of their hands, Ye are our gods; but now idolatry shall be abolished and abandoned; (v. 13.) "Thy graven images will I cut off, and thy standing images, both those that were moveable, and those that were fixed; they shall be dried up by the power of the hand, destroyed, and destroyed by the hand of God." The holiness of God will not permit the work of thy hands, but be ashamed that ever thou hast been so degraded. Among other monuments of idolatry, I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee," v. 14. Those were planted and preserved in honour of their idols, and used in the worship of them; these they were ordered to burn, (Deut. xiii. 2.) and if they do not, God will, so that they shall choose to trust to. And so will I destroy thy cities, meaning the cities which were dedicated to the idols, to some dunghill-deity or other, which they confided in for their protection. 4. That those who stand it out against the gospel of Christ, and continue in league with their idolatries and witchcrafts, shall fall under the wrath of God, and it is contradicted by v. 7., that vengeance is longer a foot upon the heathen, (upon heathenism) such as they have not heard; idolatries shall be done away, and idolaters put to shame. I will execute vengeance upon the heathen which have not heard, (some read it,) or which would not hear and receive the doctrine of Christ. God will give his Son either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

CHAP. VI.

After the precious promises, in the two foregoing chapters, relating to the Messiah's kingdom, the prophet is here directed to discourse of Israel's enemies, and the vengeance God will execute upon them for their conviction and humiliation, as necessary to make way for the comfort of gospel-grace. Christ's forerunner was a reprover, and preached repentance, and so prepared his way. Here, I. God enters an action against his people for their base ingratitude, and the bad returns they had made him for his favours, v. 1... 5. II. He shows them the wrong course they took, when they were delivered, preserved, and triumphed; and what God made, in answer to his charge, and what course they should have taken, v. 6... 8. III. He calls upon them to hear the voice of his judgments, and sets the sins in order before them, for the sake of not only a controversy with them, (v. 9.) but their injustice, (v. 10... 15.) and their idolatry, (v. 16.) for both which ruin was coming upon them.

1. H EAR ye now what the Lord saith: - Arise, contend thou before the moun-
tains, and let the hills hear thy voice. 2. Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. 3. O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. 4. For I brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.

Here,

1. The prefaces to the message are very solemn, and such as may engage our most serious attention. 1. The people are commanded to give audience; Hear ye now what the Lord saith. What the prophet speaks, he speaks from God, and in his name; they are therefore bound to hear it, not as the word of a sinful, dying man, but of the holy, living God. Hear now what he saith, for, first or last, he will be heard. 2. The prophet is commanded to speak in earnest, and to put an emphasis upon what he said; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, or with the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice, if it were possible; contend with the mountains and hills of Judea, with the inhabitants of those mountains and hills; and, some think, reference is had to those mountains and hills on which they were directed, and which are pointed this particular. But it is rather to be taken more generally, as appears by his call, not only to the mountains, but to the strong foundations of the earth, pursuant to the instructions given him. This is designed, (1.) To excite the earnestness of the prophet; he must speak as vehemently as he designed to make even the hills and mountains hear him, must cry aloud, and not whisper, or show anything, but to the voice of God. He must proclaim publicly before the mountains, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his message; he must speak as one concerned, as one that desired to speak to the heart, and therefore appeared to speak from the heart. (2.) To expose the stupidity of the people; "Let the hills hear thy voice, for this senseless, careless people will not hear it, will not heed it. Let the rocks, the foundations of the earth, that have no ears, hear, since Israel, that has ears, will not hear." It is an appeal to the mountains and hills; let them hear witness that Israel has fair warning given them, and good counsel, if they would but take it. Thus Isaiah begins with, Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth. Let them judge between God and his vineyard.

II. The message itself was very affecting; he is to let all the world know that God has a quarrel with his people, good ground for an action against them. Their offences are public, and therefore so are the articles of impeachment exhibited against them. Take notice, the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel, will plead before his people, plead by his providences, to make good his charge. Note, 1. Sin begot a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander. 2. If Israel, God's own professing people, provoke him in sin, he will let them know that he has a controversy with them; he sees sin in them, and is displeased with it, nay, their sins are more displeasing to him than the sins of others, as they are a greater grief to his Spirit, and dishonour to his name. 3. God will plead with those whom he has a controversy with, will plead with his people Israel, that they may be convinced, and that he may be justified. In the close of the foregoing chapter he pleaded with the heathen in anger and fury, to bring them to ruin; but now he will plead with Israel, to show his con- sumption and tenderness, to bring them to repentance. Come now and let us reason together. God reasons with us, to teach us to reason with ourselves. See the equity of God's cause; it will bear to be pleaded, and sinners themselves will be forced to confess judgment, and to own that God's ways are good, but, in all the而 who the right hand of the Lord didst not choose. Now, (1.) God here challenges them to show what he had done against them, which might give them occasion to desert him. They had revolted from God, and rebelled against him; but had they any cause to do so? (v. 5.) "O my people, what have I done unto thee? Wherein have I wearied thee? If subjects quit their allegiance to their prince, they will pretend, as the ten tribes did, when they revolted from Rehoboam, that his yoke is too heavy for them; but can you pretend any such thing? What have I done to you, that is unjust or unkind? Wherein have I wearied you, with the impositions of service, or the exactions of tribute? Have I made you to serve with an offering? Isa. xliii. 25. What iniquity have your fathers found in me? Jer. xvi. 18. He that has wearied you and pointed our expectations from him; never did us wrong, or put disgrace upon us; why then do we wrong and dishonour him, and frustrate his expectations from us? Here is a challenge to all that ever were in God's service, to testify against him, if they have found him, in any thing, a hard Master, and his demands unreasonable.

(2.) Since they had not show any thing that he has done against them, he will show them a great deal that he had done for them, which should have engaged them for ever to his service, v. 4. They are directed, and we in them, to look a great way back in their reviews of divine favour; let them remember their former days, their first days, when they were engaged into a people, and the great things God did for them.

[1.] When he brought them out of Egypt, the land of their bondage, v. 4. They were content with their slavery, and almost in love with their chains, for the sake of the garlic and onions they had plenty of; but God brought them up, inspired them with an ambition of liberty, and animated them with a resolution by a bold effort to shake off their fetters. The Egyptians held them fast, and would not let the people go; but God redeemed them, not by price, but by force; out of the house of servants, or, rather, the house of bondage, for it is the same word that is used in the preface of the ten commandments; which insinuates that the considerations which are arguments for duty, if they be not improved by us, will be improved by others, and used against us as aggravations of sin. When he brought them out of Egypt into a vast howling wilderness, as he left not himself without witness, so he left not them without guides, for he sent before them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, three prophets, says the Chal- dee Paraphrase; Moses the great prophet of the Old Testament, Aaron his prophet, (Exod. vii. 1.) and Miriam a prophetess, Exod. xv. 20. Note, When we are calling to mind God's former mercies to us, we must not forget the mercy of good teachers and governors when we were young, let those be made mention of, to the glory of God who went before us, saying, This is the way, walk in it; it was God that
sion, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 7. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Here is the proposal for accommodation between God and Israel, the parties that were at variance in the beginning of the chapter. Upon the trial, judgment is given against Israel; they are convicted of injustice and ingratitude toward God, the crimes with which they stood charged; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused, and therefore,

The controversy which at this point we have with God, upon any terms; (v. 6, 7.) Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?

Being made sensible of the justice of God's controversy with them, and dreading the consequences of it, they were inquisitive what they might do to be reconciled to God, and to make him their friend. They apply themselves to a proper person, with this inquiry, to the prophet, the Lord's messenger, by whose ministry they had been convinced; who so fit to show them their way as he that had made them sensible of their having missed it? And it is observable that each one speaks for himself; Wherewith shall I come? Knowing every one the plague of his own heart, they ask not, What shall this man do? But, What shall I do? Note, Deep convictions of sin and guilt make men anxious to inquire after peace and pardon, and then, and not till then, there begins to be some hope of them. They inquire wherewith they may come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God. They believe there is a God, that he is Jehovah, and that he is the high God, the Most High. They whose consciences are convinced, have learned to speak very humbly of God, and dare not speak to him as they spoke slightly of, Now. 1. We know we must come before God; he is the God with whom we have to do; we must come as subjects, to pay our homage to him, as beggars, to ask alms from him, nay, we must come before him as criminals, to receive our doom from him, must come before him as our Judge. 2. When we come before him, we must bow the head, humble ourselves, and reverent in our approaches to him: and when we come before him, there is no remedy but we must submit; it is to no purpose to contend with him.

3. When we come, and bow before him, it is our great concern to find favour with him, and to be accepted of him; their inquiry is, What will the Lord be pleased with? Note, All that rightly understand themselves and their own interest, cannot but be solicitious what they must do to please God, to avoid his displeasure, and to obtain his good will.

4. In order to God's being pleased with us, our care must be, that the sin by which we have displeased him, may be taken away, and an atonement made for it. The inquiry here is, What shall I give for my transgression, for the sin of my soul? Note, The transgression we are guilty of, includes not only the soul; for the soul acts it is not sin; and the soul suffers by it, it is the disorder, disease, and defilement of the soul, and threatens to be the death of it; What shall I give for my transgressions? What will be accepted as a satisfaction to his justice, repARATION of his honour? And what will avail to shelter me from his wrath? 5. We must inquiry, What shall we bring to him? We must not appear before the Lord empty. What shall we bring with us? In what manner must we come? We have not that in ourselves which will recommend us to him, but must have it from another. What righteousness then shall we appear before him?
II. They make proposals, such as they are, in order to it; their inquiry was very good and right, and what we are all concerned to make; but their proposals betray their ignorance, though they show their zeal; let us examine them:

1. They bid high. They offer, (1.) That which is very rich and costly, thousands of rams. God required one ram for a sin-offering, they proffer flocks of them, their whole stock, will be content to make themselves beggars, so that they may but be at peace with God. They will bring the best they have, the rams, and the most of them, till it come to thousands. (2.) That which is very dear to them, and which they would be most loath to part with. They could be content to part with their first-born for their transgressions, if that would be accepted as a satisfaction; and therefore they think it more useful than their sin of their soul. To them that were become vain in their imaginations this seemed a probable expedient of making satisfaction for sin, because our children are pieces of ourselves; and therefore the heathen sacrificed their children to appease their offended deities. Note, Those that are thoroughly convinced of sin, of the malignity of it, and of their necessity to obtain pardon, will do all for the salvation of the world, if they had it, for peace and pardon.

2. Yet they do not bid right. It is true, some of these things were instituted by the ceremonial law, as the bringing of burnt-offerings to God’s altar, and calves of a year old, rams for sin-offerings, and oil for the meat-offerings; but these alone would not remove sin. (1.) God requires that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams; that sacrifice and offering he would not; the legal sacrifices had their virtue and value from the institution, and the reference they had to Christ the great Propitiation; but otherwise, of themselves, it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. And as to the other things here mentioned, (2.) Some of them are impracticable things, as rivers of oil, which nature has not provided, to feed men’s luxury, but rivers of water, to supply men’s necessity. All the proposals of peace but those that are according to the gospel, are absurd. One stream of the blood of Christ is worth ten thousand rivers of oil. (3.) Some of them are wicked things, as to give our first-born, and all our first-born stock, to death, which would but add to the transgression, and the sin of the soul. He that hates robbery for burnt-offerings, much more hates murder, such murder; what right have we to our first-born, and the fruit of our body? Do they not belong to God? Are they not his already, and born to him? Are they not sinners by nature, and their lives forfeited upon their own account? How can they be a ransom for the remission of the transgressions of the life? Men will part with any thing rather than their sins, but they part with nothing to God’s acceptance, unless they part with them.

III. God tells them plainly what he demands, and insists upon, from those that would be accepted of him, v. 8. Let their money perish with them, that think the pardon of sin and the favour of God may be so purchased: no, God has showed them, O man, what is good. Here we are told,

1. That God has made a discovery of his mind and will to us, for the rectifying of our mistakes, and the directing of our practice. (1.) It is God himself that has showed us what we must do. We need not trouble ourselves to make proposals, the terms are already settled and laid down. He, whom we have offended, and to whom we are accountable, has told us upon what conditions he will be reconciled to us. (2.) It is to man that he has showed it; not only to thee, O Israel, but to thee, O man, Gentiles as well as Jews. To men, who are rational creatures, and capable of receiving the discovery, and not to brutes; to men, for whom a remedy is provided, not to devils, whose case is desperate. What is spoken to all men every where in general, must by faith be applied to ourselves in particular, as if it were spoken to thee, O man, by name, and to no other. (3.) It is a discovery of that which is good, and which the Lord requires of us. He has showed us our end, which we should aim at; in showing us, as far as we stand in need, what duty it is to do to God, to which end it is, as far as we have ability, to do it. It has showed us what we require of God. There is something which God requires we should do for him, and devote to him; and it is good; it is good in itself.

There is an innate goodness in moral duties, antecedent to the command; they are not, as ceremonial duties, so contrived by a command; but therefore commanded, because they are good, consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil, which are unalterable. It has likewise a direct tendency to our good; our conformity to it is not only the condition of our future happiness, but it is a great expedient of our present happiness; in keeping God’s command, but one of the greatest rewards; as well as after keeping them. (4.) It is showed us. God has not only made it known, but made it plain; he has discovered it to us with such convincing evidence as amounts to a demonstration. Lo, this, we have searched it, so it is.

2. What that discovery is. The good which God requires of us is, not the paying of a price for the pardon of sin and acceptance with God, but one part of the duty, which is the condition of our interest in the pardon purchased. (1.) We must do justly, must render to all their due, according as our relation and obligation to them are; we must do wrong to none, but do right to all, in their bodies, goods, and name. (2.) We must love mercy; not only be just to all we deal with, but kind to all that need it, and the like, as God is kind to them. Nor must we only show mercy, but we must love mercy, we must delight in it, as our God does, must be glad of an opportunity to do good, and do it cheerfully. Justice is put before mercy, for we must not give that in alms, which is wrongly got, or with which our debts should be paid. God hates robbery for a burnt-offering. (3.) We must walk humbly with our God; this includes all the duties of the first table. We must take the Lord for our God in covenant, must attend on him, and adhere to him, as ours, and must make it our constant care and business to please him. Esau’s walking with God is interpreted, (Heb. xi. 3.) his pleasing God; we must, in the whole course of our conversation, conform ourselves to the will of God, keep up our communion with him, and study to appropriate ourselves to him in our integrity; and this we must do humbly; (submitting our understandings to the truths of God, and our wills to his precepts and provisions;) we must humble ourselves to walk with God; (so the margin reads it;) every thought within us must be brought down, to be brought into obedience. If we would walk comfortably with him. This is that which God requires, and without which the most costly services are vain oblations; this is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.
hears ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. 10. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? 11. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? 12. For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. 13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in suiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. 14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest wilt I give up to the sword. 15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. 16. For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof a hissing: therefore shall ye hear the reproach of my people.

God having showed them how necessary it was that they should do justly, here shows them how plain it was that they had done unjustly; and since they submitted not to his controversy, nor went the right way to have it taken up, here he proceeds in it. Observe,

1. How the action is entered against them, ver. 9. God speaks to the city, to Jerusalem, to Samaria; his voice cries to it by his servants the prophets, who were to cry aloud, and not spare. Note, The voice of the prophets is the Lord's voice, and that cries to the city, cries to the country; Doth not Wisdom cry; Prov. viii. 1. When the sin of a city cries to God, his voice cries against the city; and when the judgments of God are coming upon a city, his voice first cries unto it; he warns before he wounds, because he is not willing that any should perish. So observe, 1. How the voice of God cries to all sinners, and is grieved by some; The man of wisdom will see thy name. When the voice of God cries to us, we may by it see his name, may discern and perceive that by which he makes himself known. Yet many see it not, are not aware of it, because they do not regard it. God speaks once, yea, twice, and they perceive it not; (Job xxxiii. 14.) but they that are men of wisdom, will hear and perceive it, and make a good use of it. Note, It is a point of true wisdom to discover the name of God in the voice of God, and to learn what he is, from what he says; Wisdom shall see thy name, for the knowledge of the holy is understanding. 2. What this voice of God says to all; "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. Hear the rod when it is coming, hear it at a distance before you come under it; they that hear the rod go forth to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments. Hear the rod when it is come, and is actually upon you, and you are sensible of the smart of it; hear what it says to you, what convictions, what counsels, what cautions, it speaks to you." Note, Every rod has a voice, and it is the voice of God that is to be heard in the rod of God; and it is well for them that understand the language of it; if which we would do, we must have an eye to him that appointed it. Note, Every rod is appointed, of what kind it shall be, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. God says to the rod that is appointed to lie for us, (Job xxiii. 14.) and to him therefore we must have an eye, to him we must have an ear; we must hear what he says to us by the affliction, hear it, and know it for thy good, Job v. 6. The work of ministers is to explain the providences of God, and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons that are taught by them.

11. Who shall show the greatness of the action, and what are the things that are laid to their charge. 1. They are charged with injustice, a sin against the second table. Are there yet to be found among them the marks and means of fraudulent dealing? What, after all the methods that God has taken to teach them to do justly, will they yet deal unjustly? It seems they will, ver. 10. And shall I count them pure? ver. 11. And they had wicked balances and a bag of false weights, by which, under a pretence of weighing what they sold, and giving the buyer what was right, they did him the greatest wrong, ver. 11. (4.) Those that had wealth and power in their hands, abused it to oppression and extortion; The rich men thereof are full of violence; for they that have much, would have more, and are in a capacity of making it more, by the power which their abundance of wealth gives them. They are full of violence, they have their houses full of that which is got by violence. (5.) Those that had not advantage of doing wrong by their wealth, yet found means of defrauding those they dealt with; The inhabitants thereof have spoken lies; if they are not able to use force and violence, they use fraud and deceit; the inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouths; they do not stick at a deliberate lie, to make a good bargain. So observe, 1. A good understanding of what is spoken falsely concerning God, saying, The Lord seeth not, he hath forsook the earth, Ezek. viii. 12. 2. They are charged with idolatry; (ver. 6.) The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the work of the house of Ahab; both these kings were wicked, and did evil in the sight of the Lord; but the wickedness which they established by a law, concerning which much was said, and in the execution of which much work of that house, was idolatry. Omri walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin of provoking God to anger with their vanities, 1 Kings xvi. 26. and v. 31. Ahab introduced the worship of Baal. These reigns were some ages before the time when this prophet lived, and yet the wickedness which they established by their laws and examples, remained with them; they held the king and that work was still done; and the princes and people still walked in their counsels, took the same measures, and governed themselves and the people by the same politics. Observe, (1.) The same wickedness continued from one generation to another. Sin is a root of bitterness soon planted, but not so soon plucked up again. The iniquity of former ages is often transmitted to, and carried upon, the succeeding ones. Those that make cor-
rupt laws, and bring in corrupt usages, are doing that which perhaps may prove the ruin of the child unborn. (2.) It was nevertheless evil in itself, provoking to God, and dangerous to the sinners, for its having been established and confirmed by the laws of princes, the examples of great men, and a long prescription. Though the worship of idols is enacted by the statutes of Omri, recommended by the practice of the house of Ahab, and pleads that it has been a blessing to many generations, yet it is still displeasing to God, and destructive to Israel; for no laws or customs are of force against the divine command.

III. What is the judgment given upon this. Being found guilty of these crimes, the sentence is, that they shall be made desolate. (v. 9.) They have driven away the Lord's name from the land, and shall have made themselves sick, in swallowing them. As they hadinned the poor with the rod of their oppressions, so would God in like manner smite them, so as to make them sick, sick of the gains they had unjustly gotten, so that though they had swallowed down riches, they should vomit them up again, Job xx. 13. Their doom is, 1. That what they have, they shall not have any comfortable enjoyment of, it shall do them no good; they grasped at more than enough, but when they have it, it shall not be enough to make them easy and happy; what is got by fraud and oppression cannot be kept or enjoyed with any satisfaction. (1.) Their food shall not nourish them: Thou shalt eat but not be satisfied; and their land shall be full of ruins, their food shall not digest, for want of God's blessing going along with it, or because the appetite shall by disease be made insatiable and still craving, the just punishment of those that were greedy of gain, and enlarged their desires as hell. Men may be surfeted with the good things of this world, and yet not satisfied, Eccl. v. 10. Isa. iv. 2. (2.) Their country shall not be fruitful and fruitful trees: Their food and drink shall be in the midst of thee, shall be broken and ruined by intestine troubles, mischief at home enough to cast thee down, though thou shouldst not be invaded by a foreign force. God can cast a nation down by that which is in the midst of them, can consume them by a fire in their own borders. (3.) They shall not be able to prevent what they have from a foreign force, or to recover what they have lost; "Thou shalt take hold of what is about to be taken from thee, but thou shalt not hold it fast, shalt catch at it, but shalt not deliver it, shalt not retrieve it." It is meant of their wives and children, that were very dear to them, which they took hold of, as resolved not to part with them, but there is no remedy, they must go into captivity. Note, What we hold closest we commonly lose soonest, and that proves least safe which is most dear. (4.) What they save for a time, shall be reserved for a future and soror stroke; That which thou deliverest out of the hand of one enemy, will I give up to the sword of another enemy; for God has many arrows in his quiver, if one miss the summer-fruits, he shall not. (5.) What they have laboured for, they shall not enjoy; (v. 13.) "Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; either it shall be blasted and withered, and there shall be nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come, and reap it for himself, or thou shalt be carried into captivity, and leave it to be reaped by thou knowest not whom; thou shalt tread the olive, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; having no heart to make use of ornaments and refreshments, when all is going to ruin. Thou shalt tread out the sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine, for many things may fall between the cup and the lip." Note, It is very grievous to be disappointed of our expectations, and not to have the pleasure of that which we have taken pains for; and this will be the just punishment of those that frustrate God's expectations from them, and answer not the cost he has been at upon them. See this threatened in the law; (Lev. xxvi. 16. Deut. xxxi. 30, 38, &c.) and compare Isa. lxii. 8, 9.

2. That all they have, shall at length be taken from them; (v. 13.) Thou shalt be made desolate because of thy sins; and v. 16, a desolation and a hissing. Sin makes a nation desolate; and when a people that have been famous and flourishing, are made desolate, it is the astonishment of some and the triumph of others; some lament it, and others hiss at it. Thus ye shall hear the reproach of my people.

Their being the people of God, in name and profession, while they kept close to their duty, and kept themselves in his love, was an honour to them, and all their neighbours; but now that they have corrupted and ruined themselves, now that their sins and God's judgments have made their land desolate, their having been once the people of God does but turn so much the more to their reproach; their enemies will say, These are the people of the Lord, Ezek. xxxvi. 20. Note, If professors religion ruin themselves, their ruin will be the most reprovable of any other; and they in a special manner will rise to the last day to everlasting shame and contempt.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, I. The prophet, in the name of the church, solemnly laments the woe and desolation of the land wherein they lived, and the desolations of many parts thereof which overwhelmed the nation, which levelled the differences, and bore down the fences, of all that is just and sacred, v. 1. To. II. The prophet, for the sake of the church, prescribes comforts, which may be of use at such a time, and gives counsel what to do. 1. They must have an eye to God, v. 7. 2. They must courageously bear up against the insolences of the enemy, v. 8. 9. 10. They must patiently bear the labours and bruises of their God, v. 9. 4. They must expect no other than that the trouble would continue long, and must endeavour to make the best of it, v. 11. 13. 5. They must encourage themselves with God's promises, in answer to the prophet's prayers, v. 14. 15. 6. They must foresee the fall of their enemies, that now triumph over them, v. 16. 17. 7. They must themselves triumph in the mercy and power of God, and his faithfulness to his covenant; (v. 18. 30.) and with that comfortable word the prophecy concludes.

1. W O is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. 2. The good man is perished out of the earth; and there is none upright among men; they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. 3. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. 4. The best of them is as a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge; the day of thy watchmen and thy vision cometh; now shall be their perplexity. 5. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. 6. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law,
a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

This is such a description of bad times, as, some think, could scarcely agree to the times of Hezeciah, when this prophet prophesied; and therefore, they rather take it as a prediction of what should be in the reign of Manasseh. But we may rather suppose it to be in the reign of Ahaz, (and in that reign he prophesied, ch. i. 1.) or in the beginning of Hezekiah's time, before the reformation he was instrumental in; and, in the best of his days, and when he had done his best to purge out corruptions, still there was much sin. The prophet cried, Look, look, what is he! He bemocks himself that his lot was cast in such a degenerate age, and thinks it his great unhappiness that he lived among a people that were ripening apace for a ruin which many a good man would unavoidably involve in. Thus David cries out, Wo is me, that Isojourn in Mesch! He laments it, 

1. That there was so few good people to be found, even among those that were called God's people, and this was their reproach. The good man is perished out of the earth, or out of the land, the land of Canaan, it was a good land, and a land of uprightness, (Isa. xxxvi. 10.) but there were few good men in it, none upright among them, v. 2.

The good man is a godly man, and a merciful man; the word signifies both. Those are completely good, who are for God and God's cause, and passionate and benevolent toward men; that love mercy and walk with God. These are perished; those few honest men that some time ago enriched and adorned our country, are now dead and gone, and there are none risen up in their stead, that tread in their steps; honesty is banished, and there is no such thing as a good man to be met with. Those that were the best and most upright, have been deceived, and become as bad as the worst; the godly man ceases, Ps. xii. 1. This is illustrated by a comparison; (v. 1.) They were as when they have gathered the summer-fruits; it was as hard a thing to find a good man as to find any of the summer-fruits, (which were the choicest and best, and therefore must carefully be gathered in,) when the harvest is over, and the vintage passed. (1 Kings x. 11.) I, even I only, am left. Good men, who used to hang in clusters, are now as the grape-gleanings of the vintage, here and there a berry, Isa. xvii. 6. You can find no societies of them as banches of grapes, but those that are, are single persons, there is no cluster to eat; and the best and fullest grapes are those that grow in large clusters. Some think that this intimates not only that good people were few, but that those few who remained, who went for good people, were good for little; like the small withered grapes, the refuse that were left behind, not only by the gatherer, but by the gleaner. When the prophet observed this universal degeneracy, it made him desire the first-ripe fruits; he wished to see such worthy, good men as the choicest and best, in his time, and in the primitive times, and as far excelled the best of all the present age as the first and full-ripe fruits do those of the latter growth, that never come to maturity. When we read and hear of the wisdom and zeal, the strictness and conscientiousness, the devotion and charity, of the professors of religion in former ages, and see the reverse of this in those of the present day, in their professions, and in their lives, we sit down and dwell with a sigh. O for primitive Christianity again! Where are the plainness and integrity of those that went before us? Where are the Israelites indeed, without guile? Our souls desire them; but in vain. The golden age is gone, and past recall; we must make the best of what is, for we are not likely to see such times as have been.

2. That there were so many wicked, mischievous people among them; not only none that did any good, but multitudes that did all the hurt they could; They all lie in wait for blood, and hunt every man his brother. To get wealth to themselves, they were not without craft, but they did to their neighbours and nearest relations, and they act as if mankind were in a state of war, and force were the only right. They are as beasts of prey to their neighbours, for they all lie in wait for blood as lions for their prey, they thirst after it, make nothing of taking away any man's life or livelihood to serve a turn for themselves, and lie in wait for an opportunity to do it. Their neighbours are as the beasts of prey to them, for they hunt every man his brother with a net, they persecute them as mocious creatures, fit to be taken and destroyed, though they are innocent, excellent ones. We say of him that is outwitted, Caput gerit lupum—He is to be hunted as a wolf. Or, they hunt them as men do the game, to feast upon it; they have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin, so that they may but get by it. Thus they do mischief with both hands earnestly; their hearts desire it, their heads contrive it, and then both hands are ready to put it in execution. Note, The more eager and intent men are upon any sinful pursuit, and the more pains they take in it, the more provoking it is.

3. That the magistrates, who by their office ought to have helpt he best to suppress sin, had so corrupted the laws and the laws they had themselves corrupted, that they were the practitioners and promoters of wrong; that they may do evil with both hands earnestly, to excite and animte themselves in it, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh, for a reward, for a bribe, with which they will be hired to exert all their power for the supporting and carrying on of any wicked design with both hands, they do evil with both hands, and so some read it. They do ill with a great deal of art and dexterity, they praise themselves for doing it so well; others thus, To do evil they have both hands, (they catch at an opportunity of doing mischief,) but to do good the prince and the judge ask for a reward; if they do any good offices, they are mercenary in them, and must be paid for them. The great man, who has wealth and power to do evil, he is the most ready and able to use them. They use mischief in conjunction with the prince and the judge, who are ready to support him, and stand by him, in so they wearch it up, they perplex the matter, involve it, and make it intricate, (so some understand it,) that they may lose equity in a mist, and so make the cause turn which way they please. It is ill with a people, when their princes and judges and great men are in a confederacy to pervert justice. And it is a sad character that is given of them, (v. 4.) that the best of them is as a briar, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge; it is a dangerous thing to have any thing to do with them, be that touches them, must be fenced with iron, (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.) he shall be sure to be scratched, to have his clothes torn, and his eyes almost pulled out. If this be not enough, then he shall be shivered, and he that is upright, what are the worst? And when things are come to this pass, the day of the watchmen comes, that is, as it follows, the day of thy visitation, when God will reckon with thee for all this wickedness; which is called the day of the watchmen, because their prophets, whom God act as watchmen over them, had often warned them of that day. When evil has been committed, even in the best and the most upright, what can be expected but a day of visitation, a deluge of judgments, as that which drowned the old world when the earth was filled with violence? 4. That there was no faith in man, people were grown so universally treacherous, that one knew not whom to repose any confidence in, v. 5. "Those
that have any sense of honour, or sparks of virtue remaining in them, have a firm regard to the laws of friendship, they would not discover what passed in private conversation, or divulge secrets, to the prejudice of a friend: but those things are now made a jest of, you will not meet with a friend that you dare trust, whose word you dare take, or who will have any tenderness or concern for you; so that wise men shall give it and take it for a rule, Trust ye not in a friend, for you will find him false, you can trust him no further than you can see him; and even him that passes for an honest man you will find to be so only with good-will to you. As you are to undertake to be your guide, to lead you into any business which he professes to understand better than you, you cannot put a confidence in him, for he will be sure to mislead you if he can get any thing by it. Some by a guide understand a husband, who is called the guide of thy youth; and that agrees well enough with what follows, Keep the doors of thy life from her that lieth in thy bosom, from thy own wife; take heed what thou sayest before her, lest she betray thee, as Delilah did Samson; lest she be the bird of the air, that carries the voice of that which thou sayest in thy bed-chamber, Eccl. x. 20. It is an evil time indeed, when the prudent are obliged even thus far to keep silence. Those who were abused, or who lived among enemies, and men had cause to be discontented, or dissatisfied, in their own families, and their nearest relations, v. 6. The times are bad indeed, when the son dishonours the father, gives him bad language, exposes him, threatens him, and studies to do him a mischief, when the daughter rises up in rebellion against her own mother, having no sense of duty, or natural affection; and no respect for her; and the daughter and her mother-in-law are vexations to her. Either they cannot agree about their property and interest, or their humours and passions clash, or, from a spirit of bigotry and persecution, the daughter shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child, Matt. x. 16. It is sad when a man's betters and worst enemies are the men of his own house, his own children and servants, that should be his guard and his best friends. Note, The contempt and violation of the laws of domestic duties are a sad symptom of universal corruption of manners. These are never likely to come to good, that are unfaithful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them, and cross them.

7. Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me. 8. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. 9. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. 10. Then shall that which mine enemy shall see, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. 11. In that day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. 12. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. 13. Notwithstanding, the land shall be desolate, because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

The prophet, having sadly complained of the wickedness of the times he lived in, here fastens upon some considerations for the comfort of himself and his friends, in reference thereto. The case is bad, but it is not desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel, fighting this thing. 1. Though God be now displeased, he shall be reconciled to us, and then all will be well, v. 7, 9. We are now under the indignation of the Lord, God is angry with us, and justly, because we have sinned against him. Note, It is our sin against God that provokes his indignation against us; and we must see it, and own it, whenever we are under divine rebukes, that we may justify God, and may study to answer his end in afflicting us, by repenting of sin, and breaking off from it. Now, at such a time, 1. We must have recourse to God under our troubles; (v. 7.) Therefore I will look unto the Lord. When a child of God has ever so much occasion to cry, as (Ho. vii.) the prophet here, v. 1.) yet it may be a comfort to him, that he has a God to look to, a God to come to, to fly to, in whom he may rejoice, and have satisfaction. All may look bright above him, when all looks black and dark about him. The prophet had been complaining that there was no comfort to be had, no confidence to be put, in friends and relations on earth, and this drives him to his God; herefore he.Herefore we must come to God. The less reason we have to delight in any creature, the more reason we have to delight in God. If princes are not to be trusted, we may say, Happy is the man that has the God of Jacob for his Help, and happy am I, even in the midst of my present woes, if he be my Help. If men be false, this is our comfort, that God is faithful; if relations be unkind, he is and will be gracious. Let us therefore look above and beyond them, and overlook our disappointment in them, and look unto the Lord. 2. We must submit to the will of God in our troubles; (v. 7.) I will bear the indignation of the Lord, will bear it patiently, without murmuring and repining, because I have sinned against him. Note, Those that are truly penitent for sin, will see a great deal of reason to patiently undergo the correction. Wherefore should a man complain, for the punishment of his sin? When we complain to God of the badness of the times, we ought to complain against ourselves for the badness of our own hearts. 3. We must depend upon God to work deliverance for us, and put a good issue to our troubles in due time; we must not only wait for him, but look for him; I will wait for the God of my salvation, and for his gracious return to me. In our greatest distresses, we shall see no reason to despair of salvation, if by faith we eye God as the God of our salvation, who is able to save the weakest, upon their humble petition, and willing to save the worst, upon their true repentance. And if we depend on God in due time; we must not only wait for him, but look for him, and for his salvation, in his own way and his own time. Let us now see, what the church is here taught to expect and promise herself from God, even then when things are brought to the last extremity. (1.) My God will hear me; if the Lord be our God, he will hear our prayers, and grant an answer of peace to them. (2.) When I fall, and am in danger of being dashed in pieces, yet I shall arise, and recover myself again. I fall, but am not utterly cast down, Ps. xxxvii. 24. (3.)
"When I sit in darkness, desolate and disconsolate, melancholy and perplexed, and not knowing what to do, or which way to look for relief, yet then the Lord shall be a Light to me, to comfort and revive me, to instruct and teach me, to direct and guide me, as a Light to mine eyes, a Light to my feet, a Light in a dark place." (4.) He will plead my cause, and execute judgment for me, v. 9. If we heartily express the cause of religion and virtue, and make it our cause, we may hope he will own our cause, and plead it. The church's cause, though it seem for a time to go against her, will at length be pleaded with jealousy, and judgment not only given against, but executed upon, the enemies of it. (5.) "He will bring me forth to the light, make me shine eminent out of the midst of obscurity, and become conspicuous; will make my righteousness shine evidently from under the dark cloud of calumny, Ps. xxxvi. 6. Isa. lviii. 10. The morning of comfort shall shine forth, out of the long and dark night of trouble." (6.) "I shall behold his righteousness; I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me, and the performance of his promises to me." III. Though enemies triumph and insult, they shall be silenced and put to shame, v. 8, 10. Observe here,

1. How proudly the enemies of God's people trampled upon them in their distress: they said, Where is the Lord their God? As if because they were afflicted, God had forsaken them, and they knew not where to find him with their prayers, and he knew not how to help them with his favours. The multidivines said to him, and it was a sword in his bones; (Ps. xlix. 10.) and see Ps. cxv. 2. Thus, in reproaching Israel as an abandoned people, they reflected on the God of Israel, as an unkind, unfaithful God.

2. How comfortably the people of God by faith bear up themselves under these insults: (v. 8.) "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; I am now down, but shall not be always so, and when my God appears for me, then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and be ashamed." (not only being disappointed in her expectations of the church's utter ruin, but having the same cup of trembling put into her hand,) "then mine eyes shall behold her in the same deplorable condition that I am now in; now shall she be trodden down." Note, The deliverance of the church will be the confession of her enemies; and she shall be ashamed, when her enemies have trampled upon God's people, so they shall themselves be trampled upon.

III. Though the land continue a great while desolate, yet it shall at length be replenished again, when the time, even the set time, of its deliverance comes. 1. Its salvation shall not come till after it has been desolate; so the margin reads it, v. 13. God has controversy with the land, and it must lie long under his rebukes, because of them that dwell therein; it is their iniquity that makes their land desolate; (Ps. cvii. 34.) it is for the fruit of their doings, their evil doings which they have been themselves guilty of, and the evil fruit of them, the sins of others, which they have been accessory to, by their bad influence and example. For this they must expect to smart a great while, for the land shall know no rest till it be purged, and the inhabitants thereof made clean from sin, notwithstanding there may be sinners still by those regions.

2. When it does come, it shall be a complete salvation; and it seems to refer to their deliverance out of Babylon by Cyrus, which Isaiah about this time prophesied of, as a type of our redemption by Christ. (1.) The decree shall be far removed. God's decree concerning their captivity, and Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning the perpetuity of it, his resolution never to release them; these shall be set aside and revoked, and you shall hear no more of them; they shall no more lie as a yoke upon thy neck. (2.) Jerusalem and the cities of Judah shall be again reared; Then thy walls shall be built; walls for habitation, walls for defence, house-walls, town-walls, temple-walls: it is in order to these, that the decree is repeated, Isa. xlv. 28. Though Zion's walls may lie long in ruins, there will come a day when they shall be repaired. (3.) All that belong to the land of Israel, whithersoever you fly, shall have a right to return; though howsoever distressed, far and wide over the face of the whole earth, shall come flocking to it again; (v. 12.) He shall come even to thee, having liberty to return, and a heart to return, from Assyria, whither the ten tribes were carried away, though it lay remote; and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress, those strongholds in which they thought they were safe from God's hand; though through Pharaoh will not let the people go, God will fetch them out with a high hand. They shall come from all the remote parts, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain, not turning back for fear of your discouragements, but they shall go from strength to strength till they come to Zion. Thus in the great day of redemption, God will gather his elect from the four winds.

14. Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thy heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilgal, as in the days of old. 15. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things. 16. The nations shall see, and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. 17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee. 18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he re- tainteth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Here is,

1. The prophet's prayer to God, to take care of his own people, and of their cause and interest, v. 14. When God is about to deliver his people, he stirs up their friends to pray for them, and pours out a spirit of grace and supplication, Zech. xii. 10. And when we see God coming towards us in the display of mercy, we may be forever dispersed in prayer. It is a prophetic prayer, which amounts to a promise of the good prayed for: what God directed his prophet to ask, no doubt he designed to give. Now, 1. The people of Israel are here called the flock of God's heritage, for they are the sheep of his hand, the sheep of his pasture, his little flock, in the world; and they are his heritage, his portion in the world; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. 2. This flock dwells solitarily in the wood, or forest, in the midst of Carmel, a high mountain; Israel was a
peculiar people that dwelt alone, and was not reckoned among the nations, like a flock of sheep in a wood. They were now a desolate people, (v. 13.) were in the land of their captivity, some resting on the desert, and some in the mountains, and made a prey to the beasts of the forest. They are scattered upon the mountains as sheep having no shepherd. 3. He prays that God would feed them there with his rod, that he would take care of them in their captivity, would protect them, and provide for them, and do the part of a good Shepherd to them; Let thy rod and thy staff be comforted, even in that darksome valley, and even there let them want nothing that is good for them. Let them be governed by thy rod, not the rod of their enemies, for they are thy people." 4. He prays that God would in due time bring them back to feed in the plains of Bashan and Gilead, no longer to be fed in the woods and mountains. Let them feed in their own country, as in the days of old. Some apply this spiritually, and make it either the prophet's prayer to Christ, or his Father's charge to him, to take care of his church, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, and to go in and out before them while they are here in this world as in a wood, that they may find pasture as in Carmel, as in Bashan and Gilead.

II. God's promise, in answer to this prayer, and we may well take God's promises as real answers to the prayers of faith, and embrace them accordingly, for with him saying and doing are not two things. The prophet prayed that God would feed them, and do kind things for them; but God answers that he will show them marvellous things, (v. 15.) will do for them more than they are able to ask or think, will out-do their hopes and expectations; he will show them his marvellous loving-kindness, Ps. vii. 17.

1. He will do that for them, which shall be the retribution of the wonders and miracles of former ages; according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt. Their deliverance out of Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace, not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt; nay, it should eclips the lustre of that, (Jer. xvi. 14, 15.) much more should the work of redemption by Christ be so. Note, God's former favours to his church are patterns of future favours, and shall again be copied cut as there is occasion.

2. He will do that for them, which shall be matter of wonder and amazement to the present age, v. 16, 17. The nations about shall take notice of it, and all that see it shall marvel. For he has done great things for them, Ps. cxxvi. 2. The impression which the deliverance of the Jews out of Babylon shall make upon the neighbouring nations, shall be very much for the honour both of God and his church. (1.) Those that had insulted over the people of God in their distress, and gloried that when they had them down, they would keep them down, shall be confounded, when they see them thus surprisingly rising up; they shall be confounded at all the might with which the captives shall now exert themselves, whom they thought for ever disabled. They shall now lay their hand upon their mouths, as being ashamed of what they have said, and not able to say any more, by way of triumph over Israel. Nay, their ears shall be deaf to the sound of their own voice, in comparison of the marvellous deliverance, they shall stop their ears, as being not willing to hear any more of God's wonders wrought for these people, which they had so despised and insulted over. (2.) Those that had impudently confronted God himself, shall now be struck with a fear of him, and thereby brought, in profession at least, to submit to him; (v. 17.) Nay, they shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall be so mortified, as if they were sentenced to the same curse the serpent was laid under; (Gen. iii. 14.) Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat. They shall be brought to the lowest abasement imaginable, and not only be so contemned, that they shall have no kind treatment to them. His enemies shall lick the dust, Ps. lxxviii. 9. Nay, they shall lick the dust of the church's feet, Isa. xlix. 23. Proud oppressors shall now be made sensible how mean, how little they are, before the great God, and they shall with trembling and the lowest submission move out of the holes into which they had crept, (Isa. ii. 21.) like worms and reptiles, and be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee, O Lord. Forced submissions are often but feigned submissions; yet they redound to the glory of God and the church, though not to the benefit of the dissemblers themselves.

III. The prophet's thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy, in the name of the church, with a believing dependence upon his promise, v. 18—20. We are here taught of God to pray for God's mercy, v. 18. God having promised to bring back the captivity of his people, the prophet, on that occasion, admires pardoning mercy, as that which was at the bottom of it. As it was their sin that brought them into bondage, so it was God's pardoning their sin that brought them out of it; Ps. lxxxv. 1, 2. and Isa. xxxiii. 24.—xxxviii. 17.—xli. 2. The pardon of sin is the foundation of all other covenant mercies, Heb. viii. 12. This the prophet stands amazed at, while the nations about stood amazed only at those deliverances which were but the fruits of this. Note, (1.) God's people, who are the remnant of his heritage, stand charged with many transgressions; being but a remnant, a very few, one would hope they should all be very good, but they are not so; God's children have their spots, and often offend their Father. (2.) The gracious God is ready to pass by and pardon the iniquity and transgression of his people, upon their repentance and return to him. God's people are pardoned people, and to this they owe their all. When God pardons sin, he passes it by, does not punish it as justly he might, nor deal with the sinner according to his deserts. But he does not lay his own people under the tokens of his displeasure, yet he will not retain his anger for ever, but though he cause grief, he will have compassion; he is not impleacable; yet against those that are not of the remnant of his heritage that are unpardoned, he will keep his anger for ever. (4.) The reasons why God pardons sin, and keeps not his anger for ever, in these he is disposed, that they may experience pardoning mercy, cannot but admire that mercy; it is what we have reason to stand amazed at, if we know what it is. Has God given us our transgressions? We may well say, Where is a God like unto thee? Our holy wonder of pardoning mercy will be a good evidence of our interest in it.

2. To take to ourselves the comfort of that mercy, and all the grace and truth that along with it
God's people here, as they look back with thankfulness upon God's pardoning their sins, so they look forward with assurance upon what he would yet further do for them. His mercy endures for ever, and therefore as he has showed mercy, so he will, v. 19, 20. (1.) He will renew his favours to us, he will turn again, he will have compassion, he will again have compassion upon us, as formerly he had; his compassions shall be new every morning: he seemed to be departing from us in anger, but he will turn again, and pity us. He will turn us to himself, and then will turn to us, and have mercy upon us. (2.) He will renew us, to prepare and qualify us for his favour; He will subdue our iniquities; when he takes away the guilt of sin, that it may not damn us, he will break the power of sin, that it may not have dominion over us; that we may not fear sin, or be led captive by it. Sin is an enemy that fights against us, a tyrant that oppresses us; nothing less than almighty grace can subdue it, so great is its power in fallen man, and so long has it kept possession. But if God forgive the sin that has been committed by us, he will subdue the sin that dwells in us, and in that, there is none like him in forgiving; and all those whose sins are pardoned, earnestly desire and hope to have their corruptions mortified, and their iniquities subdued, and please themselves with the hopes of it. If we be left to ourselves, our iniquities will be too hard for us; but God's grace, we trust, shall be sufficient for us to subdue them, so that they shall not rule us, and then they shall not ruin us. (3.) He will confirm this good work, and effectually provide that his act of grace shall never be repealed; Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea; as when he brought them out of Egypt, (to which he has an eye in the promises here, v. 15.) he subdued Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and cast them into the depth of the sea. It intimates that when God forgives sin, he remembers it no more, and takes care that it never be remembered more against the sinner; (Ezek. xviii. 22.) His transgressions shall not be mentioned unto him, they are blotted out as a cloud which never appears more. He casts them into the sea, not near the shore-side, where they may appear again next low water, but into the depth of the sea, never to rise again. All their sins shall be cast there without exception, for when God forgives sin, he forgives all. (4.) He will perfect that which concerns us, and with this good work will do all that for us, which our case requires, and which he has promised; (v. 20.) They will thou perform thy truth to Jacob, and thy mercy to Abraham. It is in pursuance of the covenant, that our sins are pardoned, and our lusts mortified; from that spring all these streams flow, and with these he shall freely give us all things. The promise is said to be mercy to Abraham, because, as made to him first, it was mere mercy, preventing mercy, considering what state it found him in. But it was truth to Jacob, because the faithfulness of God was engaged to make good to him and his seed, as heirs to Abraham, all that was graciously promised to Abraham. See here, [1.] With what solemnity the covenant of grace is ratified to us; it was not only spoken, written, and sealed, but, which is the highest confirmation, it was sworn to our fathers; nor is it a modern project, but is confirmed by antiquity too, it was sworn from the days of old; it is an ancient charter. [2.] With what satisfaction it may be applied and relied upon by us; we may say with the highest assurance, Thou wilt perform the truth and mercy, not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground; faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it.
AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM.

The name of this prophet signifies a comforter; for it was a charge given to all the prophets, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; and even this prophet, though wholly taken up in foretelling the destruction of Nineveh, which speaks terror to the Assyrrians, is, even in that, comforter to the ten tribes of Israel, who, it is probable, were now lately carried captives into Assyria. It is very uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied, but it is most probable that he lived in the time of Hezekiah, and prophesied against Nineveh, after the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria, which was in the ninth year of Hezekiah, and before Sennacherib's invading Judah, which was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, for to that attempt, and the defeat of it, it is supposed, the first chapter has reference; and it is probable that it was delivered a little before it, for the encouragement of God's people in that day of treading down and perplexity. It is the conjecture of the learned Huculus, that the two other chapters of this book were delivered by Nahum some years after, perhaps in the reign of Manasseh, and in that reign the Jewish chronologies generally place him; somewhat nearer to the time when Nineveh was conquered, and the Assyrian monarchy reduced, by Cyaxares and Nebuchadnezzar, some time before the first captivity of Judah. It is probable that Nahum did by word of mouth prophesy many things concerning Israel and Judah, as it is certain that Jonah did, (2 Kings xiv. 25.) though we have nothing of either of them in writing, but what related to Nineveh, of which, though a great and ancient city, yet, probably, we should never have heard in sacred writ, if the Israel of God had not had some concern in it.

NAHUM, I.

CHAP. 1.

In this chapter we have, I. The inscription of the book, v. 1. II. A magnificent display of the glory of God, in a mixture of wrath and justice against the wicked, and mercy and grace toward his people, and the discovery of his majesty and power in both, v. 2. 3. III. A particular application of this (as most interpreters think) to the destruction of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army, when they besieged Jerusalem, which was a very memorable and illustrous instance of the power both of God's justice and of his mercy, and spake abundance of terror to his enemies, and encouragement to his faithful servants, v. 9. 16.

1. THE burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

This title directs us to consider,
1. The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the burden of Nineveh; not only a prophecy, and a weighty one, but a burdensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill-stone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About a hundred years before this, Jonah had, in God's name, foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city; but then the Ninevites repented, and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth; the Ninevites then saw clearly how much it was to their advantage, to turn from their evil way, it was the saving of their city; and yet, soon after, they returned to it again; it became worse than ever, a bloody city, and full of lies and robbery; they repented of their repentance, returned with the dog to his vomit, and at length grew worse than ever they had been; then God sent them not this prophet, as Jonah, but this prophecy, to read them their doom, which was now irreversible. Note, The reprieve will not be continued, if the repentance be not continued in. If men turn from the good they began to do, they can.
2. The poor prophet by whom the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. The burden of Nahum was what the prophet plainly foresaw, for it was his vision, and what he left upon record; it is the book of the vision, that, when he was gone, the event might be compared with the prediction, and might confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself, is, that he was an Elkoshite, of the town called Elkies, or Eleza, which, St. Jerome says, was in Galilee. Some observe, that the scripture ordinarily says little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were uttered.

2. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 4. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. 5. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 6. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. 7. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. 8. But with an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

Nineveh knows not God, that God that contends with her, and therefore is here told what a God he is; and it is good for us all to mix faith with that which is here said concerning him, which speaks a great deal of terror to the wicked, and comfort to good people; for this glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel, and a dark side toward the Egyptians. Let each take his portion from it; let sinners read it and tremble, let saints read it and triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against his enemies, his favour and mercy are here assured to his faithful, loyal subjects, and his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible, and his favour very desirable.

1. He is a God of inflexible justice, a jealous God, and will take vengeance on his enemies; let Nineveh know this, and tremble before him. Their idols are insignificant things, there is nothing formidable in them; but the God of Israel is greatly to be feared; for, 1. He reserveth the affronts and indignities done him by those that deny his being or any of his perfections, that set up other gods in competition with him, that destroy his laws, arraign his proceedings, ridicule his word, or are abusive to his people. Let such know that Jehovah, the one only living and true God, is a jealous God, and a Re-venger; he is jealous for his own honour in the matters of his worship, and will not endure a rival; he is jealous for the comfort of his worshippers, jealous for his land, (Joel ii. 18.) and will not have that injured. He is a Revenger, and he is furious; he has fury, (so the word is,) and man has it, when it is an ungoverned passion, (so he has said, fury in not in me, Isa. xxvii, 4.) but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it. He is Lord of anger; so the Hebrew phrase is, for that which we read, he is furious; he has anger, but he has it at command and man has it, when it is often Lord over us, as theirs that have no rule over their own spirits, but God is always Lord of his anger, and weighs a path to it, Ps. lxviii. 20. 2. He resolved to reckon with those that put those affronts upon him. We are told here, not only that he is a Revenger, but that he will take vengeance; he has said he will, he has sworn it, Deut. xxxii. 40, 41. Whoever are his adversaries and enemies among men, he will make them feel his resentment: and though the sentence against his enemies is not executed speedily, yet he reserves wrath for them, and reserves them for it in the day of wrath. Against his own people, who repent, and humble themselves before him, he keeps not his anger for ever, but against his enemies he will for ever let out his anger. He will not at all acquit the wicked that sin, and stand to it, and do not wickedly depart from God, their departure, and never return; (Ps. xviii. 21.) and these he will not acquit. Humble supplicants will find him gracious, but scorful beggars will not find him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud, but late, Lord, Lord. This revelation of the wrath of God against his enemies is applied to Nineveh, (v. 8.) and should be applied by all those to themselves, who go on still in their trespasses; With an over-running flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof. The army of the Chaldeans shall overrun the country of the Assyrians, and lay it all waste. God's judgments, when they come with commission, are like a deluge to any people, which they cannot keep off, or make head against. Darkness shall pursue his enemies, (v. 8.) darkness shall follow them, whithersoever they go, shall pursue them to utter darkness; if they think to flee from the darkness that pursues them, they will but fall into that which is before them.

11. He is a God of irresistible power, and is able to deal with his enemies, be they ever so many, ever so mighty, ever so hardy. He is great in power, (v. 3.) and therefore it is good having him our Friend, and bad having him our Enemy. Now here,

1. The power of God is asserted and proved by divers instances of it in the kingdom of nature, where we always find its visible effects in the ordinary course of nature, and sometimes in the surprising alternations of that course. (1.) If we look up into the regions of the air, there we shall find proofs of his power, for he has his ways in the whirlwind and the storm; which way soever God goes, he carries a whirlwind and a storm along with him, for the terror of his enemies, Ps. xviii. 9, 8c. And wherever there is a whirlwind and a storm, God has the command of it, the control of it, makes his way through it, goes on his way in it, and serves his own purposes by it. He spake, and the whirlwind of the wind, and the stormy wind fulfils his word. He has his way in the whirlwind, he goes on undisinterred, and the methods of his providence are to us unaccountable; as it is said, His way is in the sea. The clouds are the dust of his feet, he treads on them, walks on them, raises them when he pleases,
as a man with his feet raises a cloud of dust. It is but by permission, or usurpation rather, that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God's hand. (2.) If we cast our eye upon the great deeps, there we find that the sea is his, for he made it; for when he pleases, he rebukes the sea, and makes it dry, by raising up with violence waves which will overwhelm it. He gave his proofs of his power when he divided the Red sea and Jordan, and can do the same again whenever he pleases. (3.) If we look round us on this earth, we find proofs of his power, when either by the extreme heat and drought of summer, or the cold and frost of winter, Bashan languishes, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon, is burnt, and strongest flower languishes. His power is often seen in earthquakes, which shake the mountains, and the earth is burnt at his presence by the scorching heat of the sun, and he could burn it with fire from heaven, as he did Sodom, and at the end of time he will burn the world and all that dwell therein. The earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Thus great is the Lord, and of great power.

2. This is particularly applied to his anger. If God be an almighty God, we may then see infer, (v. 6.) *Who can stand before his indignation?* The Ninivites had once found God slow to anger, (as he says, v. 5.) and perhaps presumed, that therefore his anger was not strong, and that he might make bold with him; but they will find he is just and jealous as well as merciful and gracious, and, having showed the justice of his wrath, in the next he shows the power of it, and the utter insufficiency of his enemies to contend with him. It is in vain for the stoutest and strongest sinners to think to make their part good against the power of God's anger. (1.) See God here, as a consuming fire, terrible and mighty. Here is his indignation against sin, and the fierceness of his anger, his fury poured out, not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone rained on Sodom, Ps. xi. 6. Hell is the fierceness of God's anger, Rev. xvi. 19. God's anger is so fierce, that it beats down all before it; the rocks are thrown down by him, which seemed unable to stand. Rock sometimes being rent by the eruption of subterraneous fires, which is a faint resemblance of the fierceness of God's anger against sinners whose hearts are rocky, for none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. (2.) See sinners here, as stubble before the fire, weak and impotent, and a very unequal match for the wrath of God. [1.] They are utterly unable to bear up against it, so as to resist it, and put by the strokes of it; *Who can stand before his indignation?* Not the proudest and most daring sinner; not the world of the ungodly, no, not the angels that sinned. [2.] They are utterly unable to bear up under it, so as to keep up their spirits, and preserve any enjoyment of themselves; *Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?* As it is insupportable to us, so it is intolerable. Some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world a man may bear up under, but the fierceness of his anger, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Let us therefore fear before him, let us stand in awe, and not sin.

III. He is a God of infinite mercy; and in the midst of all this wrath mercies are remembered. Let the sinners in Zech. be afraid, that go on still in their transgressions, but let not those that trust in God, tremble before him. For, 1. He is slow to anger, (v. 3.) not easily provoked, but ready to show mercy to those who have offended him, and to receive them into favour upon their repentance. 2. When the tokens of his rage against the wicked are abroad, he takes care for the safety and comfort of his own people; (v. 7.) *The Lord is good to those that are good,* and to them he will be a strong hold in the day of trouble. Note, The same almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked is engaged, and shall be employed, for the protection and satisfaction of his own people; he is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of public trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth, laying all waste, he will be a Place of defence to those that by faith put themselves under his protection, those that trust in him in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him, and are devoted to the service and worship of him; he takes care for his children, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief. They are perhaps obscure and little regarded in the world, but the Lord knows them, Ps. i. 6.

9. What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. 10. For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. 11. There is one come out of thee that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor. 12. Thus saith the Lord, Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. 13. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. 14. And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image, and the molten image; I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. 15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.
Comes out of Nineveh, imagining evil against the Lord, brings upon Nineveh this burden: never was the multitude of his prisoners so great as this. Daringly, more blasphemously affronted than by Sennacherib at that time: he was a wicked counselor, who counselled them to despair of God's protection, and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavoured to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation; (Isa. xxxvi. 7.) with this wicked counselor he here expostulates, (v. 8.) in answer to the charge of his sins and offences against God and his people. He thinks it an ill-omen, foolish, wicked thing is it for you to plot against God, as if you could outwit divine wisdom, and overpower Omnipotence itself! Note, There is a great deal imagined against the Lord by the gates of hell, and against the interests of his kingdom in the world; but it will prove a vain thing, Ps. ii. 2. He that sits in heaven, laughs at the imaginations of the pretenders, and shall afflict him, and will turn their counsels headlong.

2. The great destruction, which God will bring upon them for it; not immediately upon the whole monarchy, (the ruin of that was deferred till the measure of their iniquity was full,) but, (1.) Upon the army; God will make an utter end of it; he shall be totally cut off and ruined at one blow; one fatal stroke of the destroying angel shall lay them dead and dying. God shall make a second stroke; for the first shall not be sufficient. With some sinners God makes a quick despatch, does their business at once; divine vengeance goes not by one certain rule, nor in one constant track; but, one way or other, by acute diseases or chronic ones, by slow deaths or lingering ones, he will make an utter end of all his enemies, who persist in their imaginations against him. We have reason to believe, that the Assyrian army was mostly of the same spirit, and spake the same language, with their general, and now God would take them to task, though they did but say as they were taught; and it shall appear that they have laid themselves open to divine wrath by their own act and deed, v. 10. (1.) They are as thorns that entangle one another, and are holden together; they make one another worse, and more inimical to God and his people, and murder one another's hearts, and strengthen one another's hands, in their impiety; and therefore God will do with them as the husbandman does with a bush of thorns, when he cannot bear them, he puts them all into the fire together. (2.) They are as drunken men, intoxicated with pride and rage; and such as they shall be irrecoverably overthrown and destroyed. They shall be as drunkards, besotted to their own ruin, and shall stagger and fall, and make themselves a reproach, and be justly laughed at. (3.) They shall be devoured as stubble fully dry, which is irresistibly and irrecoverably consumed by the flame. The judgments of God are as devouring fire to those that make themselves as stubble to them. It is again threatened concerning this great army, (v. 12.) that though they be quiet and likewise numerous, yet, the Lord, who is in the midst of them, shall be their ruin. They are besieged upon them, because they are numerous, yet thus shall they be cut down, or certainly shall they be cut down, as grass and corn are cut down, with as little ado, when he shall pass through, even the destroying angel that is commissioned to cut them down. Note, The security of sinners, and their confidence in their own strength, are often presages of ruin approaching. (4.) The destruction comes upon the king; he imagines evil against the Lord, and shall he escape? No, (v. 14.) The Lord has given a commandment concerning thee, the decree is gone forth, that thy name be no more soon, that thy memory perish, that thou be no more talked of as thou hast been, and that the report of thy mighty actions be dispersed upon the wings of fame, and celebrated with her trumpet. Because Sennacherib's son reigned in his stead, and returned to his own country; and partly because the Assyrian empire not long after. Note, They that imagine evil against the Lord, hasten evil upon themselves and their own families and interests, and ruin their own names by dishonouring his name. It is further threatened, (1.) That the images he worshipped should be cut off from their temple; the graven image and the molten image out of the house of the gods, God will break it in pieces, which was what would happen when Sennacherib was slain by his two sons, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god; by which barbarous parricide we may suppose the temple was looked upon as defiled, and was therefore disused, and the images cut off from it, the worshippers of these images no longer attending there. Or, it may be taken more generally to speak against the outer ruin of Assyria; the army of the enemy shall lay all waste, and not spare even the images of their gods; by which God would intimate to them that one of the grounds of his controversy with them was, their idolatry. (2.) That Sennacherib's grave shall be made there, some think in the house of his god; there he was slain, and there he shall be buried, for he is vile; he lies under this perpetual mark of disgrace, that he had so far lost his interest in the divine protection of his country, as that he was said to have made two of them murder him. Or, it may be meant of the ignominious fall of the Assyrian monarchy itself, upon the ruins of which that of Babylon was raised; what a noise was made about the grave of that once formidable state, but now despicable, is largely described, Ezek. xxxiii. 3, 11, 15, 16. Note, Those that make themselves vile by scandalous sins, God will make them vile by shameful punishments.

3. The great deliverance, which God would hereby work for his own people, and the city that was called by his name. The ruin of the church's enemies is the salvation of the church, and a very great salvation it was, that was wrought for Jerusalem by the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. (1.) The siege shall hereby be raised; "Now will I break his yoke from off thee," by which thou art kept in bondage and kept in slavery, as Babylon was, by which thou seemest bound over to the Assyrian's wrath." That vast victorious army, when it forced free quarters for itself throughout all the land of Judah, and lived at discretion there, was as yokes and bonds upon them. Jerusalem, when it was besieged, was, as it were, bound and fettered by it; but when the destroying angel had done his work, Jerusalem's bonds were burst asunder, and was set at liberty again; this was a figure of the great salvation, by which the Jerusalem that is above is made free, is made free indeed. (2.) The enemy shall be so weakened and dispirited, that they shall never make any such attempt again, and the end of this trouble shall be so well gained by the grace of God, that there shall be no more occasion for such a severe correction. (1.) God will not again afflict for similar offences. The terror of his wrath should be upon them, and the like of this never more. (2.) If he be slighted, he is more than ever to be dreaded. It is enough; for he has by this fright accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, (Isa. x. 12.) and therefore, though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more; the bitter portion shall not be repeated, unless there be need, and the patient's case shall call for it; for God doth not afflict willingly. (2.) The enemy shall not dare again to act in the same manner; they shall never find the same path, that they have found, as they have done, to lay all waste, for he is utterly cut off, and disabled to do it. His army is cut off, his spirit cut off, and at length he is himself cut off. Lastly, The tidings of this great deliverance shall be published and welcomed with abundance of joy throughout the kingdom, v. 15. While Sennacherib prevailed, and carried all
before him, every day brought bad news; but now, 
behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth 
good tidings, the feet of the evangelist; he is seen 
coming at a distance upon the mountains, as fast as 
his feet will carry him; and how pleasant a sight is 
it once more to see a messenger of peace, after we 
have received so many of Job's messengers! We 
find these words made use of by another prophet, 
to illustrate the import of the deliverance of the 
people of God out of Babylon; (Isa. li. 7.) not that 
the prophets stole the word one from another, (as 
those did, Jer. xxiii. 30.) but, speaking by the same 
Spirit, they often used the same expressions: and it 
may be of good use for ministers to testify their 
consent to wholesome truths, (1 Tim. vi. 3.) by con-
curring in the same forms of sound words, (2 Tim. 
1. 13.) the word is a lamp by the apostle, 
both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the 
great redemption wrought out for us by our Lord 
Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the 
everlasting gospel, Rom. x. 15. Christ's ministers 
are those messengers of good tidings that preach 
peace by Jesus Christ; how beautiful are the feet 
of those messengers! How welcome their message 
to the heart and dissipates the stench of sin! And observe, He that brings these good 
tidings, brings them with a call to Judah to keep 
her solemn feasts, and perform her vows. During 
the trouble, [1.] The ordinary feasts had been in-
terrupted. Inter arma silent leges—The voice of law 
cannot be heard amidst the shouts of battle. While 
Jerusalem was compassed with armies, they could 
not keep God, that did not violate that which 
was holy, when the enemy was taken off, they must return to the observation 
of their feasts; and the feasts of the Lord will be 
doubly sweet to the people of God, when they have 
been for some time deprived of the benefit of them, 
and God graciously restores them their opportuni-
ties again; for we are taught the worth of such mer-
cies by the want of them. [2.] They had made 
vows; they would deliver them out of this 
distress; they would do something extraordinary 
in his service, to his honour; and now that the 
deliverance is wrought, they are called upon to per-
form their vows; the promise they had then made 
must now be made good, for better it is not to vow, 
that to vow and not to pay. And those words, The 
wicked shall no more pass through thee, may be 
taken as a promise of the perfecting the good work of 
reformation, which Hezekiah had begun; the wicked 
shall rest, as they have done, walk on every side, 
but they shall be cut off. Then the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad is a mercy 
indeed to a nation, when it is accompanied with 
the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, 
who are its more dangerous enemies.

CHAP. II.

We now come closer to Nineveh, that great city; she took 
not warning by the destruction of her armies, and the 
fall of her king, and therefore may expect, since she per-
sists in her enmity to God, that he will proceed in his 
curse upon her. Here is the story of Nebuchadnezzar, the 
appearance of the enemy that should destroy Nineveh, and the ter-
or of his military preparations, v. 1. - 5. II. The tak-
ing of the city, v. 6. III. The captivity of the queen, 
the flight of the inhabitants, the seizing of all its wealth, 
and the constellation it should be in, v. 7. - 10. IV. 
All this is run up to its true causes, their sinning against 
God, and God's appearing against them, v. 11. - 13. All 
this is in a sense fulfilled with the lines of Nebuchadnezzar, 
that great king of Babylon, who was dethroned by Nebuchad-
nezzar, king of the Medes, conquered Nineveh, and made 
himself master of the Assyrian monarchy.

1. If 

that dasheth in pieces is come up 
before thy face: keep the mutton; 
watch the way, make thy loins strong, for-
ify thy power mightily. 2. For the Lord 
hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, 
as the excellency of Israel: for the emitters 
have emptied them out, and marred their vine 
branches. 3. The shield of his mighty 
men is made red, the valiant men are in 
scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming 
torches in the day of his preparation, and the 
first trees shall be terribly shaken. 4. The 
chariots shall rage in the streets, they 
shall justle one against another in the broad 
ways: they shall seem like torches, they 
shall run like the lightnings. 5. He shall 
recount his worthies: they shall stumble in 
their walk; they shall make haste to the 
wall thereof, and the defence shall be pre-
pared. 6. The gates of the rivers shall be 
opened, and the palace shall be dissolved 
7. And Huazzab shall be led away captive, 
she shall be brought up, and her maids 
shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering 
upon their breasts. 8. But Nineveh is of 
old like a pool of water; yet they shall flee 
away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but 
none shall look back. 9. Take ye the spoil 
of silver, take the spoil of gold; for there is 
none end of the store and glory out of all the 
pleasant furniture. 10. She is empty, and 
void, and waste; and the heart melteth, and 
the knees smite together, and much pain is 
in all loins, and the faces of them all gather 
blackness.

Here is,

1. An alarm of war sent to Nineveh, v. 1. The 
prophet speaks of it as just at hand, for it is neither 
doubtful nor far distant; "Look about thee, and 
see, that dashes in pieces is come before thy face. 
what Nebuchadnezzar shall do against thee, is 
not to be seen, but is hid; yet when he is 
approaching, he will deliver them out of this 
distress, they would do something extraordinary 
in his service, to his honour; and now that the 
deliverance is wrought, they are called upon to per-
form their vows; the promise they had then made 
must now be made good, for better it is not to vow, 
than to vow and not to pay. And those words, The 
wicked shall no more pass through thee, may be 
taken as a promise of the perfecting the good work of 
reformation, which Hezekiah had begun; the wicked 
shall rest, as they have done, walk on every side, 
but they shall be cut off. Then the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad is a mercy 
indeed to a nation, when it is accompanied with 
the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, 
who are its more dangerous enemies.
turn away the pride of Jacob, by the captivity of the two tribes, as he did the pride of Israel, by their captivity; he has done it. He has determined to do it, to bring captives upon them, and the enemy that is to do it must begin with Nineveh, and reduce that first, and humble the pride of that. God is looking upon proud cities, and abusing them, even those that were nearest to him. Samaria is humbled, Jerusalem is to be humbled, and their pride broken. (4.) If they should bring heavy things upon Nineveh, he will bring them to her city, he brought down too? Empties have emptied the cities, and marred the vine-branches, in the country of Jacob and Israel; and must not the excellency of Nineveh, that is so much her pride, be turned away too?

3. A particular account given in of the terrors wherein the invading enemy shall appear against Nineveh; they are very things, brought to make him formidable. (1.) The shields of his mighty men are made red, and, probably, their other arms and array; as if they were already tinctured with the blood they had shed, or intended hereby to signify they would put all to the sword; they hung out a red flag, in token that they would give no quarter. (2.) The valiant men are in scarlet; not only red clothes, to inculcate they were workmen, thereby to make them the more rich clothes, to intimate the wealth of the army, and that is the sinews of war. (3.) The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation; when they are making their approaches, they shall fly as swift as lightning, the wheels shall strike fire upon the stones, and those that drive them shall drive furiously with a flaming indignation. (4.) The fir-trees shall be terribly shaken; the great men of Nineveh, that overtop their neighbours, as the stately firs do the shrubs; on, the very standing trees shall be made to shake by the violent concussions of the earth, that which great army shall cause. (5.) The chariots of war shall be very terrible; (v. 4.) They shall rage in the streets, that is, those that drive them shall rage, you would think the chariots themselves raging; they shall be so numerous, and drive with so much fury, that even in their rear, where, one would think, there should be room enough, they shall just one another; and these iron chariots shall be made so bright, that in the beams of the sun they shall seem like torches in the night; they shall run like the lightnings, so swiftly, so furiously. Nebuchadnezzar's commanders are here called his worthies, his gallants, (so the margin reads it,) his heroes, those he shall recount, and order them immediately and with their arms at their respective posts, for he is entering upon action, is resolved to take the field immediately, and to open the campaign with the siege of Nineveh. His worthies shall remember, (so some read it,) they shall be mindful of the duty of their place, and the charge they have received, and shall thereby be made so intent upon their business, that they shall make more haste than good speed; they stumble, but shall not fall; for they shall make haste to the wall thereof, shall open the trenches; and the defence, or the covered way, shall be prepared, (something to shelter them from the darts of the besieged,) and they shall so closely carry on the siege, and with so much vigour, that at length the gates of the river_G even might be opened, (v. 6.) Those gates of Nineveh, which opened upon the river Tigris, (on which Nineveh was built,) shall be first forced by, or betrayed to, the enemy; and by those gates they shall enter. And then the palace shall be dissolved, either the king's house, or the house of Nisroch his god; the same word signifies both a palace and a temple. When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with a people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods, can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them. 4. A prediction of the consequences of this, and is an easy matter to conclude what will be. (1.) The queen shall fall into the hands of the enemy; (v. 7.) Hizzab shall be led away captive; she that was established, (so some read it,) thought herself safe, because she was concealed, and shut up in secret, shall be discovered, (so the margin reads it,) and shall be led away captive, in greater disgrace than that of common prisoners; she shall be brought up in a mock-state, and made maids of them (v. 8.) to her, because she is weak and faint, not able to bear such frights and hardships, which are doubly hard and frightful to those that have not been used to them; they shall attend her, not to speak cheerfully to her and to encourage her, but murmuring and muttering themselves, with the voice of doves, the doves of the valleys, ( Ezek. vii. 16.) noted for their sighs and lamentations. They shall be tabering upon their breasts, beating their own breasts in grief and vexation, as if they were drumming upon them, for so the word signifies. (2.) The inhabitants, though numerous, shall none of them be able to make head against the invaders, or stand their ground; (v. 8.) Nineveh is of old like a pool of water, replenished with people as a pool with water, (and swarmed with multitude; Rev. xxi. 13.) or as those waters with fish; it was long ago a populous city, in Jonah's time there were 129,000 little children in it, (Jonah iv. 11.) and, ordinarily, cities and countries are increasing in their number every year; but though they have so many hands to be employed in the public service, yet they shall not be able to inspire one another with courage, but they shall fly away like winds. Their commanders shall do what they can to animate them; they shall cry, "Stand, stand, have a good heart on it, and we shall do well enough," but none shall so much as look back; they shall not have the least spark of courage remaining, but every one shall think it his wisest course to make his best of the opportunity to escape; they shall not so much as look back to their city, which can dispirit the strongest and boldest, in the day of distress, so that they shall not be what one would expect from them, but like a pool of water, the water thereof is dried up and gone. (3.) The wealth of the city shall become a prey, and all its rich furnishings shall fall into the hands of the victorious enemy; (v. 9.) they shall Thus animate and animate one another to flight. Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold; thus the officers shall stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here are silver and gold enough for them, for there is no end of the store of money and plate. Nineveh, having been of old like a pool of water, has gathered a vast deal of mud; and abundance of glory it has out of all the pleasant furniture, all the vessels of desire, which are to supply their wants. Here, Note, and now shall be a prey and a pride to the conquerors. Those who prepare raiment as the clay, and heap up silver as the dust, know not who may put on the raiment, and divide the silver, Job xxxvi. 16, 17. Thus this rich city is empty, and void, and waste, v. 10. See the vanity of worldly wealth; instead of defending its owners, it does but expose them, and enables them to be employed by others, for more mischief. (4.) The soldiers and people shall have no heart to appear for the defence of the city. Their spirits shall melt away like wax before the
11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion’s whelp, and none made them afraid! 12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey and his dens with ravin. 13. Behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn thy chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions; and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Here we have Nineveh’s ruin.
1. Triumphed in by its neighbours, who now remember against it all the oppressions and abuse of power it had been guilty of in its pomp and prosperity; (v. 11, 12.) Where is the dwelling of the lions? It is gone, there appears no remnant, no footsteps of it; Where is the feeding-place of the young lions, where they glutted themselves with prey; The princes of Nineveh had been as lions, as beasts of prey; cruel tyrants are no better, nay, in this respect much worse—that, being men, humanity is expected from them; nay, if they were indeed lions, they would not prey upon those of their own kind; Seuils inter se conventus urbis—Fierce bears agree together. But in the shape of baseness, they had a plenty of lions: they walked in Nineveh as a lion in the woods, and none made them afraid; every one stood in awe of them, and they were under no apprehensions of danger from any; though no body loved them, every body feared them, and that was all they desired; Oderint, dum mutuant—Let them hate, so that they do but fear. The king himself, and every prince, made it their business, by all the arts of violence and extortion, to entertain himself, and raise his family; he did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, (and no little would be enough for them,) and he strangled for his lionesses, killed all that came near him, and seized what they had for his children, for his wives and concubines, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin, as lions are wont to do. Note, Many make it an excuse for their rapine and injustice, that they have wives and children to provide for, whereas what is so got will never do them any good; they that fear the Lord, and get what they have honestly, shall not want a competency for themselves and theirs, verily they shall be fed, when the young lions, though dens and holes were filled with prey and victual for them, shall lack and suffer hunger, Ps. xxxiv. 10.
2. It is avowed by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, it is his doing, and let all the world take notice that it is so; (v. 13.) Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. And what good can hosts do for her in her defence, when the Lord of hosts is against her for her destruction? The oppressors in Nineveh thought they only set their neighbours against them, who were not a match for them, and whom they could easily overpower; but it proved they set God against them, who is, and will be, the Asserter of right, and the Avenger of wrong. God is against the princes of Nineveh, and then, (1.) These military preparations will stand them in no stead; I will burn her chariots in the smoke; he does not say in the fire, but in contempt of them, the very smoke of God’s indignation shall serve to burn their chariots; they shall be consumed as soon as the fire of his indignation is kindled, which as yet it does but smoke, and not flame out. (2.) The chariots of the princes, being jerked and stifled with the smoke; then the chariots of their glory shall be the shame of their families, Isa. xxi. 12. (2.) Their children, the hopes of their families, shall be cut off; The sword shall devour the young lions, whom they were so solicitous to provide for by oppression and extortion. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of their children, for which they have all their comfort in this world, that take sinful courses to enrich them, and (as has been said of some) damn their souls to make their sons gentlemen. (3.) The wealth they have heaped up by fraud and violence, shall neither be enjoyed by them, nor employed for them; I will cut off thy prey from the earth; not only shall not be the better for it, but shall be enfeebled by it, and be more exposed to the dissembling of them for the future to prey upon their neighbours. (4.) Their agents abroad shall not have that respect from their neighbours, and that influence upon them, which sometimes they had had; The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard, no more be heeded. Which some think refers to Rabshakeh, one of Nineveh’s messengers, that had blasphemed the living iniquity which was remembered against Nineveh long after. Those are not worthy to be heard again that have once spoken reproachfully of God.

CHAP. III.

This chapter goes on with the burthen of Nineveh, and concludes it. 1. The sins of that great city are charged upon it, murder, (v. 1.) whoredom and witchcraft, (v. 4.) and a general extenuation of wickedness, v. 19. II. Judgments are here threatened against it, blood for blood, (v. 2, 3.) and shame for shameful sins, v. 5–7. III. Instances are given of the like desolations brought upon other places for their sins, v. 8–11. IV. The judgment of all those things which they depended upon, and put confidence in, is foretold, v. 12–19.

1. WO to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; 2. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. 3. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: 4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that sell eth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. 5. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the
Here is,

I. Nineveh arraigned and indicted; it is a high crime: that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her numbers nor her grandeur shall secure her from prosecution. 1. It is a city of blood, in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed, either by unrighteous war, or under colour and pretence of public justice; or by suffering barbarous murderers to go unpunished; for this the righteous God will make inquisition. 2. It is all full of lies, truth is banished from among them, there is no such thing as honesty, one knows not whom to believe, nor whom to trust. 3. It is all full of robbery and rapine; no man cares what mischief he does, nor to whom he does it; The prey departs not, they never know whom to attack nor how to strike, and so they destroy all. 4. They shed blood, and told lies, in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves. 4. There is a multitude of whoredoms in it, that is, idolatry, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself, and to which she seduced the neighbouring nations, as a well-favoured harlot, and sold, and ruined nations through her whoredoms. 5. She is a mistress of witchcrafts, and by them she seduced Loti. 1. 4. That which Nineveh aimed at was, a universal monarchy, to be the metropolis of the world, and to have all her neighbours under her feet; to compass this, she used not only arms, but arts, compelling some, but deluding others, into subjection to her, and whelming them as a harlot by her charms, to lay their necks under her yoke, suggesting to them that it would be for their advantage; she courted them to join her in her idolatrous rites, to tie them the faster to her interests; and made use of her wealth, power, and greatness, to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them, and made a hand of them. These were the whoredoms, like those of Tyre, Isa. xxviii. 15, 17. These were her witchcrafts, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And this is it that God has quarrelled with her, who, having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants, and another of slaves, and who claims it as his prerogative to be universal Monarch.

II. Nineveh condemned to ruin, upon this indictment. Wo to this bloody city! v. 1. See what this wo is.

Nineveh had with her cruelties been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore destruction and terror shall be brought upon her. Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way, will, sooner or later, meet with their match. (1.) Hear the alarm with which Nineveh shall be terrified, v. 2. It is a formidable army that advances against it, you may hear them at a distance, the rumour of which, while driving the chariot-horses with fury; you may hear the noise of the rattling of the wheels, the pinching of the horses, and the jingling chariots; the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it. (2.) See the slaughter with which Nineveh shall be laid waste, v. 3. The sword drawn, with which execution shall be done, the bright sword lifted up, and the glittering spear, the dazzling brightness of which is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against. Since they have been so bold in these make, when they are commissioned to slay; there is a great number of carcases, for the slain of the land shall be many, there is no end of their carcases, there is such a multitude of slain, that it is vain to go about to take the number of them, they lie so thick, that passengers are ready to stumble upon their carcases at every step. The destruction of Semacheth's vanity, which was so great a name, is perhaps looked upon here as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for they that will not take warning by judgments at a distance, shall have them come nearer.

II. Nineveh had with her whoredoms and witchcrafts drawn others to shameful wickedness, and therefore God will lead her with shame and confusion, (v. 5—7.) The Lord of hosts is against her, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy, shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen that while she courted her neighbours, it was with design to ruin their liberty and property, when all her wicked arts shall be brought to light, then her shame is discovered to all nations, and her sins are open, and she is reproved, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to naught, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then to see the nakedness of thy land do they come, and it appears ridiculous. Then do they cast abominable filth upon her, as upon a carted strumpet, and make her vile as the spewing of all things that great city, which all the nations had made court to, and coveted an alliance with, is become a gazings-stock, a laughing-stock. They that formerly looked upon her, and fled to her, in hopes of protection from her, now look upon her, and flee from her, for fear of being ruined by her. Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest, will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and, because miserable, will be made contemptible, and thereby be made more miserable. When Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her? Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit of relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or, if it would, none shall do any such good office; Whence shall I seek comforters for thee? Note, Those that showed no pity in the day of their power, may expect to have no pity in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh, that had been deceived by her wiles, came to be undeceived in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate, when she was made a spectacle or gazings-stock. Note, The greater men's show was in the day of their abused prosperity, the greater will be their shame in the day of their destruction. I will make thee an example; so Drusius reads it. Note, When proud sinners are humbled and brought down, it is designed that others should take example by them not to lift up themselves in security and insolence, when they prosper in the world.

8. Art thou better than populous Noah, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? 9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. 10. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the
NAHUM, III.

streets; and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11. Thou also shalt be drunk: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. 12. All thy strong holds shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. 13. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy hand shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. 14. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln. 15. There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall eat thee up like the canker-worm: make thyself many as the canker-worm, make thyself many as the locusts. 16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm spelteth, and fleeth away. 17. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. 18. There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually!

Niniveh has been told how God is against her, and then none can be for her, to stand in her stead; yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and says, I shall have peace. Threatened folks live long; therefore here the prophet largely shows how vain her confidences would prove, and how God would judge her, as the judgment of God. To convince them of this,

1. He shows them that other places, which had been as strong and as secure as they, could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Niniveh shall fall unpitied and uncomforited, (for miserable comforters will they prove, who speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble,) and she shall be able to hold but two days: And thou shalt be; etc. v. 8. He takes them off from their vain confidences by quoting precedents. The city mentioned is Zo, a great city in the land of Egypt: (Jer. xlv. 23.) No-Amonn, so some read it, both there and here. We read of it, Ezek. xxx. 14.-16. Some think it was Diospolis, others Alexandria. As God said to Jerusalem, Go, see what I did to Sodoma, (Gen. xlvii, 12,) so to Niniveh that great city, Go, see what I did to populous Zo. Note, It will help to keep us in a holy fear of the judgments of God, to consider that we are not better than those that have fallen under those judgments before us. We deserve them as much, and are as little able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions. Are we better than such and such, who were in like manner exercised? Nay, were not they better than we, and less likely to be afflicted? Now concerning No, observe.

1. How firm their standing seemed to be, v. 8. She was fortified both by nature and art, was situate among the rivers. N Ib, in several branches, not only watered her fields, but guarded her wall; her rain-patri was the sea, the lake of Mareota, an Egyptian sea, like the sea of Tiberias; her wall was from the sea, it was fenced with a wall which was thought to make the place impregnable; it was also supported by its interests and alliances abroad, v. 9. Ethiopia, of Arabia, was her strength, either by the wealth brought to her in a great trade by the African forces engaged for military service; the whole country of Egypt also contributed to the strength of this populous city; so that it was infinite, and there was no end of it; (so it might be rendered,) she set no bounds to her ambition, and knew no end of her wealth and strength; people flocked to her endlessly, and she thought there never would be any end of it, but it is God's prerogative to be infinite. Put and Laban were thy helpers, two neighboring countries of Africa, Mauritania, and Libya, this is, Libya Cyrenaica, a country that Egypt had much dependence upon. No, thus helped, seemed to sit as a queen, and was not likely to see any sorrow. But,

2. See how fatal her fall proved to be; (v. 10.) Yet was she among the great, and her strength failed her; even she that was so strong, so secure, yet went into captivity. This refers to some destruction of that city, which was then well known, and probably, fresh in memory, though not recorded in history; for the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar, (if we should understand this prophetically,) could not be made an example to Niniveh; for the redding of one of the first of his cities, and that of Egypt one of the last. The strength and grandeur of that great city could not be its protection from military execution; (1.) Not from that which was most barbarous; for those young children had no compassion showed them, but were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets by the merciless conquerors. (2.) Not from that which was most inglorious and disgraceful; they cast lots for her honourable men that were made prisoners of war, who should have them for their slaves. So many had they of them, that they knew not what to do with them, but they made sport with throwing dice for them; all her great men, that used to be adored on state-days with chains of gold, were now bound in chains of iron; they were finisht with and buffeted; as drunk with the cup of the Lord's indignation; they were so drunk that they were not only as slaves, but as condemned malefactors. What a mortification was this to populous Zo, to have her honourable men and great men, that were her pride and confidence, thus abused! Now hence he infers against Niniveh, (v. 11.) Thus also shall be intoxicated, infatuated, thou also shalt reel and stagger; as drunk with the cup of the Lord's indignation; that is, as drunk with his distress and danger, and not able to face the enemies; because of whose strength and terror, having no strength of their own, they shall seek strength, shall come sneaking to their neighbours, to beg their assistance in a time of need. Thus God can cut off the spirit of princes, and take away their heart.
2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garisons and strong holds they had, which were regular, and well fixed? They put up paper walls, and like the first-rate screens, which, if you give the tree but a little shake, will fall into the mouth of the ceter that gapes for them; so easily will their strong holds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy, upon the first summons, v. 12. Note, Strong holds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when the Lord sends his own hand of judgment against them, and erecting a siege. They are strong, and high, but only in his own conceit, Prov. xviii. 10. They are supposed to make their strong holds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable, and serviceable to them against the invader; (v. 14.) Drink the water for the siege, lay in great quantities of water, that that which is so necessary to the support of human life, may not be wanting; it is put here for all manner of provision, with which Nineveh is ironically bid to furnish herself, in expectation of a siege. Take ever so much care that thou mayest not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail; fortify the strong holds, by adding out-works to them, or putting men and arms into them, as with the building of tower upon tower and trench upon trench, and tread the mortar, and make strong the brick-kiln, take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications, but it shall be all in vain, for (v. 15.) there shall even the fire devour thee, if the strong hold be burnt, or the sword cut thee off, if it be taken by storm. It is by fire and sword that in time of war the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants? Were their number and value reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications? Alas! these shall stand in no stead, they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers; (v. 13.) Thy people in the midst of thee are women; they have no conduct, no courage, they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are in such times of danger and distress; they shall be at their wits' end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own imagination, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the vaant men shall become cowards. O vero Phrygus, neque enim Phrygus—Phrygian dames, not Phrygian men. Though they make themselves many, (v. 15.) as the canker-worm and as the locust, so the women and children in Nineveh, thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven, though thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders, who having so much money to stand up in defence of, and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, should, one would think, give the enemy a warm reception; yet their hearts shall fail them too; though they be numerous as caterpillars, yet the fire and sword shall cut them up, and lay them waste, as the locust and the canker-worm, and as the locusts and the canker-worms; (v. 15.) They are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous like them. He adds, (v. 16.) The canker-worm spoils, or spreads herself, and flies away. Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms. The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil, without opposition, or any hope of recovery. Or, the canker-worm, which has come from abroad to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded, and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove themselves to some other place, will spread their wings, and fly away where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them. Note, It is rare to find even those that have shared with us in our joys, willing to share with us in our griefs too. The canker-worm, who are as many as the locusts, and as mischievous as the locusts, and as much as the locusts are much to be feared, there is anything to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that have got by, they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bid her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms, which on a sudden fly away as the eagle toward heaven, Prov. xxviii. 5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of the gates? or, did they believe they would remain, when Nineveh should be taken? What those shall be against the force of the judgments of God? v. 13. The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies, the gates of thy rivers, (ch. ii. 6.) the flood-gates, or the passes and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country; or the gates of the cities; these, though ever so strong and well guarded, shall not answer their end; the fire shall devour the bars, the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their king and princes? They should do them no service; (v. 17.) Thy crowned are as the locusts; those that had pomp and power, as crowned heads, were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance, when the enemy came in like a flood. Thy captains, that should lead the fore-runners, (v. 14.) and should have been great, but they are as the great grasshoppers, the maximum quad sic—the largest specimens of that species; still they are but grasshoppers, worthless things, that can do no service. They camp in the hedges in the cold day, the cold weather; but when the sun rises, they flee away, and are gone nobody knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers that had slumbering about Nineveh, when trouble arose, fled away, and shift for their own safety: the hiredlings flee, because he is a hireling. The king of Assyria is told, and it is a shame he needs to be told it, (who might observe it himself,) that his shepherds stumble; they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place, and the trust reposed in them: Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust, and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves, and rally again? In this also they should be disappointed; for when the shepherds are smitten, the sheep are scattered, the people are dispersed upon the mountains, and no man gathers them, nor will they ever come together of themselves. 'The shepherds are but hirelings.' Nineveh, when trouble arises, will put them to flight, and shift for their own safety: the hiredlings flee, because he is a hireling. The judgment they are under is as a wound, and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, no healing of thy bruises, no possibility that the wound, which is so grievous and painful to thee, should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate, (v. 19.) and thy neighbours, instead of lending a hand to help thee, shall clap their hands over thee, and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because thou hast been always doing mischief to those about thee, there is none of them but what thou hast abused and insulted; and therefore they shall be so far from pitying thee, that they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with. Note, Those that have been ungenerous to their neighbours, will, one that has been an injury to another, find it come to them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves against their day comes to fall; and these that dare not lay hands on them themselves, will clap their hands over them, and brands them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served, and paid in their own coin. The troubles shall be troubled, will be the burden of many, as here, the burden of Nineveh.
AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF THE PROPHECY OF HABAKKUK.

It is a very foolish fancy of some of the Jewish rabbins, that this prophet was the son of the Shunamite woman, that was at first miraculously given, and afterward raised to life, by Elisha; (2 Kings 4,) as they say also that the prophet Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, which Elijah raised to life. It is a more probable conjecture of their modern chronologers, that he lived and prophesied in the reign of King Manasseh, when wickedness abounded, and destruction was hastening on; destruction by the Chaldeans, whom this prophet mentions as the instruments of God's judgments; and Manasseh was himself carried to Babylon, as an earnest of what should come afterward. In the apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon, mention is made of Habakkuk the prophet in the land of Judah, who was carried thence by an angel to Babylon, to feed Daniel in the den; those who give credit to that story, take pains to reconcile our prophet's living before the captivity, and foretelling it, with that. Huetius thinks that that was another of the same name, a prophet, this is of the tribe of Simeon, that of Levi; others, that he lived so long as to the end of the captivity, though he prophesied of it before it came. And some have imagined that Habakkuk's feeding Daniel in the den, is to be understood mystically, that Daniel then lived by faith, as Habakkuk had said the just should do; He was fed by that word, Hab. ii. 4. The prophecy of this book is a mixture of the prophet's addresses to God in the people's name, and to the people in God's name; for it is the office of the prophets to carry messages both ways. We have in it a lively representation of the intercourse and communion between a gracious God and a gracious soul. The whole refers particularly to the invasion of the land of Judah by the Chaldeans, which brought spoil upon the people of God, a just punishment of the spoil they had been guilty of among themselves; but it is of general use, especially to help us through that great temptation with which good men have in all ages been exercised, arising from the power and prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous by it.

HABAKKUK, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, I. The prophet complains to God of the violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice among his own people, and the hardships thereby put upon many good people, v. 1. 4. II. God by him foretells the punishment of that abuse of power by the sword of war, and the desolations which the army of the Chaldeans should make upon them, v. 5. 11. III. Then the prophet complains of that too, and is grieved that the Chaldeans prevail so far; (v. 12. 13.) so that he scarcely knows which is more to be lamented, the sin, or the punishment of it, for in both many harmless good people are very great sufferers. It is well that there is a day of judgment, and a future state, before us in which it shall be eternally well with all the righteous, and with them only, and ill with all the wicked, and them only; so the present seeming disorders of providence shall be set to rights, and there will remain no matter of complaint whatsoever.

1. THE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. 2. O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! 3. Why dost thou shew iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. 4. Therefore the law is slackened, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

We are told, in the title of this book, (which we have, v. 1.) that the prophet was a prophet, a
man divinely inspired and commissioned, which is enough; if that be so, we need not ask concerning him where he was at the place of his birth: we are also told that the book itself is the burden which he saw; he was as sure of the truth of it as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes already accomplished.

Here, in these verses, the prophet sadly laments the iniquity of the times, as one sensibly touched with grief for the lamentable decay of religion and righteousness. It is a very melancholy complaint which he minced not himself to make.

1. That no man could call what he had his own; but, in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he hath no power on his side, had what he had a mind to, though he had no right on his side: the land was full of violence, as the old world was, Gen. vi. 11. The prophet cries out of violence; (v. 2.) iniquity and grievance, spoil and violence; In falsehood and unrighteous actions, in neighbourly and among friends, in commerce and in courts of law, every thing was carried with a high hand, and no man made any scruple of doing wrong to his neighbour, so that he could but make a good hand of it for himself. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done him, (in losing times it fared best with those that had nothing to lose,) therefore he bid him and those his friends to see other people wronged, and he could not but mingle his tears with those of the oppressed. Note, Doing wrong to harmless people, as it is an iniquity in itself, so it is a great grievance to all that are concerned for God's Jerusalem, who sigh and cry for abominations of this kind. He complains, (v. 4.) that the wicked doth compass about the righteous. One honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besieging him on every side; many wicked men, in confederacy against it, run them down; may, one wicked man (for it is singular) with so many various arts of mischief sets upon a righteous man, that he perfectly besieges him.

2. That the kingdom was broken into parties and factions, that were continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace; There are that raise up strife and contention, (v. 5.) that foment divisions, wide breaches, incense men against one another, and sow discord among brethren, by doing the work of him that is the accuser of the brethren. Strifes and contentions that have been laid asleep, and begun to be forgotten, they awake, and industriously raise up again, and blow up the racks that were laid unburnt these two years. And if blessed are the peace-makers, cursed are such peace-breakers, that make parties, and so make mischief that spreads further, and lasts longer, than they can imagine. It is sad to see bad men warming their hands at those flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation, and stirring up the fire too.

3. That the torrent of violence and strife ran so strongly to bid defiance to the restraints and regulations of laws, and the administration of justice, v. 4. Because God did not appear against them, nobody else would, therefore the law is slack, is silent, it breathes not, its pulse beats not, (so, it is said, the word signifies,) it intermits, and judgment does not go forth as it should; no cognizance is taken of those crimes, no justice done upon the criminals; nor the enemies of God are speedily punished in the courts of equity, the righteous shall be condemned, and the wicked justified, so that the remedy proves the worst disease. The legislative power takes no care to supply the deficiencies of the law, for the obviating of those growing, threatening mischiefs; the executive power takes no care to answer the good intentions of the laws that are made; the strength of justice is dried up by violence, and has no free course.

4. That all this was open and public, and impudently avowed; it was barefaced. The prophet complains that this iniquity was showed him, he beheld it which way soever he turned his eyes, nor could he look off it; spoiling and violence are before me. Note, The abounding wickedness in a nation is a very great eyesore to good people, and if they did not see it, they could not believe it to be so bad as it is. Solomon often complains of the vexation of this kind, which he saw under the sun; and the prophet was much better employed than to wish his country might not see it, Jer. ix. 2. But then we must needs go out of the world, which therefore we should long to do, that we may remove to that world where holiness and love reign eternally, and no spoiling and violence shall be before us.

5. That he complained of this to God, but could not obtain a redress of those grievances; "Lord," says he, "why dost thou show me iniquity? Why hast thou cast my lot in a time and place when and where it is to be seen, and why do I continue to sojourn in Meshech and Kedar; I cry to thee of this violence, I cry aloud, I have cried long; but thou wilt not hear, thou wilt not save; thou dost not take vengeance on the oppressors, nor do justice to the oppressed, as if thine arm were shortened, or thine heart heavy with iniquity. O hasten and quicken the wickedness of the wicked, nay, and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say, We have cleansed our hearts in vain, (Ps. lxix. 13.) and hardens those in impiety, who say, God has forsaken the earth. We must not think it strange, if wickedness be suffered to prevail far, and prosper long, God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprovers of bad men, and the rebukes of good men; and therefore, though we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments, yet we must say, "He is wise, and righteous, and good, in all; and must believe the day will come, though it may be long deferred, when the cry of sin will be heard against these that do wrong, and the cry of prayer for those that suffer it.

5. Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously; for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you. 6. For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. 7. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. 8. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. 9. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. 10. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. 11. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.
We have here an answer to the prophet's complaint, giving him assurance that, though God be long, he would not hear always, with this provoking people; for the day of vengeance was in his heart, and he must have patience; and much repentance and reformation turn away the judgment they were threatened with.

1. The preamble to the sentence is very awful; (v. 5.) Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, since they will not be brought to repentance by the long-suffering of God, he will take another course with them. No repentance is secured deep, as those who are secure, even in the Lord, will make amends for any. The Lord will inflict upon them, 1. A public punishment, which shall be beheld and regarded among the heathen, which the neighbouring nations shall take notice of, and stand amazed at, see Deut. xxix. 24, 25. This will aggravate the desolations of Israel, that they will thereby be made a spectacle to the world. 2. An amazing punishment, so strange and surprising, and so much out of the common road of Providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be sorer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not; nay, it shall not be credited, even by those that had the prediction of it from God, before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eye-witnesses of it, when they knew of it, and believed it, though it be told you; it will be thought incredible that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur to enforce and aggravate it, that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken, that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant, and that he had done so much for them; it is a punishment of God's professing people cannot but be the astonishment of all about them. 3. A speedy punishment; I will work a work in your days, now quickly; this generation shall not pass till the judgment threatened be accomplished. The sins of former days shall be reckoned for in your days; for now the measure of the iniquity is full, Mat. xxiii. 38. 4. It shall be a punishment in which much of the hand of God shall appear: it shall be a work of his own working, so that all who see it shall say, This is the Lord's doing; and it will be found a fearful thing to fall into his hands; so to those whom he takes to task. 5. It shall be such a punishment as will typify the destruction to be brought upon the despisers of Christ and his gospel, even to that these words are applied, (Acts xiii. 41.) Be wary of the sword of the Lord. The ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans for their idolatry, was a figure of their ruin by the Romans for rejecting Christ and his gospel, and it is a very marvellous thing, and almost incredible. Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

H. The sentence itself is very dreadful and particular; (v. 6.) Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans. There were those that raised up a great deal of strife and contention among them, which was their sin; and now God will raise up the Chaldeans against them, who will strive and contend with them, which shall be their punishment. Note, When God's professing people quarrel among themselves, snarl at and denounce one another, it is just with God to bring the common enemy upon them, that shall make peace by making an universal devastation. The contending parties in Jerusalem were inveterate one against another, when the Romans came, and took away their place and nation. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of the destruction threatened, who, though themselves acting unrighteously, shall execute the righteousness of the Lord upon them; the unrighteousness of Israel. Now here we have,

1. A description of the people that shall be raised up against Israel, to be a scourge to them. (1.) They are a bitter and hasty nation, cruel and fierce, and what they do is done with violence and fury; they are precipitate in their counsels, vehement in their passions, and in their action, as in words they use. (2.) They are strong and therefore formidable, and such as there is no standing before, and yet no fleeing from; (v. 7.) They are terrible and dreadful, famed for the gallant troops of their being in field; (v. 8.) Their horses are famed, they are proud to go about and pursue, and more fierce than the evening-wolves; and wolves are observed to be the most ravenous towards the evening, after they have been kept hungry all day, waiting for that darkness under the protection of which all the beasts of the forest creep forth, Ps. civ. 28. Their squadrons of horse shall be very numerous; Their horsemen shall spread themselves a great way, for they shall come from far, from all parts of their own country, and shall be dispersed into all parts of the country they invade, to plunder it, and enrich themselves with the spoil of it. And in making speed to spoil, they shall hasten to the prey, (as those Isa. viii. 1, margin,) for they shall fly as the eagle toward the earth when she hastens to eat, and seek her food there; and they shall look among the nations, and the desolate wilderness, for it is no wise, this is my will, this is my command, it shall be done because I choose it. What favour can be hoped for from such an enemy? Note, Those who have been unjust and unmerciful, among whom the law is slacked, and judgment doth not go forth, will justly be paid in their own coin, and fall into the hands of those who will deal unjustly and numerically with them. 2. A prophecy of the terrible execution that should be made by this terrible nation; They shall march through the breadth of the earth; (so it may be read,) for in a little time the Chaldean forces subdued all the nations in those parts, so that they seemed to have conquered the world; they overrun Asia and part of Africa. Or, through the breadth of the land of Israel, which they utterly destroyed by them. Their faces shall be turned toward the east; (1.) That they shall seize all as their own that they can lay their hands on. They shall come to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs, which they have no right to, but that which their sword gives them. (2.) That they shall push on the war with all possible vigour; They shall all come for violence, (v. 9.) not to determine any dispute by the sword, but in all ways to ruin themselves with the sword; Their faces shall be set up as the east wind; their very countenances shall be so fierce and frightful, that a look will serve to make them masters of all they have a mind to; so that they shall swallow up all, as the east wind takes and blasts the buds and flowers. Their faces shall look toward the east, (so some read,) they shall still have an eye to the sword, but right a way westward from Judea, and all the spoil they seize they shall remit thither. (3.) That they shall take a vast number of prisoners, and send them into Babylon: They shall gather the captivity as the sand for multitude, and shall never know when they have enough, as long as there are any more to be had. (4.) That they shall make nothing of the opposition that is given to them; all the Chaldeans and Jews depend upon their great men to make a stand, and with their conduct and courage to give check to
of his own mind under the burden which he saw; and still he is full of complaints. If he look about him, he sees nothing but violence done by Israel; if he look before him, he sees nothing but violence done against Israel, and is forced to say which is the more melancholy sight: his thoughts of both he pours out before the Lord. It is our duty to be affected both with the inequities and with the calamities of the church of God, and of the times and places wherein we live; but we must take heed lest we grow jerevish in our resentments, and carry them too far, so as to entertain any hard thoughts of God, or to entertain any desire to take off the head of his enemies, and to destroy them. The world is bad, and always was so, and will be so; it is out of our power to mend it; but we are sure that God governs the world, and will bring glory to himself out of all, and therefore we must resolve to make the best of it, must be ourselves better, and long for the better world. The prospect of the prevalence of the Chaldeans drives the prophet to his knees, and he takes the liberty to plead with God concerning it. In his plea we may observe,

I. The truths which he lays down, which he resolves to abide by, and with which he endeavours to comfort himself and his friends, under the growing threatening power of the Chaldeans; and they will furnish us with pleasing considerations for our support in the like case.

1. However, says, ye God is the Lord our God, and our Holy One. The victorious Chaldeans impute their power to their idols, but we are taught to tell them that the God of Israel is the true God, the living God, Jer. x. 10, 11. (1.) He is Jehovah, the Fountain of all being, power, and perfection; our Rock is not as theirs. (2.) He is my God. He speaks in the people's name; every Israelite may say, "He is mine; though we are thus sore broken, and all this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten the name of our God, nor quitted our relation to him, yet have we not disowned him, nor hath he disowned us, Ps. xlv. 17. We are an offending people, he is an offended God, yet he is ours and we will not entertain any hard thoughts of him or of his service, for all this." (3.) He is my Holy One; this intimates that the prophet loved God as a holy God, and feared him for the sake of his holiness; "He is mine, because he is a Holy One; and therefore he will be my Sanctifier and my Saviour, because he is my Holy One. Men are unholy, but my God is holy."

2. Our God is from everlasting. This he pleads with him; Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, or my Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. 13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked fievour eth the man that is more righteous than he? 14. And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? 15. They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoice and are glad. 16. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plentiful. 17. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

The prophet, having received of the Lord that which he was to deliver to the people, now turns to God, and again addresses himself to him for the case of his people. He saith, they shall scoff at the kings and commanders of the forces that think to make head against him; and the princes shall be a scorn to them, some equal a match shall they appear to be. Do they depend upon their garrisons and fortified towns? He shall deride every strong hold, for to him it shall be weak, and he shall heap dust, and take it; a little soil, thrown up for ramparts, shall serve to give him all the advantage against them that they can choose the more convenient place, as a jest of them, and a sport of taking them. (5.) By all this he shall be puffed up with an intolerable pride, which shall be his destruction; (v. 11.) Then shall his mind change for the worse. The Spirit both of the people and of the king shall grow more haughty and insolent. Those that will not be content with their own rights, will not be content when they have made themselves masters of other people's rights too; but as the condition rises, the mind rises too; this victorious king shall pass over all the bounds of reason, equity, and modesty; and break through all their bonds, and thereby he shall offend, shall make God his Enemy, and so prepare ruin for himself by intriguing this his power to his god, whereas he had it from the God of Israel. Bel and Marduk were his gods, and they gave him the glory of his successes; they were hardened in their idolatry, and blasphemously argued, that because they had conquered Israel, their gods were too strong for the God of Israel. Note, It is a great offence (and the common offence of proud people) to take that glory to ourselves, or give it to gods of our own making, which is due to the living and true God only. These closing words of the sentence give a glimpse of comfort to the afflicted people of God; it is to be hoped that they will change their minds, and grow better, and ripe for deliverance; and they did so. However their enemies will change their minds, and grow worse, and ripe for destruction, which will inevitably come in God's due time; for a haughty spirit, lifted up against God, goes before a fall.
death, Ps. cxviii. 18. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church from the eternity of God; for Christ has said, Because I live, and therefore the Rock in which the church is built, he shall live also, Jer. xxv. 19. He is the Rock on which the church is so firmly built, that the gates of hell shall not, cannot, prevail against it. We shall not die.

4. Whatever the enemies of the church do may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends; therefore they need not distress them. It was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do, nor had they any power against his Israel, but what was given them from above. He gave them their commission to take the spoil, and to take the prey, Is. x. 6. Herein God appears a mighty God, that the power of mighty men is derived from him, and depends upon him, and is under his check; he says concerning it, Hitherto shall it come and no further. They whom God ordains, shall do no more than what has God ordained, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people. Men are God's hand, the rod in his hands, Ps. xvii. 14. And he has ordained them for judgment, and to execution of the judgment of the earth; and, in the execution of it, they must expect it, they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction, that they may be ruined, but for their correction, that they may be reformed: they are not intended for a sword, to cut them off, but for a rod, to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts, though they mean not so, neither do they think it, Isa. x. 6. Note, It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure that his counsel shall stand.

5. Though the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and does not approve of that wickedness; (v. 13.) They are of fiercer eyes than to behold evil. The prophet, observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say, "It is vain to serve God, and it is indifferent to him what men are." But he soon suppresses the thought by having recourse to his first principle, that in all things God is an opponent and adversary, and cannot be, the Author or Patron of sin; as he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is of fiercer eyes than to behold it with any allowance or approbation; no, it is that abominable thing which the Lord hates. He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offence to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice. There is in the nature of God an antipathy to these dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and though an expiament is happily found out for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will or can be reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it. Note, God's contumacy at sin must never be interpreted into a giving countenance to it; for he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, Ps. v. 4, 5. The iniquity which, it is here said, God does not look upon, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people by their persecutors; though God sees cause to permit it, yet he does not approve of it; so it agrees with that of Balaam, (Num. xxiii. 21.) He has not beheld iniquity against Jacob, nor seen, with allowance, perverseness against Israel; which is very comfortable to the people of God, in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it; though the instruments of their trouble hate them, it does not thereby follow that God does not, he loves them, and it is in love that he corrects them.

II. The grievances he complains of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths; "Since we are sure that thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptation given them to question whether thou art so or no? Therefore lookedst thou upon the Chaldeans that dealt treacherously with thy people, and didst cast them down among the dead, Ps. lxxii. 2.) Why dost thou suffer the sworn enemies, who blaspheme thy name, to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously, with thy sworn subjects, who desire to fear thy name? What shall we say to this?" This was a temptation to Job; (ch. xxi. 7.—xxv. 1.) to David; (Ps. lxxiii. 2. & 8.) to Jeremiah, ch. xi. 2. 1. That God permitted sin, and was patient with the sinners. He looked upon them, he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain or punish them, but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his looking upon them intimates that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but that he gave them encouragement and assistance, as they were smiled upon them, and favoured them. He held his tongue, and let them proceed in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. These things thou hast done, and I kept silence.

2. That his patience was abused, and, because sentence against these evil works and workers was not executed speedily, therefore their hearts were the more given to sin, their eyes were the more set on evil, Ps. cxvii. 3—4. (1.) They were false and deceitful, that there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They dealt treacherously; under colour of love and friendship, they prosecute and execute the most mischievous designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing. (2.) They hated and persecuted men because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteousness. The wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he, for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill will to the image of God, and therefore devour good men, because they bear that image. Though many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves, and of like wickedness, yet they were not persecuted by them, because they were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.'

3.) They make no more of killing men than of catching fish. The prophet complains that Providence having delivered up the weaker to be a prey to the stronger, they were, in effect, made as the fishes of the sea, v. 14. So they had been among themselves, praying upon one another; the greater fishes do upon the lesser; (v. 3.) and they were made so to the common enemy. They were as the creeping things, or swimming things, (for the word is used for fish, Gen. i. 20.) that have no ruler over them, either to restrain them from devouring one another, or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies. They are given up to the Chaldeans as fish to the fishermen. These proud oppressors make no conscience of killing them, any more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small a count do they make of human lives. They make no difficulty of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are ungirdled and unarmed, and it is rather a pleasure, than any pains, to take them. They make no distinction among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They have various ways of spoiling and destroying, as men have
of taking fish. Some they take up with the angle, (v. 13.) one by one; others they catch in sheets, and by wholesale, in their net, and gather them in their drug, their enclosing net. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

(4.) They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it, though it was got dishonestly; their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous; their possession and fraud, they have a deal of it, and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it. And therefore, (1.) They have great complacency in themselves, and are very pleasant, they live merrily; (v. 15.) Therefore they rejoice and are glad, because their wealth is great, and their projects succeed, for the increase of it, Job xxxi. 25. So take a lesson, Luke xix. 19. [2.] They have a great conceit of themselves, are very much in love with themselves, and are great admirers of their own ingenuity and conduct; they sacrifice to their own net and burn incense to their own drag; they applaud themselves for having got so much money, though ever so dishonestly. Note, There is a proneness in us to take the glory of our outward employments to ourselves too much; and yet, as if the power of our hands, have gotten me this wealth, Deut. viii. 17. This is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the drag-net, because it is our own, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus, is, because it is their portion in fat. They that make a god of their money, will make a god of their drag-net, if they can get money by it.

Lastly, The prophet, in the close, humbly expresses his hope that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind always to go on and prosper thus, and expostulates with God concerning it; (v. 17.) Shall they therefore empty their net? Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels, with that which the Chaldeans, in the close of the foregoing chapter, are going to rob men of their estates by violence and oppression, and take away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again, to catch more? And will thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not share continually to stay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a sin and an injury to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the King of nations, and will he not assert his injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain that? The prophet lodges the matter in God's hand, and leaves it with him, as the Psalmist does, (Ps. lxxiv. 22.) Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.

CHAP. II. In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet, (v. 1.) and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violence and violence of the Chaldeans. The answer is, I. That after God has served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people, and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans, will humble and bring down, not only that proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarch, for his haughtiness and insolence, and the sin and sinfulness, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey, v. 2. 3. II. That not only, but all other sinners like them, should perish under a divine wrath, and that the thirst after dominion and anointing and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey, v. 2. 3. III. Those that make drunkenness, that they may exposer their neighbours to shame, v. 12. 17. IV. Those that worship idols, v. 18. 20. 1. I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. 2. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Here, 1. The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God; (v. 1.) I will stand upon my watch, as a sentinel on the walls of a besieged city, or in the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence. I will look up, will look round, will look within, and watch to see what he will say unto me, will listen attentively to the sounds of his mouth, and try his voice, and be watchful of his proceedings, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction. I will watch to see what he will say in me, (so it may be read,) what the Spirit of prophecy in me will dictate to me, by way of answer to my complaints. Even in an ordinary way, God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences, whispering to us, This is the way, walk in it. This is the voice of God in both. The prophet's standing upon his tower, or high place, speaks his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach, to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God, must withdraw from the world, and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thoughts, study the scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves upon the tower. His standing upon his watch, speaks his patience, his constancy and resolution; he will wait the time, and weather the point, as a watchman does, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will say to him, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him as a prophet to give satisfaction to his people, to answer all their expectations, when he is reproved, or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us. 1. When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of Providence, are tempted to think that it is fate, or fortune, and not a wise God, that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside, we must have recourse to our consciences with considerations proper to clear this matter, we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us, must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation, and solve the objected difficulties, must do as the Psalmist, consider the days of old, and make a diligent search, (Ps. lxxiii. 17,) must go into the sanctuary of God, and there labour to understand the end of these things; (Ps. lxxiii. 17,) we must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them. 2. When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, by his providences, and by our humble representations; (when David says, I will direct my prayer unto thee, as an arrow to the mark, he adds, I will look up, will look after my prayer, as a man does after the arrow he
as shot, Ps. v. 5.) we must hear what God the 
Lord will speak, Ps. lxxxviii. 8. 3. When we go to 
read and hear the word of God, and so consult 
his word, we must do it in the 
very way that God will thereby say unto us, to suit our con- 
verse, and what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and com-
fort, he will bring to our souls, that we may receive 
it, and submit to the power of it, and may consider 
what we shall answer, what returns we shall make 
to the word of God, when we are reproved by it.
4. When we are attacked by such as spurn with 
God and his word, and the counsel therein, 
and do not see his way to have been bent by, besieged as in a tower by 
hosts of objectors, we should consider how to an-
swer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear 
what he says to us for our satisfaction, and have 
that ready to say to others, when we are reproved, 
to satisfy them, as a reason of the hope that is in us, 
(1 Pet. iii. 15.) and beg of God a mouth and wisdom, and that it may be 
given us in that same hour what we shall speak.
II. God graciously gives the meeting; for he 
will not disappoint the believing expectations of his 
people that wait to hear what he will say unto them, 
but will speak peace, will answer them with good 
words and comfortable words, Zech. i. 13. The 
prophet had complained of the prevalence of the 
Chaldean error, that God was not his God, and 
now, to pacify him concerning it, he here gives him 
a further prospect of their fall and ruin, as Isaiah, 
before this, when he had foretold the captivity in 
Babylon, forecasted also the destruction of Babylon. 
Now this great and important event being made 
known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish 
the vision, and transmit it to the generations to 
come, who should see the accomplishment of it.
1. The prophet must write the vision, v. 2. Thus 
when St. John had a vision of the New Jeru-
salem, he was ordered to write, Rev. xxi. 5. He 
must write it, that he might imprint it on his own 
mind, and make it more clear to himself; but espe-
cially that it might be notified to those in distant 
places, and transmitted to those in future ages. 
What is handed by tradition, is easily mistaken, 
and liable to corruption; but what is written, is re-
duced to a certainty, and preserved safe and pure.
We have reason to bless God for written visions, 
that God has written to us the great things of his 
prophets as well as of his law. He must write the 
vision, and make it plain upon tables, must write 
it legibly, in large characters, so that he who runs 
read it with ease; and, having written it, he will 
not keep it from himself, nor subject it to his 
judgment or criticism, and leave it unread; but 
write it down, so that others may read it, who 
will read it with wonder and profit. 
2. The people must hear for the accomplish-
ment of the prophetic words. This means 
an appointed time to come. You shall now be told 
your deliverance by the breaking of the Chal-
deans' power, and that the time of it is fixed in 
the counsel and decree of God; there is an appointed 
time, but it is not near, it is yet to be deferred a great while; and that comes in here as a reason 
why it must be written; that it may not be revi-

Vol. iv.—6 T
and will be sure to do the work when the time 
comes; it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, 
but to wait his time. And it is a great encourage-
ment to wait with patience, that, though the pro-
mised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, 
and be an abundant recompense for our waiting.

If the end it shall speak, and yet he:
we shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time 
appointed, nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will 
fully answer our believing expectations. The promise must not fail; even another day, but not the 
end it shall speak; and therefore though it tarry 
longer than we expected, yet we must continue 
waiting for it; being assured it will come, and 
willing to tarry until it does come. The day that 
God has set for the deliverance of his people, and the 
destruction of his and their enemies, is a day, (4.) 
That will surely come at last; it is never adjourned 
sine die—without another day, but it will 
without fail come at the fixed time, and the fittest 
time. (2.) It will not tarry, for God is not slack, 
as some count slowness; (2 Pet. iii. 9.) though it 
para our time, yet it does not tarry past God's 
time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is 
so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith 
and patience, as we must only be 
sure it is a God who is with us. (4.) There are some who will 
profoundly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted 
up, that they seem to take notice of it; if God 
will work for them immediately, they will thank him, 
but they will not give him credit; their hearts 
are lifted up toward vanity, and since God puts 
them off, they will shift for themselves, and not be 
obedient to him: they think their own hands suf-
icient for them, and God's promise is to them an 
insignificant thing. That man's soul that is thus 
lifted up, is not upright in him; it is not right with 
God, is not as it should be. Those that either dis-
trust or despise God's all-sufficiency, will not walk 
uprightly with him, Gen. xlvii. 1. But, (2.) Those 
who are truly good, and whose hearts are upright 
with God, will value the promise, and venture their 
all upon it; and, in confidence of the truth of it, will 
keep close to God and duty in the most difficult 
trying times, and will then live comfortably in 
companionship with God, dependence on him, and 
expectation of him. The just shall live by faith; during 
the captivity good people shall support themselves, 
and live comfortably, by faith in these precious pro-
hecies, while the wickedness of others is deferred 
and hidden. 
The just shall live by his faith, by that faith which 
he acts upon the word of God. This is quoted in 
the New Testament, (Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. 
Heb. x. 38.) for the proof of the great doctrine 
of justification by faith only, and of the influence 
which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. 
Those that are made just by faith, shall live, 
shall be happy here and for ever; while they are here, 
they live by it; when they come to heaven, faith 
shall be swallowed up in vision.

5. Yea also, because he transgresseth by 
wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at 
home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and 
is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but 
gathereth unto him all nations, and brareth 
unto him all people: 6. Shall not all these 
take up a parable against him, and a taunt-
ing proverb against him, and say, Wo to 
him that increaseth that which is not his! how 
long? and to him that ladeth himself 
with thick clay! 7. Shall they not rise up sud-
denly that shall bite thee, and awake that
HABAKKUK, II. 11. Great is the Lord; and greatly to be praised; and his knowledge is without measure. 12. The north I know not; and the south I understand not; but there is no speech nor language where God is not. 13. He is great in counsel; and there is no end of his works. 14. Powe.
which they must give of it another day. They overlode their ship with this thick clay, and so sink it and themselves into destruction and perdition. [2.] See what people say of him, while he is thus increasing his wealth; they cry, How long? How long will it be ere he has enough? They cry to God, How long wilt thou suffer this proud oppressor to trouble the nations? Or, they say to one another, See how long it will last, how long he will be able to keep what he gets thus dishonestly. They dare not speak out, but we know what they mean when they say, How long? [3.] See what will be in the end hereof; what he has got by others, shall be taken by violence from him. The Medes and Persians shall make a prey of the Chaldeans, as they had done of other nations, v. 7, 8. 

"There shall be those that will bite thee, and vex thee; from whom thou didst not fear any danger, that seemed asleep, shall rise up and awoke to be a plague to thee. They shall rise up suddenly when thou art most secure, and be prepared to receive the shock, and ward off the blow. Shall they not rise up suddenly? No doubt they shall, and thou thyself hast reason to expect it, to be dealt with as thou hast dealt with others; that thou shalt be for booties unto them, as others have been unto thee, that, according to the law of retaliation, as thou hast spoiled many nations, so thou shalt themselves, as it is written, shall spoil thee." The king of Babylon thought he had brought all the nations round about him so low, that none of them should have been able to make reprisals upon him; but though they were but a remnant of people, a very few left, yet these shall be sufficient to spoil him, when God has such a controversy with him. First, For men's blood, and the things which God has done are accounted of ambition and revenge, especially for the blood of Israelites, which is in a special manner precious to God. Secondly, For the violence of the land, his laying waste so many countries, and destroying the fruits of the earth, especially in the land of Israel. Thirdly, For the violence of the city, the many cities that he had turned into ruinous heaps, especially Jerusalem the holy city; and of all that dwelt therein, who were ruined by him. Note, The violence done by proud men, to greaten and enrich themselves, will be called over again, and must be accounted for, another day, by him to whom vengeance belongs. [2.] Here is a war against him for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher. 9-11. The counsel of his heart, as 7, so 9, is denounced, it is much the same with that in the foregoing article—an insatiable desire of wealth and honour; it is coveting an evil covetousness to his house, grasping at an abundance for his family. Note, Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family; it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it; he is greedy of gain, troubles his house; and all this wrong,吃了 God's part of it, and upon all the affairs of it. Wo to him that gains an evil gain; so the margin reads it. There is a lawful gain, which by the blessing of God may be a comfort to a house; (a good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children;) but what is got by fraud and injustice is ill-gotten, and will be bad gain, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. Now observe,

[1.] What this covetous wretch aims at; it is to set his nest on high, to raise his family to some greater dignity than it had before arrived at; or to set it, as he apprehends, out of the reach of danger, that he may be delivered from the power of evil; that it may be in the power of the worst of his enemies to do him a mischief, or so much as to disturb his repose. Note, It is common for men to pretend it as an excuse for their covetousness and ambition, that they only consult their own safety, and aim to secure themselves: and yet they do but deceive themselves, when they think their wealth will be a strong city to them, and a high wall, for it is soon in their own conceits, Prov. xviii. 11. [2.] What he will get by it; Thou hast consulted, not safety, but shame, to thy house, by cutting off many people, v. 10. Note, An estate raised by iniquity is a scandal to a family. Those that cut off, or undermine others, to make room for themselves, that impoverish others to enrich themselves, will be confounded, and shall be made to feel upon them a mark of infamy. Yet that is not the worst of it; "Thou hast sinned against thine own soul, hast brought that under guilt and wrath, and endangered that." Note, Those that do wrong to their neighbour, do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads, Not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance, that they cannot be proved upon him, let him know that if there be no other witnesses against him, the stones shall cry out of the wall against him, and the beam out of the timber in the roof shall answer it, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials with which he built the house, were unjustly gotten, v. 11. The stones and timber cry out, etc., for the ground and the groans under the sin of man, and waits to be delivered from that bondage of corruption. [3.] Here is a war against him for building a town and a city by blood and extortion; (v. 12.) He builds a town, and is himself lord of it; he establishes a city, and makes it his royal seat: so Nebuchadnezzar did; Jer. v. 30. [4.] I have built for the house of the kingdom? But it is built with the blood of his own subjects, whom he has oppressed, and the blood of his neighbours, whom he has unjustly invaded; it is established by iniquity, by the unrighteous laws that are made for the security of it. Wo to him that doeth so; for the towns and cities thus built can never be established, they will fall, and their founders be buried in the ruins of them. Babylon, which was built by blood and iniquity, did not continue long, its decay soon came to fall; and then this wo took effect, when that prophecy, which is expressed as a history, (Isa. xxi. 9.) proved a history indeed; Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And the destruction of that city was,

[1.] The shame of the Chaldeans, who had taken so much pains, and were at such a vast expense, to fortify it; (v. 13.) Is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people who have laboured so hard to defend their city shall labour in the very fire, shall see the out-works which they confided in the strength of set on fire, and shall labour in vain to save them? Or, they, in their pursuits of worldly wealth and honour, shall find their desire of them a great hazard, as they that labour in the fire do. The worst that can be said of the labourers in God's vineyard is, that they have borne the burdens and heat of the day; (Matt. xx. 12.) but these that are eager in their worldly pursuits, labour in the very fire, make themselves perfect slaves to their lusts. There is not a greater drudge in the world than he that is under the burden of covetousness. And what comes of it? Though they take a world of pains, they are but poorly paid for it; for, after all, they wearied themselves for very vanity; they were told it was vanity, and when they find themselves disappointed of it, and disappointed in it, they will own it is worse than vanity, it is vexation of spirit. [2.] It was the honour of God, as a God of impartial justice and irresistible power; for by the r
of the Chaldean monarchy (which all the world
could not but take notice of) the earth was filled with
the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, v. 14. The
Lord is known by these judgments which he ex-
cutes; especially when he is pleased to look upon
for the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, given
himself to be God alone, Job xl. 11, 12. See what
good God brings out of the staining and sinking of
earthly glory; he thereby manifests and magnifies
his own glory, and fills the earth with the knowledge
of it as plentifully as the waters cover the sea, which
he deep, spread far, and shall not be dried up until
time shall be no more. Such is the knowledge of
the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, given
by the gospel; (2 Cor. iv. 6.) and such was the
knowledge of his glory by the miraculous ruin of
Babylon. Note, Such as will not he taught the
knowledge of God's glory by the judgments of his
mouth, shall be made to know and acknowledge it
by the judgments of his hand.

15. Wo unto him that giveth his neigh-
bour drink, that puttest thy bottle to him, and
makest him drunken also, that thou mayest
look on their nakedness! 16. Thou art
filled with shame for glory: drink thou also,
and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of
the Lord's right hand shall be turned
unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on
thy glory. 17. For the violence of Lebanon
shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts,
which made them afraid, because of men's
blood, and for the violence of the land, of
the city, and of all that dwell therein. 18.
What profieth the graven image, that the
maker thereof hath graven it; the molten
image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker
of his work trusted therein, to make dumb
idols! 19. Wo unto him that saith to the
wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it
shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with
gold and silver, and there is no breath at all
in the midst of it. 20. But the Lord is
in his holy temple; let all the earth keep
silence before him.

The three foregoing articles, upon which the
woes here are grounded, are very near akin to each
other. The criminals charged by them are op-
pressors and extortioners, that raise estates by
rapine and injustice; and it is mentioned here again,
(v. 17.) the very same that was said, v. 8. For that
is the crime upon which the greatest stress is laid; it
is because of men's blood, innocent blood, barba-
rously and unjustly shed, which is a provoking, cry-
ing thing; it is for the violence of the land, of
the city, and of all that dwell therein, which God will
certainly reckon for, sooner or later, as the Asserter
of right, and the Avenger of wrong.

But here are two articles more, of a different na-
ture, which carry a wo to all those in general to
whom they belong, and particularly to the Babyloni-
' an monarchs, by whom the people of God were
taken and held captives. The punishments of
drunkenness stand here im-
peached and condemned. Belshazzar was one of
those; he was so, remarkably, that very night that
the prophecy of this chapter was fulfilled in the pe-
riod of his life and kingdom, when he drank wine
before a thousand of his lords, (Dan. v. 1.) began
the healths and forced them to pledge him. And
perhaps it was one reason why the succeeding mo-
narchs of Persia made it a law of their kingdom,
that in drinking none should compel, but they should
do according to every man's pleasure, (as we find,
Esth. i. 8.) because they had seen in the kings of
Babylon their neighbours drunk, who is in want, wrong
healths, and making people drunk. But the wo
here stands firm and very fearful against all those,
whether they are, who are guilty of this sin at any
time, and in any place, from the statele palace
(where that was) to the paltry ale-house. Observe,
1. Who the sinner is, that is here attidted against;
it is he that makes his neighbour drunk, v. 15. To
give a neighbour drink, who is in want, wrong
healths, and making people drunk. But to
give a neighbour drink, who has enough already,
and more than enough, with design to intoxicate
him, that he may expose himself, may talk foolishly,
and make himself ridiculous, may disclose secret
concerns, or be drawn in to agree to a bad bargain
for himself—this is abominable wickedness; and
those who are guilty of it, who make a practice of
it, and take a pride and pleasure in it, are rebels
against God and man. They make their mark for
the devil in hell, and his cursed interests, and
enemies to men on earth, and their honour and wel-
fare; they are like the son of Nebat, who sinned
and made Israel to sin. To entice others to
drunkenness, to put the bottle to them, that they may
be allured to it by its charms, by looking on the wine
when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup; or to
force them to it, by obliging them to drink in the
club (and club-lawyers indeed they are) to drink so
many glasses, and so filled, is to do what we can,
and perhaps more than we know of, toward the
murder both of soul and body; and those that do
so, have a great deal to answer for.

2. What the sentence is, that is here passed upon
him. There is a wo to him, (v. 15.) and a punish-
ment, (v. 16.) he shall be turned unto him. (1.)
He shall put the cup of drunkenness on the
head of his neighbour; The cup of fury, the cup of
trembling, the cup of the Lord's right hand, shall be
turned unto him; the power of God shall be armed
against him. That cup which had gone round
among the nations, to make them a desolation, an
astonishment, and a hissing, which had made them
stumble and fall, so that they could rise no more,
shall at length be put into the hand of the king of
Babylon, as was foretold, Jer. xxv. 13, 16, 18, 26,
27. Thus the New Testament Babylon, which had
made the nations drunk with the cup of her forni-
ations, shall have blood given her to drink, for she
is worthy, Rev. xviii. 3, 6. (2.) Does he take a
pleasure in putting his neighbour to shame? He shall
himself be loaded with contempt. Thou art filled
with shame, and every one of thee, shall be filled
with shame, and every one of thee, shall be filled
now with shame, more than ever thou wast with glory;
and the glory thou hast been filled with, shall but serve to make thy shame the more
grievous to thyself, and the more ignominious in
the eyes of others. Thou also shalt drink of the cup
of trembling, and shalt expose thyself by thy fear
and cowardice, which shall be a wakeful refuge
unto thee, and thine drunkenness, to bear shame, and all about thee
shall load thee with disgrace, for shameful spewing
shall be on thy glory, on that which thou hast most
prided thyself in, thy dignity, wealth, and domi-
nion; those whom thou hast made drunk, shall them-
sewspew upon it. For the violence of Lebanon
shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts; (v. 17.)
A PRAYER of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth. 2. O LORD.
I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

This chapter is entitled, a prayer of Habakkuk; it is a meditation with himself, an intercession for the church. Prophets were praying men, this prophet was so. He is a prophet and he shall pray for thee; (Gen. xx. 7) and sometimes they prayed for even those whom they reproached against. They that were intimately acquainted with the mind of God concerning future events, knew better than others how to order their prayers, and what to pray for, and, in the foresight of troublous times, could lay up a stock of prayers, that might then receive a gracious answer, and so be serving the church by their prayers when their prophesying was over. This prophet had found God ready to answer his requests and complaints before, and therefore now repeats his applications to him. Because God has inclined his ear to us, we must resolve that therefore we will call upon him as long as we live.

1. The prophet owns the receipt of God's answer to his former representation, and the impression it made upon him; (v. 2) "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, thy hearing;" (so some read it.) "that which thou wouldest have us hear, the decree that is gone out in the earth." The word, received thine, and it is before me. Note, Those that would rightly order their speech to God, must carefully observe, and lay before him his speech to them. He had said, (ch. i. 1.) I will watch to see what he will say; and now he owns, Lord, I have heard thy speech; for if we turn a deaf ear to God's word, we can expect no other than that he should turn a deaf ear to our prayers. Prove thy word, and I will hear it, and was afraid. Messages immediately from heaven, commonly struck even the best and holiest men into a consternation; Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel, did exceedingly fear and quake; but beside that, the matter of this message made the prophet afraid, when he heard how low the people of God should be brought, under the oppressing power of the Chaldeans, and how long they should continue under it; he was afraid lest their spirits should quite fail, and lest the church should be utterly rooted out and run down, and being kept low so long, should be lost at length.

2. He earnestly prays that for the elect's sake these days of trouble might be shortened, or the trouble of these days mitigated and moderated, or the people of God supported and comforted under it. He thinks it very long to wait till the end of the years; perhaps he refers to the seventy years fixed for the continuance of the captivity, and therefore, "Lord," (says he,) "do something on our behalf, in the midst of the years, those years of our distress; though we be not delivered, and our oppressors destroyed, yet let us not be abandoned and cast away."

(1.) Do something of thine own counsel, (Rev. xiv. 1.) do something of the work of God's own hand, formed by him, formed for him; (Rev. xvi. 20.) "revive, that even when it walks in the midst of trouble, Ps. cxxxviii. 7. 8. Grant thy people a little reviving in their bondage, Ezra ix. 8. Ps. lxxxix. 6. Preserve alive thy work; (so some read it.)" though the church be chastened, let it not be destroyed, though it have not its liberty, yet continue its life, give a remnant to be holden up to another generation. Revive the work of thy grace in us, by sanctifying the trouble to us, and supporting us under it, though the time be not yet come, even the set time for our deliverance out of it; whatever becomes of us, though we be dead and dry bones, Lord, let thy work be revived, let not that sink, and go back, and come to nothing." (2.) "Do something for thine own honour; in the midst of the years make known, make thyself known, for now verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, (Isa. xlv. 13.) make known thy power, thy pity, thy promise, thy providence in the government of the world, for the safety and welfare of thy church. Though we be buried in obscurity, yet, Lord, make thyself known; whatever becomes of Israel, let not the God of Israel be forgotten in the world, but discover himself even in the midst of the dark years, before they are expected to appear." When in the midst of the years of the captivity God miraculously saved the three children in the fiery furnace, and humbled Nebuchadnezzar, this prayer was answered, In the midst of the years make known. (3.) "Do something for thy people's comfort; In wrath remember mercy, and make that known: show us thy mercy, O Lord," Ps. lxxxv. 7. They see God's displeasure against them in their troubles, and that makes them grievous indeed; there is wrath in the bitter cup, that therefore they deprecate, and are earnest in begging that in the midst of wrath God would remember mercy to them, would make it appear that he is a merciful God, and they are vessels of his mercy. Note, Even those that are under the terrors of God's wrath, must not despair of his mercy; and mercy, mere mercy, is that which we must flee to for refuge, and rely upon as our only hope. He does not say, Remember our merit, but, Lord, remember thy own mercy.

3. God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. 4. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power, 5. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. 6. He stood and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. 7. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. 8. Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thy horses, and thy chariots of salvation? 9. Thy bow was made quite naked, according to the oaths of the tribes, even thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. 10. The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the overfowling of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. 11. The sun and moon stood still in their habitations: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear. 12. Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. 13. Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the
foundation unto the neck. Selah. 14. Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages; they came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly. 15. Thou didst walk through the sea with thy horses, through the heap of great waters.

It has been the usual practice of God's people, when they have been in distress, and ready to fall into despair, to help themselves by recalling their experiences, and reviving them, considering the days of old, and the years of ancient times, (Ps. lxxxv. 5.) and pleading them with God in prayer, as he is pleased sometimes to plead them with himself; (Isa. lxiii. 11.) Then he remembered the days of old. This is that which the prophet does here, and he looks as far back as the first forming them into a people, when they were brought by miracles out of Egypt, a house of bondage through the wilderness, a land of drought, into Canaan, then possessed by mighty nations. He that thus brought them at first into Canaan through so much difficulty, can now bring them thither again out of Babylon, how great soever the difficulties are that lie in the way. Those works of wonders, wrought of old, are remembered by him for the greater encouragement to the faith of God's people in their present straits.

1. God appeared in his glory, so as he never did before or since; (v. 3, 4.) He came from Teman, even the He: One from mount Paran. This refers to the visible display of the glory of God, when he gave the law upon mount Sinai, as appears from Deut. xxi. 22. xxxiii. 3. When the Nephilim were in the earth, they were bowled. Then the Lord came down upon mount Sinai in a cloud, (Exod. xix. 20.) and his glory was as the devouring fire; not only to enforce the law he then gave them, but to avenge the deliverance he had wrought for them, and to magnify it; for the first word he said there, was, I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt. I that appear in this glory, am the Author of that work. Then his glory covered the heavens, which shone with the reflection of that glorious appearance of his; the earth also was full of his praise, or of his splendour, as some read it. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of mount Sinai, and praised the God of Israel, or the earth was full of the glory of God, which were to be praised. His brightness was as the light, as the light of the sun when he goes forth in his strength; he had horns, or bright beams, (so it should be rendered,) coming out of his side or hand; rays of glory were darted forth around him; and with some rays borrowed thence it was that Moses's face shone when he came down from that mount of glory. Some by the horns, the head; others by the side; for the word was, doing coming out of his hand, understand the two tables of the law, which perhaps, when God delivered them to Moses, though they were tables of stone, had a glory round them; those books were girt with beams, and so it agrees with Deut. xxxi. 2. From his right hand went a fiery law for them. It is added, And there was the hiding of his power: there was his hidden power, in the rays that came out of his hand; the operations of his power, compared with what he could have done, were rather the hiding of it than the discovery of it; the secrets of his power, as well as of his wisdom, are double to that which is; Job xli. 6.

2. God sent plagues on Egypt; for the humbling of proud Pharaoh, and the obliging of him to let the people go; (v. 5.) Before him went the pestilence, which slew all the first-born of Egypt in one night; and burning coals went forth at his feet, when, in the plague of hail, there was fire mingled with hail; burning diseases, (so the margin reads it,) some think, those that wasted Egypt; others, the hail which smote Canaan, and which had not been diminished before Israel was brought in upon them. These were at his feet, at his coming, for they are at his command; he says to them, Go, and they go, Come, and they come. Do this, and they do it.

3. He divided the land of Canaan to his people Israel, and expelled the heathen from before them; (v. 6.) He stood and searched the earth, and looked upon the habitations of the nations. He stood and searched the earth, and looked upon the habitations of the nations for an inheritance to his people; (Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.) He beheld, and drove asunder the nations that were in possession of it; though they combined together against Israel, God dispersed and discomfited them before Israel. Or, He exerted such a mighty power as was enough to shake in pieces all the nations of the earth. Then the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow; the mighty princes and potentates of Canaan, that seemed as high, as strong, and as firmly fixed, as the mountains and hills, were broken to pieces, they and their kingdoms were totally subdued. Or, The power of God was so exerted, as to have shaken the mountains and hills; may, and Sinai did tremble, and the adjacent hills; see v. 15. His power was everlastling; all the motions of his providence are according to his eternal counsels; and he is the same for ever, that which he was yesterday and to-day. His covenant is unchangeable, and his mercy endures for ever. When he drove asunder the nations of Canaan, one might have seen the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian trembling, all the inhabitants of the neighboring countries taking the alarm; and though they were not in the commission given to Israel to destroy, nor their land within the warrant given to Israel to possess, yet they thought their own house in danger, when their neighbor's house was on fire, and therefore they were in a great fright, v. 7. Balak the king of Moab was so, Numb. xxii. 3. 4. Some make the tents of Cushan to be in affliction, when, in the days of judge Othniel, God delivered Cushan-Rishathaim into his hand: (Judge iii. 8.) and the curtains of the land of Midian to tremble, when, in the days of judge Gideon, a barley cake, in a dream, overthrew the tent of Midian, Judg. vii. 13.

4. He divided the Red sea and Jordan, when they stood in the way of Israel's progress, and yet fetched water for ever out of the river, as he brought Israel out of Egypt. One would have thought that God was displeased with the rivers, and that his wrath was against the sea, for he made them give way and flee before him, when he rode upon his horses and chariots of salvation, as a general at the head of his forces, mighty to save. Note, God's chariots are not so much chariots of state to himself as chariots of salvation to his people; it is his glory to be called Saviour. This seems to be referred to again, (v. 15.) Thou didst walk through the sea, through the Red sea, with thine horses, in the pillar of cloud and fire; (that was his chariot borne by angels;) thus thou didst walk secure, and so as to accommodate thyself to the slow pace that Israel could go, as Jacob tenderly drove, in consideration of his age and Saviour! to the sea, through the cloud and fire, or wind, of great waters; and Israel likewise was led through the depth as a horse in the wilderness, Isa. lxxiii. 13. 14. When they came to enter Canaan, the overflowing of the water passed by; that is, Jordan, which at that time overflowed all his banks, was divided, Josh. iii. 15. Note, When the difficulties in the way of public duty seem most insuperable, when they rise to the height, and overflow, yet then God can put them by, break
through them, and get over them. Then the deep uttered his voice, when the Red sea and Jordan being divided, the waters roared and made a noise, as if they were sensible of the restraint they were under from proceeding in their natural course, and coming to the waters they gave a shock to the banks, or sides, on high, (for the waters stood up on a head, Josh. iii. 16.) as if they would have made opposition to the orders given them; they lifted up their voice, lifted up their waves; but in vain, the Lord on high was mightier than they, Ps. xc. 3, 4. With the dividing of the sea and Jordan, notice is again taken of the trembling of the mountains, as if the stop given to the waters gave a shock to the sides, or hills; they are put together, Ps. cxxv. 3, 4. When the sea saw it, and fled, and Jordan was driven back, the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. The whole creation yielded, earth and waters trembled at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the mighty God of Jacob. But (as Mr. Cowley paraphrases it)

By where thou wilt, thou sea, and Jordan's current cease; (v. 11.)
For at God's word, wherewith he pleases,
The rocks shall weep new waters forth instead of these.

So here, Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers; channels were made in the wilderness, such as seemed to cleave the earth, for the waters to run in, which issued out of the rock, to supply the camp of Israel; as the streams of Egypt, (v. 12.) are moved. Note, The God of nature can alter and control the powers of nature which way he pleases; can turn waters into crystal rocks, and rocks into crystal streams.

3. He arrested the motion of the sun and moon, to befriend and complete Israel's victories; (v. 11.)
The sun and moon stood still at the prayer of Joshua, that they might help him, (cf. v. 14.) as the night of favour to favour their escape; they stood still in their habitation in the heaven, (Ps. xcv. 4.) but with an eye to Gibeon and the valley of Ajalon, where God's work was in the doing, and of which they, though at so vast a distance, attended the motions. At the light, at the direction of thine arrow, they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear; they followed thy arrow, to favour them; according to the intimation of the arrows God shot, (as Joshua's arrows, 1 Sam. xx. 20.) and which way soever his spear pointed, (the glittering light of which they acknowledged to outshine theirs,) that way they directed their influences, benign to Israel, and malignant against their enemies, as when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Note, The heavenly bodies, as well as earth and seas, are at God's command, and, when he pleases, at Israel's service too.

6. He carried on, and completed, Israel's victories over the nations of Canaan, and their kings: he slew great kings and famous, Ps. cxxxvi. 17, 18. This is largely insisted upon here, as a proper plea with God, to enforce the present petition, that he would restore them again in to that land, which they were, at the first, at the mercy of all. (2.) He marched them through the land from end to end, in indagation, as seeming to let that wicked generation of Canaanites any longer possess so good a land. He marched them this side with disdain; (so some;) despising their confederacies. (3.) He threshed the heathen in anger; trod them down, nay, he trampled them out, as corn in the floor; to give them, and what they had, to be meat to his people Israel; Mic. iv. 13. (4.) He wounded the heads out of the house of the wicked; he destroyed the families of the Canaanites, and wounded their princes, the heads of their families; nay, he cut off the head in many countries, and took it even to the neck. Are they a building? They are razed even to the foundation. Are they a body? They are plunged in deep mire even to the neck, so that they cannot get out, or help themselves. He brake the heads of the levithian in pieces, Ps. lixv. 14. Some apply this to Christ's victories over Satan and the powers of darkness, in which he woundeth the heads of many countries, and at last overthrows them. He struck through with his staves the head of the villages; (v. 14.) with Israel's stones God struck through the head of the villages of the enemies, whether Egypt or Canaan. Staves shall do the same execution as swords, when God pleases to make use of them. The enemy came out with the utmost force and fury, as a whirlwind to scatter me; (says Israel,) for many a time have they thus afflict ed me, thus attacked me, from my youth, Ps. cxix. 1. Pharaoh, when he pursued Israel to the Red sea, came out as a whirlwind; so did the kings of Canaan in their confederacies against Israel. Their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly; they were as confident of success in their enterprise as ever any great man was of devouring a poor man, which was more than he had ventured for himself against him was carried on with secrecy. But God disappointed them, and their pride did but make their fall the more shameful, and God's care of his hower the more illustrious. (6.) He walked to the sea with his horses; (so some read it, v. 15.) he carried Israel's victories to the great sea, which was opposite to that side of Canaan at which they entered, so that hereby, out of his hand, they were driven back, and he overtook them. He gave this land to the tribes of Israel, it was his oath to Isaac, confirmed to Jacob, and repeated many a time to the tribes of Israel; Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan. This word God will accomplish, though Israel be ever so unworthy, (Deut. ix. 5.) and their enemies ever so many and mighty. Note, What God does for his tribes, is according to the oaths of the tribes, according to what he has said and sworn to them; for he is faithful that promised. (2.) He would hereby show his kindness to his people, because of their relation to him, and his interest in them; Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, v. 13. All the powers of nature are shaken, and the course of nature changed, and every thing seems to be thrown into disorder, and all is for the salvation of God's people. There are a people in the world, who are God's people, and their salvation is that which he has in his eye, in all the operations of his providence. Heaven and earth shall sooner come together than any of the links in the golden chain of their salvation shall be broken; and even that which seems most unlikely, shall by an overruling hand be made to work for their salvation, Phil. i. 19. (3.) He would hereby give a signal form of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ. It is for salvation with thine anointed; with Joshua, who led the armies of Israel, and was a figure of him whose name he bare, even Jesus, our Joshua. What God did for his Israel of old, was done with an eye to his Anointed, for the sake of the Mediator, who was both the Founder and Prom
dation of the covenant made with them. It was sal-
vation with him, for, in all the salvations wrought for them, God looked upon the face of the Anointed, and did them by him.

16. When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trou-
ble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. 17. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, nei-
ther shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; 18. Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me walk upon my high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

Within the compass of these few lines we have the prophet in the highest degree, both of trembling and triumphing; such are the varieties both of the state and of the spirit of God's people in this world. The day of distress shall be no more trembling, but everlasting triumph.

1. The prophet had foreseen the prevalence of the church's enemies, and the long continuance of the church's troubles; and the sight made him tremble, v. 16. This goes on with what he had said, (v. 2.) “I have heard thy speech, and was afraid; when I heard what sad times were coming upon the church, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice; the news made such an impression, that it put me into a perfect ague-fit”—the blood retiring to the heart, to succour that when it was ready to faint, the extreme parts were left destitute of spirits, so that his lips quivered. Nay, he was so weak, and so unable to help himself, that he was as if rot-
tenness had entered into his bones, he had no strength left; and he had neither strength nor enterprise to tremble in himself, trembled all over him, trembled within him; he yielded to his trembling, and troubled himself, as our Saviour did; his flesh trembled for fear of God, and he was afraid of his judgments. Ps. cxix. 120. He was touched with a tender concern for the calamities of the church, and trembled for fear lest they should end at length in its ruin, and that the name of Israel would be blotted out, and did he think it any disparagement to him, or a re-
proach to his courage, but freely owned he was one of those that trembled at God's word, for to them he will look with favour; I tremble in myself that I might rest in the day of trouble. Note, When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to provide accordingly, and to lay up something in store, and he help whithin himself at the warning given him of the deluge coming, had the ark for his resting place in the day of that trouble. The pro-
phet tells us what he said in his trembling: his fear was, that, when he comes up to the people, when the Chaldean comes up to the people of Israel, he will invade them, will surround them, will break in upon them, nay, as it is in the margin, he will cut them in pieces with his troops; he cried out, We are all undone, the whole nation of the Jews is lost and gone. Note, When things look bad, we are too apt to aggravate them, and make the worst of them.

11. He had looked back upon the experiences of the church in former ages, and had observed with great admiration, how God had preserved his church and covered himself out of his fright, and not only re-
covered his temper, but fell into a transport of holy joy, with an express non obstante—although to the calamities he foresaw coming, and this, not for himself, only, but in the name of every faithful Israelite.

1. He supposes the ruin of all his creature-comforts to be the very means whereby God will make him to forget his sorrows, and to be glad both with the joy of his presence, and the joy of the glory of his power. Ps. cx. 15. 2. He supposes himself deprived of all by blasting and unseasonable weather, or some other immediate hand of God. Or, that the captives in Babylon have gone through plenty of all good things as in their own land. (1.) He supposes the fruit-tree to be withered and be-
come barren; the fig-tree (which used to furnish them with much of their food, hence we often read of eakes of figs) shall not so much as blossom, nor shall fruit be in the vine, from which they had their comfort, that is, it is not true of them. (2.) He supposes the labour of the olive should fail, their oil, which was to them as butter is to us; the labour of the olive shall lie, (so it is in the margin,) their expectations from it shall be disappointed. (3.) He supposes the bread-corn to fail; the fields shall yield no meat, and since the king himself is served of the field, if the productions of that be withdrawn, every one will feel the want of the good. (4.) He supposes the cattle to perish, either for want of the food which the field should yield, and does not, or, by disease, or being destroyed and carried away by the enemy; the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stall. Note, When we are in the full enjoyment of our creature-comforts, we should con-
sider that there may come a time when we shall be stripped of them, and feel the want of them accordingly, as not abusing them, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

2. He resolves to delight and triumph in God not-
withstanding; when all is gone, his God is not gone; (v. 18.) “Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I shall have him to rejoice in, and will rejoice in him.” Destroy the vines and the fig-trees, and you make all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease, Hos. ii. 11, 12. But those who, when they were full, enjoyed God in all, when they are emptied and impoverished, can enjoy all in God; and can sit down upon a melancholy heap of the ruins of all their creature-
comforts, and even then can sing to the praise and glory of God, as the God of their salvation. This is the principal ground of our joy in God, that he is the God of our salvation, our eternal salvation, the salvation of the soul; and if he be so, we may re-
joyce in him as such in our greatest distresses, since by them our salvation cannot be hindered, but may be furthered. Note, Joy in God is never out of season, nay, it is in a special manner seasonable when we meet with losses and crosses in the world, that it may then appear that our hearts are not set upon these things, nor our happiness bound up in them. See how the prophet triumphs in God, “The Lord God is my strength,” v. 19. He that is the God of our salvation in another world, will be our Strength in this world, to carry us on in our jour-
yney thither, and help us over the difficulties and oppositions we meet with in our way. Even then
when provisions are cut off, to make it appear that man lives not by bread alone, we may have the want of bread supplied by the graces and comforts of God's Spirit, and with the supplies of them. (1.) We shall be strong for our spiritual warfare and work; *The Lord God is my Strength, the Strength of my heart.* (2.) We shall be swift for our spiritual race; “He will make my feet like hinds' feet, that with enlargement of heart I may run the way of his commands, and outrun my troubles.” (3.) We shall be successful in our spiritual enterprises; “He will make me to walk upon my high places; I shall gain my point, shall be restored unto my own land, and tread upon the high places of the enemy,” Deut. xxxii. 13.—xxxiii. 29. Thus the prophet, who began his prayer with fear and trembling, concludes it with joy and triumph; for prayer is heart’s ease to a gracious soul. When Hannah had prayed, she went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. This prophet, finding it so, publishes his experience of it, and puts it into the hand of the chief singer for the use of the church, especially in the day of our captivity.” And though then the harps were hung upon the willow-trees, yet in the hope that they would be resumed, and their right hand retrieve its cunning, which it had forgotten, he set his song upon Shigionoth, (v. 1.) wandering tunes, according to the variable songs, and upon Neginoth, (v. 19.) the stringed instruments. He that is afflicted, and has prayed aright, may then be so easy, may then be so merry, as to sing psalms.
This prophet is placed last, as he was last in time, of all the minor prophets before the captivity, and not long before Jeremiah, who lived at the time of the captivity. He foretells the general destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and sets their sins in order before them, which had provoked God to bring their ruin upon them; calls them to repentance; threatens the neighbouring nations with the like destructions, and gives encouraging promises of their joyful return out of captivity in due time, which have a reference to the grace of the gospel. We have, in the first verse, an account of the prophet, and the date of his prophecy, which supercedes our inquiry concerning them here.

ZEPHANIAH, I.

CHAP. I.

After the title of the book, (v. 1.) here is, 1. A threatening of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, an utter destruction, by the Chaldeans, v. 2. 4. 11. A charge against them for their gross sin, which provoked God to bring that destruction upon them; (v. 5, 6.) and so he goes on in the rest of the chapter, setting both the judgments before them, that they might prevent them or prepare for them; and the sins that destroy them, that they might judge themselves, and justify God in what was brought upon them. 1. They must hold their peace because they had greatly sinned, v. 7. 9. But, 2. They shall howl because the trouble will be great. The day of the Lord is near, and it will be a terrible day, v. 10. 18. Such fair and timely warning as this did God give to the Jews of the approaching captivity; but they hardened their neck, which made their destruction remediless.

1. THE word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah. 2. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord. 3. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea; and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord. 4. I will also stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests; 5. And them that worship the host of heaven upon the house-tops; and them that worship and that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham; 6. And them that are turned back from the Lord; and those that have not sought the Lord, nor inquired for him.

Here is, 1. The title-page of this book, (v. 1.) in which we observe, 1. What authority it has, and who gave it that authority; it is from heaven and not of men. It is the word of the Lord. 2. Who was the instrument of conveying it to the church. His name Zephaniah, which signifies the servant of the Lord, for God revealed his secrets to his servants the prophets. The pedigree of other prophets, whose extraction we have an account of, goes no further back than their father, except Zechariah, whose grandfather also is named. But this of Zephaniah goes back four generations, and the highest mentioned is Hizkiah; it is the very same name in the original with that of Hezekiah king of Judah, (2 Kings xvi. 1.) and refers, probably, to him; if so, our prophet, being lineally descended from that pious prince, and being of the royal family, could with the better grace reprove the folly of the king's children as he does, v. 8. 9. When this prophet prophesied; in the days of Josiah king of Judah, who reigned well, and in the twelfth year of his reign
Zechariah, coming, 

The Baid; 

They Jerusalem, a great the Note, Without 


fenders." idols consume God's therefore, The II. 2.

2. Those they them, consume them. The prophesying of them, as, (v. 4.) He put down the idolatrous priests, the word is the Chemarin. The word signifies black men; some think because they were black clothes, after to appear grave; others, because their faces were black with attending the altars, or the fires in which they burnt their children to Moloch. They seem to have been immediate attendants upon the service of Baal; they shall be cut off with the priests, the regulars with the seculars. The very name of them shall be cut off; the order shall be quite abolished, so as to be forgotten, or rememb-reted with contempt. And the worshipers of the host of heaven upon the house-tops shall be cut off, (v. 5.) who justified themselves in their idolatry with them that did not worship images, the work of their own hands, but offered their sacrifices, and burnt their incense, to the sun, moon, and stars, immediately upon the tops of their houses; but God will let them know that he is a jealous God, and will not endure any rival, and though some have thought that the most specious and plausible idolatry, yet it will appear as great an offence to God, to give divine honours to a star, as to give them to a stone or a stock. Even the worshippers of the host of heaven shall be consumed as well as the worshippers of the beasts of the earth, or the fends of hell. The sin of the adulteress is not the less sinful for the gaiety of the adulterer.

3. They that will not humble themselves under their mighty hand, shall be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah, where God is known, and Jerusalem, where his dwelling-place is, if they revolit from him, and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them. 

4. All wicked people, and all those things that are the sins of Jerusalem, he will cut off not only the wicked men, but all men; even the few among them that are good, shall be involved in this common calamity. Though they shall not be cut off from the Lord, yet they shall be cut off from the land. It is with Judah and Jerusalem that God has this quarrel, both city and country, and upon them he will stretch out his hand, the hand of his power, the hand of his wrath; he will not only stretch out his hand, but he will stretch out his hand and destroy them, and make them a curse to all that dwell round about them, (v. 1, 2.)

5. They will not humble themselves under their mighty hand, and therefore they will be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah, where God is known, and Jerusalem, where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him, and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them.

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7. They will not humble themselves under their mighty hand, and therefore they will be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah, where God is known, and Jerusalem, where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him, and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them.

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9. They will not humble themselves under their mighty hand, and therefore they will be humbled and brought down by it. Note, Even Judah, where God is known, and Jerusalem, where his dwelling-place is, if they revolt from him, and rebel against him, shall have his hand stretched out against them.
half, he will have none. Such waters will not be long sweet, it come from a fountain that sends forth bitter water too; what have they to do to swear by the Lord, that swear by Malcham? 3. Those also shall be consumed, that have apostatized from God, together with those that never gave up their names to him, v. 6. I will cut off, [1.] Them that are turned back from the Lord; that were well taught, and began well, that had given up their names to him, and set out at first in the worship of him, but have flown off, and turned aside, and fallen in with idolaters, but despised those good ways of God, which had been brought up in, and desired them; the Lord will be sure to reckon with, who are renegados from his service, who began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh; they shall be treated as deserters, to whom no mercy is showed. [2.] Those that have not sought the Lord, nor ever inquired for him, never made any profession of religion, and think to excuse themselves with that, shall find that this will not excuse them; not that, that is the thing laid to their charge: they are atheistical, careless people, that live without God in the world; and those that do so, are certainly unworthy to live upon God in the world.

7. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. 8. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. 9. In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. 10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, and a howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. 11. Howl, ye inhabitants of Makketh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. 12. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. 13. Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof.

Notice is here given to Judah and Jerusalem, that God is coming forth against them, and will be with them shortly; his presence, as a just Avenger, his day, the day of his judgment, and his wrath, are not far off, v. 7. Those that improve not the presence of God with them as a Father, but sin away that presence, may expect his presence with them as a Judge, to call them to an account for the contempt put upon his grace. The day of the Lord will come; men have their day now, when they take a liberty to do what they please, but God's day is at hand; it is here called his sacrifice, a sacrifice of his preparing; for the punishing of presumptuous sinners is a sacrifice to the justice of God, some reparation to his injured honour; they that brought their offerings to other gods, were justly made themselves victims to the true God. On a day of sacrifice great slaughter was made; so shall there be in Jerusalem, men shall be killed up as fast as lambs for the altar; with as little regret, with as much pleasure; The slain of the Lord shall be many. On a day of sacrifice great feasts were made upon the sacrifices; so the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem shall be feasted upon by their enemies the Chaldeans; these are the guests God has prepared and invited to come and glut themselves— their revenge with slaughter, and their covetousness with plunder. Now observe,

Who they are, that are marked to be sacrificed, that shall be visited and punished in this day of reckoning, and what it is they shall be called to an account for.

1. The royal family, because of the dignity of their place, shall be first reckoned with for their pride, and vanity, and affectation; (v. 8.) I will punish the princes, and the king's children, who think themselves exempt from punishment; they shall find themselves accountable to God, and that, high as they are, he is above them. They shall be punished, and all such as, like them, are clothed with strange apparel, such as, in contempt of their own country, (where, probably, it was the custom to go in a very plain dress, as became the seed of Jacob that plain man,) affected to appear in the fashion of nations, and to買って on strange apparel; studying to resemble those from whom God had appointed them, even in their clothes, indifferently to distinguish themselves. The princes and the king's children, seemed to wear any homemade stuffs, though God had provided them fine linen and silks, (Ezek. xvi. 10.) but they must send abroad to strange countries for their clothes, which could not please unless they were for fetched and dear-bought; and even these of inferior rank affected to imitate the princes, and the king's children. Pride in apparel is displeasing to God, and a symptom of the degeneracy of a people.

2. The noblemen, and their stewards and servants, come next to be reckoned with; (v. 9.) In the same day will I punish those that leap on the threshold; a phrase, no doubt, well understood then, which probably signified the invading of their neighbours' rights; entering their houses by force and violence, and seizing their possessions, they leap on the threshold; as much as to say, the house is their own, and they will keep their hold of it; and, accordingly, they make all in it their own that they can lay their hands on, and so fill their masters' houses with goods gotten by violence and deceit, and with all the goods thereby contracted. Nor shall it suffice them to say, that the ill-gotten gains were not for themselves, but for their masters, and that what they did was by their order; for the obligations we lie under to keep God's commandments, are prior and superior to the obligations we lie under to serve the interests of any master on earth.

3. The trading people, and the rich merchants, are next called to account; iniquity is found in their end of the town, among the inhabitants of Makketh, a low part of Jerusalem, deep like a mortar; (for so the word signifies; the goldsmiths lived there, (Neh. iii. 32.) and the merchants; and they are now cut down, they are broken, and have shut up their houses, and are come hooker, (or, brought) to a close, and they that bear silver are cut off, in the first place, by the invaders, for the sake of the silver they carry, which is so far from being a protection to them, that it will expose and betray them. The conquerors aimed at the wealthy men, and carried them off first, while the poor of the land escaped. Or, it may be meant of a general decay of trade, which was a pre
face and introduction to the general destruction of the land. It is the token of a declining state, when great dealers are cut down, and great bankers are cut off, and become bankrupts, who cannot fall alone, but with themselves ruin many.

4. All the secure and careless people, the sons of pleasure, that live a loose, idle life, are next reckoned with; (v. 12) they come from all parts of the country, to take up their quarters in the head-quarters of the kingdom, where they take private lodgings, and indulge themselves in ease and luxury; but God will find them out, who will, at the time I will search Jerusalem with candles, to discover them, that they may be brought out to conspicuously punish. This intimates that they conceal themselves, as being either ashamed of the sin, or afraid of the punishment of it; when the judgments of God are abroad, they hope to escape by absconding, and getting out of the way; but God will search Jerusalem, as search is made for a whereabout in disguise, that is harboured by his accomplices; God's hand will find out all his enemies, wherever they lie hid, and will punish not only the secret idolaters, but the secret epicures and profane; and those are they that are here described, and marks are given by which they will be discovered when strict search is made for them.

(1.) Their dispositions are sensual; they are settled on the base, in texture of pleasures, strengthening themselves in their wealth and wickedness, they are secure and easy, and, because they have had no changes, they fear none, as Moab, Jer. xxxviii. 11. They had not been emptied from vessel to vessel. They fill themselves with wine and strong drink, and banish all thought, saying, To-morrow shall be as this day, Isa. xvi. 12. Their being settled on their base, signifies the same without Dicer or. They may not be detected, and their dispensing of rewards and punishments; "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; that is, He will do nothing. They deny his providential government in the world; "What good and evil there is in the world, comes by the wheel of fortune, and not by the disposal of a wise and supremely powerful God." They may not be detected, and their dispensing of rewards and punishments; "The Lord will not do good to those that serve him, nor do evil to those that rebel against him; and therefore there is nothing got by religion, nor lost by sin." This is the effect of their sensuality; if they were not drowned in sense, they could not be thus senseless, nor could they be so stupid, if they had not stupefied themselves with the love of pleasure. It was also the cause of their sensuality; men would not make a god of their belly, if they had not at first become so vain, so vile in their imaginations, as to think the God that made them altogether such a one as themselves. But God will punish them, their end is destruction, Phil. ii. 19.

11. What the destruction will be, with which God will punish sinners, and what course he will take with them. 1. He will silence them; (v. 7.) Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord. He will force them to hold their peace, will strike them dumb with horror and amazement: they shall be speechless, all the excuses of their sin, and exceptions against the sentence, will be overruled, and they shall not have a word to say for themselves. 2. He will break them and destroy them, and not be served as sacrifices; (v. 8.) he will give them into the hands of their enemies, and glorify himself thereby. 3. He will fill both city and country with lamentations; (v. 10.) In that day there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish-gate, so called because near either to the fish-ponds or to the fish-market. It belonged to the city of David; (2 Chron. xxxiii. 14. Neh. in 3.) perhaps the same with that which is called the fish-gate, (Zech. xiv. 10.) and if so, it will explain what follows here, And a howling from the second, that is, the second gate, which leads next to that fish-gate. The alarm shall go round the walls of Jerusalem, from gate to gate; and there shall be a great crashing from the hills, a mighty noise from the mountains round about Jerusalem, either from the acclamations of the victorious invaders, or from the lamentations of the timorous invaded, or from both. The inhabitants of the city, even of the choicest, shall publickjy, and keep possession of them. And the vineyards they have planted shall they not drink the wine of, but instead of having it for the relief of their friends that faint among them, they shall part with it for the animating of their foes that fight against them, Deut. xxviii. 30.

14. The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. 15. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress a day of wasting and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of thick darkness. 16. A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. 18. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land

Nothing could be expressed with more spirit and life, nor in words more proper to startle and awaken a secure and careless people, than the warning here given to Judah and Jerusalem, of the approaching destruction by the Chaldeans. That is enough to make the sinners in Zion tremble—that it is the day of the Lord, the day in which he will manifest himself by taking vengeance. It is the day of the Lord, a specimen of the day of judgment, a kind of doom's-day, as the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans is represented to be in our Saviour's prediction concerning it, Matt. xxiv. 27.

1. This day of the Lord is here spoken of as very near; the vision is not for a great while to come, as those imagine who put the evil day far from them; they deceive themselves, if they judge of it at a distance, for it is near, it is near, it hastens greatly. The prophet gives the alarm like one that is in earnest, like one that awakens a family with the cry of, Fire, fire, when it is at next door that the danger is; "It is near, it is near, and therefore it is high time to bestir yourselves, and do what you can for your own safety before it be too late." It is madness for those to elude whose
JUDASIAH, II.

1079

1. it is spoken of as a very dreadful day; the very voice of this day of the Lord, the noise of it, when it is coming, shall be so可怕 to make the mighty men cry there bitterly, cry for fear of children. It shall be a vexation to hear the report of it. In the last great day of the Lord the mighty shall cry bitterly to rocks and mountains to shelter them; but in vain. Observe how emphatically the prophet speaks of this day approaching: (v. 15.) It is a day of wrath, God's wrath, whereby the utmost wrath shall be a day of trouble and distress to the sinners, they shall be in pain, and shall see no ways of easing or helping themselves. The miseries of the damned are summed up (perhaps with reference to this here,) in the indignation and wrath of God, which is the cause, and the tribulation and anguish of the sinner's soul, which is the effect, Rom. ii. 8, 9. It will be a day of darkness and gloominess, every thing shall look dismal, and there shall not be the least gleam of comfort, or glimpse of hope; look round, and it is all black. It is a day of clouds and thick darkness; there is not only nothing visible, but nothing sensible; the thick clouds are big with storms and tempests.

2. It is spoken of as a destroying day; (v. 16, 17.) It shall be destroying, (1.) To places, even the strongest and best fortified; A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, to break into them, and against the high towers, to bring them down; for what fences, what fences can hold out against the wrath of God? (2.) To persons; (v. 17.) I will bring distress upon men, the strongest and stoutest of men; their hearts and hands shall fail them; they shall walk like blind men, wandering endlessly because they have sinned against the Lord. Note, Those that walk as bad men, will justly be left to walk as blind men, always in the dark, in doubt and danger, without any guide or comfort, and falling at length into the ditch. Because they have sinned against the Lord he will deliver them into the hands of cruel enemies, that shall pour out their blood as dust, so profusely, and with as little regret, and their flesh shall be thrown as dung upon the dunghill.

3. The destruction of that day will be unavoidable and universal, v. 18. (1.) There shall be no escape from it. Note, There shall be silver and gold, which they have hoarded up so covetously against the evil day, or which they have spent so prodigally, to make friends for such a time, shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath. Another prophet borrowed these words from this, with reference to the same event, Ezek. vii. 19. Note, Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. xv. 3. (2.) There shall be no escaping it by flight or concealment; for the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; and where then can a hiding-place be found? See what the fire of God's jealousy is, and what the force of it: it will devour with the devouring fire. He shall make riddance, a speedy riddance, of all them that dwell in the land; as the husbandman, when he rides his ground, cuts up all the briers and thorns for the fire. Note, Sometimes the judgments of God make riddance, even utter riddance, with sinful nations, a speedy riddance; their destruction is effected, is completed, in a little time. Let not sinners be led asleep by the patience of God, for when he measures of their iniquity is full, his justice will both overtake and overcome, and make quick work and thorough work.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter we have, I. An earnest exhortation to the nation of the Jews to repent and make their peace with God, and so prevent the day threatened before it was too late, (v. 1. 3.) and this infered from the revelation of God's wrath against them in the foregoing chapter. II. A denunciation of the judgments of God against all others that shall not be found to repent, or to be made distressed, or rejoiced, in the calamity of Israel. 1. The Philistines, v. 4. 7. 2. The Moabites and Ammonites, v. 8. 11. 3. The Ethiopians and Assyrians, v. 12. 15. All these he makes the work of one of their trembling; that is put into the hands of God's people, as was also foretold by other prophets before and after.

1. GA THER yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; 2. Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. 3. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness, it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

Here we see what the prophet meant in that terrible description of the approaching judgments, which we had in the foregoing chapter, from first to last; his design was not to drive the people to despair, but to move them to God and to their duty, not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins. In pursuance of that, he here calls them to repentance, national repentance, as the only way to prevent national ruin.

Observe, 1. The summons given them to a national assembly; (v. 1.) Gather yourselves together. He had told them, in the last words of the foregoing chapter, that God would make a speedy riddance of all that dwelt in the land, upon which, one would think, it should follow, "Disperse yourselves, and flee for shelter where you can find a place." When the decree was absolutely gone forth for the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, that was the advice given, (Matth. xiv. 16.) Then let them which are in Judea, flee into the mountains; but here it is otherwise. God warns, that he may not wound, threatens, that he may not strike, and therefore calls to the people to use means for the turning away of his wrath. The summons is given to a nation not desired. The word signifies either, (1.) Not desiring, that has not any desires toward God, or the remembrance of his name, is not desirous of his favour and grace; or (2.) Very indifferent to it, has no mind to repent and reform; "Yet come together, and see if you can stir up desires in one another." Thus God is often found of those that sought him not, nor asked for him, Isa. lxv. 1. Or, (2.) Not desirable, no ways lovely, nor having any thing in them amiable, or which might recommend them to God, nor to his grace; and he hath laid them waste, a land of delights; (Dan. xi. 41.) but now it is unlovely, it is a nation not desired, to which God might justly say, Depart from me but he says, "Gather together to me, and let us see if any expedient can be found out for the preventing of the ruin. Gather together, that you may in a body humble yourselves before God, may fast, and pray, and seek his face. Gather together, to consult among yourselves what is to be done in this critical
in the midst of the living things, it may give and take advice, and speak his mind; and that while the soul may be made up entirely, and be a national act.

Some read it, "inquire into yourselves, ye inquire into yourselves; examine your consciences, look into your hearts, search and try your ways; inquire into yourselves, that, you may find out the sin by which God has been provoked to this displeasure against you, and may find out the way of returning to him." Note, When God is dealing with us, it concerns us to inquire into ourselves.

2 Arguments urged to press them to the utmost seriousness and expedition herein; (v. 2.) "Do it in earnest, do it with all speed before it be too late, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass." The manner of speaking here is very lively and awakening, designed to make them apprehensive, (as all sinners are concerned to be.) (1.) That their danger is very great, that their all lies at stake, that it is a matter of life and death, which therefore well requires and well deserves the closest application of mind that can be. It is not a trifle, and therefore is not a thing to be trifled about. It is the fierce anger of the Lord that is kindled against them, and is just ready to kindle upon them; that devouring fire which none can dwell with, and which cannot be quenched; they must hold their head under fear. (2.) "It is the day of the Lord's anger, the day set for the pouring out of the full vials of it, that you are threatened with, that great day of the Lord," spoken of, ch. i. 14. "Are you not concerned to prepare for that day?" (2.) That it is very imminent; "Bestir yourselves now quickly, before the decree bring forth, and then it will be too late, the opportunity will be lost, and never recovered. The decree is as it were big with child, and it will bring forth the day, the terrible day, which shall pass as chaff, which shall hurry you away into captivity, as chaff before the wind." We know not what a day may bring forth, (Prov. xxvii. 1.) but we do know what the decree will bring forth against impotent sinners, whom therefore it highly concerns to repent in time, in the accepted time. Note, It is the wisdom of those whom God has a controversy with, to agree with him quickly, while they are in the way, before his fierce anger comes upon them, not to be turned away. In a case of this nature delays are highly dangerous, and may be fatal; they will be so if by them the heart is hardened. How solicitous should we all be to make our peace with God before the decree bring forth; though at any hour you may send up your desires; for so is the rule, Seek, and ye shall find. A general call was given to the whole nation, to gather together, but little good is to be expected from the far greater part of them; if the land be saved, it must be by the interest and intercession of the pious few, and therefore to them the exhortation here is particularly directed. (2.) In the name of Jesus; (v. 3.) "Seek ye the Lord, that he may be gracious unto you, and show you kindness; before the day of grace be over, or the day of life; before our everlasting state shall be determined on the other side the great gulf fixed!"

3. Directions prescribed for the doing of this effectually. It is not enough to gather together in a congregation, but they must seriously and calmly apply themselves to the duty of the day; (v. 5.) Seek ye the Lord; that they might mingle one and another, and stand with us; before the day of grace be over, or the day of life; before our everlasting state shall be determined on the other side the great gulf fixed! and all providences; actuated by this principle and disposition, they have wrought his judgments, both to themselves and to others, who have made conscience of their duty to him, and have laid out themselves for the advancement of his honour and interest in the world. (2.) What they are required to do; they must seek; which denotes both a careful inquiry, and a constant endeavour, that they may know and do their duty. (1.) They must seek the Lord, seek his favour and grace, admire him, love him, and entreat him for it; and in their need, seek him early, seek him diligently, and continue seeking him. (2.) They must seek righteousness; "Seek to God for the performance of his promises to you, and see to it that you abound yet more in duty to him, seek for the righteousness of Christ to be imputed to you, for the graces of God's Spirit to be implanted in you; hunger and thirst after them." (3.) They must seek peace; "This they were so eminent for, that they were denominated the meek of the land; and yet this they must seek. Note, Those that are ever so good, must still strive to be better, those that have ever so much grace, must still be praying and labouring for more, Nay, these that excel in any particular grace, must still seek to excel yet more in that, because in that most assaults will be made upon them by their own friends. They are expected from them by their friends, and in that they are most apt to be themselves secure. Si dixistis, sufficit, peristi—Say but, I am all that I ought to be, and you are undone. In the difficult, trying times approaching, the meek will find exercise for all the meekness they have, and all little enough, and therefore should seek it earnestly, and pray that when God in his providence gives them occasion for it, he would by his grace enable them to exercise it, to show all meekness to all men, in all instances; that as the day is, so may the strength be.

4. Encouragements given to take these directions, It may be, you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. (1.) You particularly that are the meek of the earth; though the day of the Lord's anger do come upon the land, yet you shall be safe, you shall be taken under special protection; verily it shall be well with thy remnant, Jer. xv. 11. Thy life will I give unto thee for a prey, Jer. xlv. 5. I will deliver thee in that day, Jer. xxxix. 17. It may be, you shall be hid; if any be hid, you shall." Good men cannot be sure of temporal preservation, for all things come alike to all, but they are most likely to be preserved in the great day of the Lord, by the managing care of Providence. It is expressed thus doubtfully, to try if they will trust the goodness of God's nature, though they have but the it may be of a promise; and to keep up in them a holy fear and watchfulness, lest they should seem to come short, and should do any thing to throw themselves out of the divine protection. Note, Those that hold fast to the nature of things by whom they are instructed, have reason to hope that God will find out a hiding-place for them, where they shall be safe and easy in times of common calamity. They shall be hid (as Luther says) aut in caelo, aut sub caelo—either in heaven, or under heaven, either in the possession of heaven, or under the protection of heaven. Or, (2.) You of this nation, though it be a nation not desirous, yet, in the day of the Lord's anger, by his providence, they shall be hid, your land shall be preserved for the sake of those few meek ones that stand in the gap, to turn away the wrath of God. It concerns us all to make sure to ourselves, that we shall be hid in the great day of God's wrath; and if we hide ourselves in chambers of safety, in chambers of safety, Isa. xxvi. 20. If we prepare an ark, that shall be our hiding-place, Gen. vii. 1. "

ZEPHANIAH, II.
4. For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon-day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. 5. Wo unto the inhabitants of the sea-coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. 6. And the sea-coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. 7. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The prophet here comes to foretell what share the neighbouring nations should have in the destructions made upon those parts of the world by Nebuchadnezzar and his victorious Chaldees, as other of the prophets did at that time; which is designed, (1.) To awaken the people of the Jews, by making them sensible how strong, how deep, how large, the imputation of these calamities should be, that the day of the Lord, which was near, might appear the more dreadful, and they might thereby be quickened to prepare for it as for a general deluge. (2.) To comfort them with this thought, that their case, though sad, should not be singular; (Solamem miseria socios habuisse doloris—the wretched find it consolatory to have companions of their woe) and much more so, that though God had sentenced to be their Enemy, and to fight against them, yet he was still so far their Friend, and an Enemy to their enemies, that he represented, and would revenge, the indignities done them.

In these verses, we have the doom of the Philistines, who were near neighbours, and old enemies, to the people of Israel. Five lordships there were in that country; only four are here named, Gaza and Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron; Gath, the fifth, is not named; some think, because it was now subject to Judah. They were the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, (v. 5.) for their country lay upon the Great sea. The nation of the Cherethites is here joined with them, which bordered upon them, (1 Sam. xxx. 14.) and fell with them, as is foretold above (v. 1.) The land of the Philistines, called Canaan, for it belonged to that country which God gave to his people Israel, and was inserted in the grant made to them, Josh. xiii. 3. This land is yet to be possessed, (five lords of the Philistines,) so that they wrongfully kept Israel out of the possession of it, (Judg. iii. 3.) which is now remembered against them. For though the rights of others may be limited by God, the righteous God will at length avenge the wrong.

1. It is here foretold that the Philistines, the usurpers, shall be dispossessed and quite extinguished. In general, here is a wo to them, (v. 5. which) coming from God, speaks all misery; The word of the Lord is against them—the word of the former prophets, which, though written years before, will be in its season, Lev. xi. 31. This word, now by this prophet, is against them. Note, Those are really in a woful condition that have the word of the Lord against them, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. They that rebel against the precepts of God's word shall have the threatenings of the word against them. The effect will be no less than their destruction. (1.) God himself will be the Author of it: "I will even destroy thee, who can make good what I say and will." (2.) It shall be a universal destruction, it shall extend itself to all parts of the land, both city and country. Gaza shall be forsaken, though now a populous city; it was forlorn, (Jer. xlvii. 6.) that baldness should come upon Gaza; Alexander the great razed the city, and we find, (Acts v. 26.) that Gaza was a desert. Ashkelon shall be a desolation, a pattern of desolation. Ashdod shall be driven out at noon-day; in the extremity of the scorching heat they shall have no shade, no shelter to protect them; but then, when most incommoded by the weather, they shall be forced away into captivity, which will begin an aggravating circumstance (v. 6.) Ekron likewise shall be rooted up, that had been long taking root. The land of the Philistines shall be depopulated, there shall be no inhabitant, v. 5. God made the earth to be inhabited, (Isa. xiv. 18.) otherwise he had made it in vain; but if men do not answer the end of their creation, in serving God, it is just with God that the earth should not answer the end of its creation, in serving them for a habitation; man's sin has sometimes subjected it to this vanity.

(3.) It shall be an utter destruction. The sea-coast, which used to be a harbour for ships, and a habitation for merchants, shall now be deserted, and be only cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks; (v. 6.) and then perhaps put to better use than when it was possessed by the lords of the Philistines.

2. It is here foretold that the house of Judah, the rightful owners, shall recover the possession of it, v. 7. The remnant of them that shall return out of captivity, when God visits them, shall be made to lie down in safety in the houses of Ashkelon; to lie down in the evening, when they are weary and sleepy. There they shall feed themselves and their flocks. Note, God will at length restore his people to their rights, though they may be long kept out from them.

8. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. 9. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles; and salt-pits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. 10. This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts. 11. The Lord will be terrible unto them: for he will manifest all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

The Moabites and Ammonites were both of the posterity of Lot, their countries joined; and, both adjoining to Israel, they are here put together in the prophecy against them.

1. They are both charged with the same crime, and that was, reproaching and reviling the people of God, and triumphing in their calamities; (v. 8.) They have reproached my people; while God's people kept close to their duty, it is probable that they reproached them for the singularities of their religion; and now that they had revolted from God,
and were fallen under his displeasure, they reproached them for that too. It has been the common lot of God's people in all ages, to be reproached and reviled upon one account or other; thus the old serpent spits his venom; and pride is at the bottom of it, it is in their pride that they have magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts, thinking themselves as good as they, as great, and even as he himself is. There is reason to believe that God's people are filled with, Ps. cxxiii. 4. They have spoken big (so some read it, magna locuti sunt—they have spoken great things) against their border; (v. 8.) against those of them that bordered upon their country, whom upon all occasions they insulted; or against the prosperity they claimed, which they disputed, or the protection they boasted of, which they said they could get for themselves. They reproached the people of the Lord of hosts as a deserted, abandoned people; great swelling words of vanity are the genuine language of the church's enemies. "But I have heard them," (says God,) "and will let you know that I have heard them, I have heard, and I will reckon for them,) Jude 15. And if God hears the reproaches and revilings we are under, it is a great argument of his great care for us. Nay, God not only takes notice of, but interests himself in, the reproaches cast on his people, because they are his; and it is certain, that they who look with disdain upon the people of the Lord of hosts, thereby dishonour the Lord of hosts himself. See this very thing charged on Moab and Ammon, Ezek. xxxv. 3, 8.

2. They are both laid under the same dishonour. Assyria was a type of the Antichrist and the Gentiles, and the Jews were by them reproached. See what solemnity sentence is pronounced upon them, v. 9. It is the Lord of hosts, the sovereign Lord of all, who has authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; it is the God of Israel who is jealous for their honour, it is he that has said it, nay, he has sworn it. As I live, said the Lord. The sentence is, (1.) That the Moabites and Ammonites shall be quite destroyed; they shall be as Sodom and as Gomorrah, the marks of whose rains in the Dead sea lay near adjoining to the countries of Moab and Ammon; they shall, though not by the same means, (even fire from heaven,) yet almost in the same manner, be laid waste; not again to be inhabited, or not of a long time. The country shall produce nothing but nettles, instead of corn; and there shall be brine-pits, instead of the pleasant fountains of water, with which the country had abounded. (2.) That Israel shall be too hard for them; shall spoil them of their goods, and possess their country by lawful war. Note, Proud men sometimes, by the just judgment of God, fall under the mortification of being tramelled upon themselves by those whom they hitherto tramelled upon. And this shall they have for their fruit.

3. Other nations shall in like manner be humbled, that the Lord alone may be exalted; (v. 11.) The Lord will be terrible unto the Moabites and Ammonites in particular, who have made themselves a terror to his Israel. (1.) Heathen gods must be abolished; they have long had possession, and their worshipers have both glorified them, and gloried in them. But the Lord will vanquish all the gods of the earth, will starve them out of their strong holds. The Pagans had a fond conceit, that their idols were regaled by their offerings, and did eat the fat of their sacrifices, Deut. xxxiii. 38. Omnia comest a Belo—Bel has eaten all. But it is here promised that when the Christian religion is set up in the world, that such a thing as he spoke of in the dumb idols, shall forsake their altars, and bringing no more sacrifices to them, and thus they shall be famished, or made lean, as the word is; their priests shall. This speaks the vanity of these idols, it lies in the power of their worshippers to famish them; whereas the true God says, If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. It speaks also the victory of the God of Israel over them; Now know we, that he is greater than all gods. (2.) Heathen nations must be converted; when the gospel gets ground, by it men shall be brought to worship him who lives forever, for that is the command of the everlasting gospel, Rev. xiv. 7. Every one of this place shall not need to go up to Jerusalem, to worship the God of Israel, but, wherever they are, they may have access to him. I will that men pray every where. God shall be worshipped, not only by all the tribes of Israel, and the strangers who join themselves to them, but by all the isles of the heathen; this is a promise which looks favourably upon our native country, for it is one of the most considerable of the isles of the Gentiles, by which God will be glorified.

12. Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword. 13. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. 14. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cornor and the buttern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar-work. 15. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly: that said in her heart, I am and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

The cup is going round, when Nebuchadnezzar is going on conquering and to conquer: and not only Israel's near neighbours, but those that lay more remote, must be reckoned with for the wrongs they had done to God's people; the Ethiopians and the Assyrians are here taken to task. The Ethiopians, or Arabians, that had sometimes been a terror to Israel, (as in Assy's time, 2 Chron. xiv. 9.) must now be reckoned with. They shall be slain by my sword, v. 12. Nebuchadnezzar was God's sword, the instrument in his hand, with which these and other enemies were subdued and punished, Ps. xvii. 14.

2. The Assyrians, and Nineveh the head city of their monarchy, are next set in the order of time, to receive their doom. He that is God's sword, will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria, and make himself master of it. Assyria had been the rod of God's anger against Israel, and now Babylon is the rod of God's anger against Assyria, Isa. x. 5. He will make Nineveh a desolation, as has been lately and largely foretold by the prophet Nahum. Oberserveth, next set in the order of time, to receive their doom.

(1.) How flourishing Nineveh's estate had formerly been, (v. 15.) This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly. Nineveh was so strong, that she feared no evil, and therefore dwelt carelessly, and set danger at defiance; she was so rich, that she thought herself sure of all good, and therefore was a rejoicing city, full of mirth and glory; and she thought with a delight that she deserved no quarrel, but said in her heart, "I am, and there is none beside me that can compare with me, no city in the world that can pretend to be equal with me." God
can with his judgments frighten the most secure, humble the most haughty, and mar the mirth of those that most laugh now.

2. How complete Nineveh's ruin shall now be; it shall be made a desolation, v. 13. Such a heap of ruins shall this once pompous city be, that it shall be, [1.] A receptacle for beasts, such a wilderness, that flocks shall lie down in it; may, such a waste, desolate, frightful place, that wild beasts, the beasts of the nations, all kinds of beasts, shall take up their abode there; the melancholy birds, as the cormorant and bittern, shall make their nests in what remains of their nests; their subterraneous abodes; their subterraneous ruins that are uninhabited and unrefractory. The lintels, or chapters of the pillars, the windows and thresholds, and all the fine cedarwork curiously engraven, shall lie exposed; and on them these rude, ominous birds shall perch, and their voice shall singing. How are the songs of mirth turned into hoarse, horrid noises! What little reason have men to be proud of stately buildings, and rich furniture, when they know not what all the pomp of them may come to at last. [2.] A division to travellers. They that had come, to gratify their curiosity with the sight of Nineveh's splendour, shall now look on her with as much contempt as ever they looked upon her with admiration; (as it was said) "Let that woman stand at the door," and wag her hand, making light of her desolations, may, and making sport with them; "There is an end of proud Nineveh." They shall not weep, and wring their hands, (their adversaries are unpitied and unmerciful, who were insolent and haughty in their prosperity,) but they shall hiss and wag their hands, forgetting that perhaps their ruin is not far off.

CHAP. III.

We now return to Jerusalem, and must again hear what God has to say to her, 1. By way of reproof and threatening, for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her; of which divers instances are given, with the aggravations of them, v. 1-7. 2. By way of promise of mercy and grace, which God had yet in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises here are, 1. That God would bring in a glorious work of reformation among them, cleanse them from their sins, and bring them home to himself; many promises of this kind here are, v. 8-13. 2. That he would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them, when he had thus prepared them. Thus the kingdom shall be given to Zion, and, to clear his own way, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. These promises were to have their full accomplishment in gospel-times and gospel-places.

1. WO to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! 2. She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction: she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. 3. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. 4. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. 5. The just Lord is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity; every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame. 6. I have cut off the nations; their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 7. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction: so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

One would wonder that Jerusalem, the holy city where God was known, and his name was great, should be the city of which this black character is here given; that a place which enjoyed such pietv of the means of grace, should become so very corrupt and vicious, and that God should permit it to be so; yet so it is, to show that the law made nothing perfect; but if this be the true character of Jerusalem, as no doubt it is, (for God's judgments will make none worse than they are,) it is no wonder that the prophet begins with wo to her. For the holy God hates sin in those that are nearest to him, nay, in them he hates it most. A sinful state is, and will be, a woful state.

1. Here is a very bad character given of the city in general; how is the faithful city become a harlot! 1. She shamest herself; she is filthy and polluted, has made herself infamous; (so some read it; v. 1.) the glorious city, (so the margin,) always cramming herself with filthy, and unclean, and uncleanliness for the flesh; her lusts and lusts, and the lusts of her, and the lusts of the lusts of it. Sin is the filthiness and pollution of persons and places, and makes them odious in the sight of the holy God. 2. She wrongs her neighbours and inhabitants; she is the oppressing city; never any place had statutes and judgments so righteous as this city had, and yet, in the administration of the government, never was more unrighteousness committed. 3. She is false to God, and in every respect walks contrary to him, v. 2. 4. He has given his law, and spoken to her by his servants the prophets, telling her what is the good she should do, and what the evil she should avoid; but she obeyed not his voice, nor made conscience of doing as he commanded her, in any thing. He has taken her under an excellent discipline, both of the word and of the rod; but she did not receive the instruction of the one, or the correction of the other; did not submit to God's will, nor answer his end in either. He encouraged her to depend upon him, and his power and promise, for deliverance from evil, and supply with good; but she trusted not in the Lord; her confidence was placed in her alliances with the nations more than in her covenant with God. He gave her tokens of his presence, and instituted ordinances of communion for her with himself; but she drew not near to her God, did not meet him where he appointed, and where he promised to meet him. She stood at a distance, and said to the Almighty, Depart. 5. Here is a very bad character of the leading men in; those that should by their influence suppress vice and promote piety there, are the great patrons, and patrons of it; and those that should be his physicians, are really her worst disease. 1. Her princes are ravenous and barbarous as roaring lions that make a prey of all about them; and they are universally feared and hated; they use their power for destruction, and not for edification. 2. Her judges, who should be the protectors of injured innocence, are evening wolves, rapacious, cruel, and covetous; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow; they take so much delight and pleasure in cruelty and oppression, that when they have devoured a good man, they reserve the bones, as it were, for a sweet morsel, to be gnawed the next morning, Job xxxi. 31. Her prophets, who pretended to be special messengers from heaven to them, were light and treacherous persons, fanciful, and of a vain imagination,
ZEPHANIAH, III.

frothy and airy, and of a loose conversation, men of no consistency with themselves, in whom one could put no confidence; they were so given to bantering, that it was hard to say when they were serious. Their pretended prophecies were all a sham, and they secretly laughed at these that were deluded by them. 4. They that were teachers by office, and had the charge of the holy things, were false to their trust, and betrayed it: they were to preserve the purity of the sanctuary, but they did themselves pollute it, and the sacred offices of it, which they were to attend upon; such priests as Hophni and Phinehas, who by their wicked lives made the sacrifice of the Lord to be abhorred. They were to exercise no offense, and to justly judge it to; but in their explications and applications of it, they did violence to the law; they corrupted the sense of it, and perverted it to the patronizing of that which was directly contrary to it; by forced constructions, they made the law to speak what they pleased, to serve a turn, and so, in effect, made void the law.

III. We have here the aggravations of this general corruption of all orders and degrees of men in Jerusalem.

1. They had the tokens of God's presence among them, and all the advantages that could be of knowing his will, with the strongest inducements possible to do it, and yet they persisted in their disobedience, v. 3. (1.) They had the honour and privilege of the Sheichinah, God's abode in their land, so as not with any other people; "The just Lord is in the midst of thee, to take cognizance of all thou dost amiss, and give countenance to all thou dost well; he is in the midst of thee as a holy God, and therefore thy pollutions are the more offensive, Deut. xxxii. 14. He is in the midst of thee as a just God, and therefore will punish the affronts you put upon him, and the wrongs and what you do to one another.” (2.) They had God's own example set before them, in the discovery he made of himself to them, that they might conform to it; "He will not do iniquity, and therefore you should not; for this was the great rule of their institution, "Be ye holy, for I am holy. God will be true to you, be not you then false to him.” (3.) He sent to them his prophets, rising up early and sending them; Every morning he brings forth his light, even as the coming comes, he fails not; he shows them plainly what the good is which he requires of them, and puts them in mind of it; he wakes morning by morning, (Isa. 1. 4.) wakes his prophets with the rising sun, to bring to light the things which belong to their peace. So that upon the whole matter, what more could have been done to his vineyard, to make it fruitful? Isa. v. 4. And yet in all, the unjust know no shame, that have been unjust are unjust still, and are not ashamed of their unrighteousness, neither can they blush. If they had any sense of honour, any shame left in them, they would not so directly contrary to their profession, and to the instructions given them. But that they are past shame are past cure.

2. God has set before their eyes some remarkable monument of his justice, which was designed for warning to them; (v. 6.) I have cut off the nations, the seven nations of Canaan, which the land spewed out for their wickedness; upon which they had this caution given them, to take heed lest it shew them out also, Lev. xviii. 28. Or, it may refer to some of the neighbouring nations that were made desolate for their wickedness, especially to the nation of Israel, their ten tribes; their towers were desolate, their high towers, their strong towers, their pride and power broken, their streets wasted, so that none passed along through them; the cities were destroyed and laid in ruins, no man was to be found in them, no inhabitant, all were slain, or carried into captivity. The enemies did it, but God avows it; I cut them off, says he. And God designed this for an admonition to Jerusalem; (Ezek. xxiii. 9, 11.) "I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, surely these judgments upon others will deter thee from the like wicked practices; surely thou wilt receive instruction by these providences; it ought reasonably to be expected, that thou wouldest not continue to sin like the nations, when thou seest the ruin which their sin brought upon them.” They could not but see their own house in danger, when their neighbour's was on fire: and when we are frightened God should be feared.

3. He had set before them life and death, good and evil, both in his word and in his providence. (1.) He had assured them of the continuance of their prosperity, if they would fear him and receive instruction, for so their dwelling would not be cut off as their neighbour's was; if they took the warning given them, and reformed, what was past should be pardoned, and their tranquility lengthened out. (2.) He had made them feel the smart of the rod, though he reproved them from the sword; "H owever I punish them, that, being chastened, they might not be condemned: such various methods did God take with them, to reclaim them, but all in vain; they were not won upon by gentle methods, nor had severe ones any effect, for they rose early, and corrupted all their doings; they were more active and eager for the devouring than ever; more studious and solicitous in making provision for their lusts, and let slip no opportunity for the gratification of them. God rose up early to send them his prophets, to reduce and reclaim them, but they were up before him, to shut and bolt the door against them. Their wickedness was universal; all their doings were corrupted, and it was all owing to themselves, they could not lay the blame upon the tempter, but they alone must hear it; they themselves wilfully and designedly corrupted all their doings; for every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed.

8. Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

9. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. 10. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

11. In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride; and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain.

12. I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. 13. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.
Things looked very bad with Jerusalem in the foregoing verses; she is got into a very bad name, and seems to be incorrigible, incurable, mercystoof and judgment-proof. Now one would think it should follow, therefore expect no other but that she should be utterly abandoned and rejected, as reprobate silver; since they will not be wrought upon by prophets or providences, let them he made a desolation as their neighbours have been: but before that, there is the word of God which takes occasion, from man's badness, to appear so much the more illustrious. They still grew worse and worse; therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, v. 8. Since the law, it seems, will make nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope shall; let those that lament the corruptions of the church, wait upon God, till he send his Son into the world, to save his people from their sins, and send his gospel to reform and refine his church, and to purify to himself a peculiar people both of Jews and Gentiles. And there were those who, according to this direction and encouragement, waited for redemption, for this redemption in Jerusalem; and long-looked for came at last, Luke ii. 38. For judgment Christ will come into this world, John ix. 38. 1. It is not unreasonable that his church, to bring down and destroy the enemies of it, its spiritual enemies; of which the destruction of Babylon, and other the oppressors of God's people, in the Old Testament times, was a type, and would be a happy preface. He will rise up to the prey, to lead captivity captive, (Ps. xviii. 18.) to conquer and spoil the powers of darkness, and the powers on earth, that set themselves against the Lord and his anointed; he will break them with a rod of iron, (Ps. ii. v. 9.—xi. 5, 6.) his determination is to gather the nations, and to assemble the kingdoms. By the gospel of Christ preached to every creature all nations are summoned, as it were, to appear in a body before the Lord Jesus, who is about to set up his kingdom in the world. But since the greatest part of mankind will not obey the summons, he will pour upon them his indignation, for he that believes not is condemned already. At the time of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be on earth distress of nations with perplexity, (Luke xxii. 25.) greater tribulation, such as never was, or ever shall be, Matt. xxiv. 21. Then God pours upon the nations his indignation, even an outpouring anger for their iniquities, and the anger against the Messiah and his kingdom, Ps. ii. 1, 2. Then all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of his jealousy. Both Jews and Gentiles shall be reckoned with for their enmity to the gospel. Principalities and powers shall be spoiled, and made a show of openly, and the victorious Redeemer shall triumph over them. The end of those that continue to be of the earth, and to mind earthly things, after God has set up the kingdom of heaven among men shall be destruction, (Phil. iii. 19.) they shall be devoured with the fire of God's jealousy.

II. To amend what he finds amiss in his church. When God intends the restoration of Israel, and the revival of their peace and prosperity, he makes way for it by their reformation, and the revival of their virtue and piety; for this is God's method, both with particular persons and communities, first, to make them holy, and then to make them happy. These promises were in part accomplished after the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when by their captivity they were thoroughly cured of their idolatry; and this was all the fruit, even the taking away of sin but it looks further, to the blessed effects of the gospel of grace. Times of reformation in which we live, Heb. ix. 10.

1. It is promised that there shall be a reformation in men's discourse, which had been generally cor-

rupted, but should now be with grace seasoned with salt; (v. 9.) Then will I turn to the people a pure language; I will turn the people to such a language, from that evil communication which had almost ruined all good manners among them. Note, Converting grace refines the language, not by making the phrases witty, but the substance wise. Among the Jews, after the captivity, there needed a reformation of the dialect, for they had mingled the names of strange tongues with their language, (Ezra x. 4.) and that grievance shall be redressed. But that is not all; their language shall be purified from all profaneness, filthiness and falsehood, I will turn them to a choice language; so some read it; they shall not speak rashly, but with caution and deliberation; they shall choose out their words. Note, An air of purity and piety in common conversation is a great help to the public faith. The grace of such blessings, shall be given where God gives a pure language to those that have been people of unclean lips.

2. That the worship of God, according to his will, shall be more closely applied to, and more unanimously concurred in. Instead of sacrifice and in cense, they shall call upon the name of the Lord, prayer is the spiritual offering with which God must be pleased. Though he had honoured Jerusalem with a greater glory, yet is it necessary that we have a pure language. We are utterly unfit to take God's name into our lips, unless they be pure lips. The purifying of the language in common conversation, is necessary to the acceptableness of the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart in our devotion; for how can sweet waters and bitter come out of the same mouth, Matt. xii. 33. But that their language being thus purified, they shall serve God with one consent; with one shoulder, so the word is; adling to oxen in the yoke, that draw even; when Christians are unanimous in the service of God, the work goes on cheerfully. This is the effect of the pure language, purified from passion, envy, and censoriousness. Note, Purity is the way to unity; the reformation of manners the way to a comprehension; the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable.

3. That those that were driven from God, shall return to him, and be accepted of him; (v. 10.) From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia; from Egypt, so described, (Isa. xviii. 1.) or from some other very remote country, my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed shall bring sacrifice and offer up the incense of prayer, (Isa. v. 13.) The reason that by reason of their distance had almost forgotten God, and their obligations to him, shall be put in mind of him, as the prodigal son was of his father's house, in the far country. Those that by reason of their dispersion, under the tokens of his displeasure, might be afraid of coming to him, yet even they shall be gathered under his wings; the daughter of his dispersed, that is afterwards, will be found among those whom the Lord our God shall call; and though they are dispersed he will own them for his; his calling them my dispersed, puts honour upon them, sufficient to balance all the disgrace of their dispersion. These shall come, (1.) With their humble petitions; They are my suppliants. Note, True converts are suppliants to God; they do not plead, but petition, bring up their case with that of Ashdod, (Neh. xi. 24.) and wherever they are, though beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, a great way off from his house of prayer, he has his eye upon them, and his ear open to them, they are his suppliants. (2.) With their spiritual sacrifices they shall bring mine offering; shall bring themselves as spiritual sacrifices to God, Rom. xii. 1. The conversion of the Gentiles is called the bringing in of the Gentiles, (Rom. xiv. 16.) and with their suppliants they shall bring spiritual sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and alms, with which God is well pleased.
4. That sin and sinners shall be purged out from among them, v. 11. God will take away, (1.) Their just reproach; In that day shall thou not be ashamed for all thy doings. They shall be ashamed as peni- tents, and shall continue to be so, (see Ezek. xvi. 63.) but they shall not be ashamed as sinners that are not penitents. (2.) It shall be a sign that thou shalt no more do a shameful thing, as thou hast done. "The guilt of sin being taken away by par- doning mercy, the reproach of it shall be rolled away from the sinner's own conscience, that being purged, and pacified, and cleansed from dead works. When wickedness and wicked people abound in a nation, those few in it that are good, are apt to set others at liberty of their land; but when sin- ners are converted, and the land reformed, that shame and the cause of it are removed."

5. That God will have a remnant of holy, humble, serious people among them, that shall have the comfort of their relation to him, and interest in him. (v. 12.) I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people. When the Chaldeans carried away the Jews into captivity, they left the poor of the land for vine-dressers and husbandmen, a type and figure of God's distinguished remnant, whom he sets apart for himself; they are afflicted and poor, low in the world; such God has chosen, James ii. 5. The poor are evangelized, low in the world. The poor are afflicted for sin, poor in spirit. They are God's leavings, for it is a remnant according to the election of grace. I have reserved them to myself, says God, (Rom. xi. 4, 5.) and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. Note, Those whom God designs for the glory of his name, he enables to trust in his name. And the greater their affliction and poverty in the world are, the more reason the see to trust in God, having nothing else to trust in, 1 Thess. v. 3.

6. That this select remnant shall be blessed with purity and peace, v. 13. (1.) They shall be blessed with purity, both in words and actions; they shall neither do iniquity, nor speak lies. Justice and ve- racity shall command them, and govern them, though it be ever so much against their secular interest. They shall not only not speak a direct, de- liberate lie, but there shall not be a lying tongue found in their mouth, not in the mouth of any of them; not the least equivocation shall come from them. (2.) They shall be blessed with peace. They shall, as the sheep of God's pasture, feed, and lay down, and none shall make them afraid. They shall not be fearful themselves, nor shall any about them be fearful to them. Note, Those that are excellently good need not be afraid of any calamity, for it cannot hurt them, and therefore should not terrify them.

14. Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. 15. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. 16. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thy hands be slack. 17. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will re- joice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing. 18. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. 19. Be- hold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee; and I will save her that haleth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. 20. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your cap- tivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.

After the promises of taking away of sin, here follow promises of the taking away of trouble; for when the cause is removed, the effect will cease. What makes a people holy, will make them happy of course. The precious promises here made to the purified people, were to have their full accom- plishments in the comforts of the gospel; in the hope, and much more in the enjoyment, of which, they are here called upon. (1.) To rejoice and sing; (v. 14.) Sing, O daughter of Zion, sing for joy, shout, O Is- rael, in a holy transport and exultation; be glad and rejoice with all the heart; let the joy be inward, let it be great; those that love God with all their heart have occasion with all their heart to rejoice in him. He gives them peace, (v. 15.) that their sons may be justified, and they may be called children of the Lord. Sing and rejoice. Note, Those that reform, have cause to rejoice; whereas Israel cannot rejoice for joy as other people, while she goes a whoring from her God. God's promises, applied by faith, fur- nish the saints with constant and abundant matter for joy; they are filled with joy and peace in believing them. (2.) To throw off all their discouragement; (v. 16.) In that day it shall be said to Jeru- salem, God will say it by his prophets, by his pro- visions, their neighbours shall say it, they shall say it to one another, "Fear thou not, be not disposed to fear, do not easily admit the impressions of it; when things are bad, fear not their being worse, but hope they will mend; frighten not thyself upon every occasion. Let not thy hands be slack or faint; string thy hands; and thy hands in Jeru- salem, and their hands in Jeru- salem, will say it by their hands; or, as the hands of the Lord, will be our strength both for doing and suffering.

Let us now see what these precious promises are, which are here made to the people of God, for the banishing of their griefs and fears, and the encourag-
ing of their hopes and joys: and to us are these promises made as well as to them.

1. An end shall be put to all their troubles and distresses; (v. 15.) "The Lord has taken away thy judgments;" has removed all the calamities thou hast been groaning under, which were the punishments of thy sins; the noise of war shall be silenced, the reproach of famine done away, and the captivity brought back. Though some grievances remain, thou shalt be only a spectator, and not an actor in them; the sin shall be pardoned. He has cast out thine enemy, that has thrust himself into thy land, and triumphed over thee. He has swept out thine enemy; (so some read it,) "as dirt is swept out of the house to the dunghill." When they sweep out their sins with the besom of reformation, God will sweep out their enemies with the besom of destruction. If they should need correction, they shall fall all together, half the midst of the Lord, whose mercies are great, and shall not again fall into the hands of man, whose tender mercies are cruel; Thou shalt not see evil any more, not such evil days as thou hast seen. Note, The way to get clear of the evil of trouble, is to keep clear from the evil of sin; and to them that do so, trouble has no real evil in it.

2. He will give them the tokens of his presence with them; though he has long seemed to stand at a distance, (they having provoked him to withdraw,) he will make it to appear that he is with them of a truth; "The Lord is in the midst of thee, O Zion, of thee, O Jerusalem, as the sun in the centre of the universe, to diffuse his light and influence upon every part. He is in the midst of thee, to preside in all thy righteous actions, and be the sovereign judicialist. And, (1.) "He is the King of Israel, (v. 15.) and is in the midst of thee as a King in the midst of his people." With an eye to this, our Lord Jesus is called the King of Israel; (John i. 49.) and he is, and will be, in the midst of his church always, even to the end of the world, to receive the homage of his subjects, and to give out his favours to them, even where but two or three are gathered together in his name. (2.) "He is the Lord thy God, thine in covenant, and he is in the midst of thee as thy God, whom thou hast an interest in, and whose own thou art. He has put himself into dear relations to thee, laid himself by promise under obligations to thee, and, that thou mayest have abundant comfort in both, he is in the midst of thee, nigh at hand to thee, and says so in the middest of thee as thy God and King, is mighty, is almighty, is able to do all that thee that thou needest, and cannot desire." (4.) "He has engaged his power for thy succour; He will save; he will be Jesus; will answer the name, for he will save his people from their sins."

3. God will take delight in them, and in doing them good. The expressions of this are very lively and affecting; (v. 17.) He will rejoice over thee with joy, will not only be well pleased with thee upon thy repentance and reformation, and take thee into favour, but will take a complacency in thee, as the bridegroom does in his bride, or the bride in her ornaments, Isa. lxi. 3.—5. The conversion of sinners and the consolation of saints are the joy of angels, for they are to appear before the Lord with joy, (Ps. cxlv.) and the joy of God himself. The church should be the joy of the whole earth, (Ps. lxxxii. 2.) for it is the joy of the whole heaven. He will rest in his love, will be silent in his love; so the word is, "I will not rebuke thee as I have done, for thy sins; I will acquiesce in thee, and in my relation to thee. I know not where there is the like expression of Christ having such a relation to his church, unless in that song of songs, Cant. iv. 9. Thou art for me a chy little bride, as my sister, my spouse, with one of thine eyes. O the condescensions of divine grace! The great God not only loves his saints, but he loves to love them, is pleased that he has pitched upon these objects of his love. He will joy over them with singing. He that is grieved for the sin of sinners, rejoices in the graces and services of the saints, and is ready to express that joy, by singing over them. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them Jesus Christ will shortly be glorified and admired.

4. God will comfort Zion's mourners, who sympathize with her in her griefs, and will wipe away their tears; he will comfort them with the comfort of joy; (v. 18.) He is very condescending and tender to comfort them, as at the death of his dear friends, (2 Cor. i.) and he is very ready to come to the relief of them, as at the death of his dear friends. He has made his angels ministering spirits to them, to comfort them in their distresses; (Heb. i.) and he shall be found very ready to comfort them, as in the death of his dear friends, and to comfort them in their distresses; (Ps. lix.) I will wither them to their own land. When the people's hearts are prepared, the work will be done suddenly; and who can hinder it, if God undertake to effect it? "I will turn back your
captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord; you shall plainly discern the hand of God in it, and say, This is the Lord's doing."

6. God will by all this put honour upon them, and gain them respect from all about them. Israel was at first made high above all nations in praise and fame, Deut. xxvi. 19. The reproach brought upon them was therefore one of the sorest of their grievances; (nothing cuts deeper to those that are in honour, than disgrace does;) and therefore, when God returns in mercy to his church, it is here promised that she shall regain her credit; all the reproach shall be for ever rolled away, as Israel's at Gilgal, Josh. vi. 9. The church shall be as honourable as ever she has been despicable. (1.) Even those that have reproached her, shall be made to respect her; I will give them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame; that the same who were the witnesses of their disgrace, may see cause to change their mind concerning them. They that said, "This is Zion whom no man looks after," shall say, "This is Zion whom the great God looks after." And she that was looked upon to be the offscouring of the earth, now appears to be the darling of heaven. (2.) Even those that never knew her, shall be brought to honour her; (v. 20.) I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth; so the Jewish church was, when the fear of the Jews fell upon their neighbours, (Esth. viii. 17.) and some of all nations said, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, Zech. viii. 23. So the Christian church was, when it was made to flourish in the world, for there is that in it, which may justly recommend it to the value and esteem of all the people of the earth. And so the universal church of the first-born will be in the great day; when the saints shall be brought together to Christ, that he may be admired and glorified in them, and they admired and glorified in him before angels and men. Then will God's Israel be made a name and a praise to eternity.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE PROPHECY OF

HAGGAI.

The captivity of Babylon gave a very remarkable turn to the affairs of the Jewish church, both in history and prophecy. It is made a signal epocha in our Saviour's genealogy, Matth. i. 17. Nine of the twelve minor prophets, whose oracles we have been hitherto consulting, lived and preached before their captivity, and most of them had an eye to it in their prophecies, foretelling it as the just punishment of Jerusalem's wickedness. But the three last (in whom the Spirit of prophecy took its period, until it revived in Christ's forerunner) lived and preached after the return out of captivity; not immediately upon it, but some time after. Haggai and Zechariah appeared much about the same time, eighteen years after the return, when the building of the temple was both retarded by its enemies, and neglected by its friends. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them, (so we read Ezra v. 1.) to reprove them for their remissness, and to encourage them to revive that good work when it had stood still for some time, and to go on with it vigorously, notwithstanding the opposition they met with in it. Haggai began two months before Zechariah, who was raised up to second him, that out of the mouth of two witnesses the word might be established. But Zechariah continued longer at the work; for all Haggai's prophecies, that are recorded, were delivered within four months, in the second year of Darius, between the beginning of the sixth month and the end of the ninth. But we have Zechariah's prophecies dated above two years after, Zech. vii. 1. Some have the honour to lead, others to last, in the work of God. The Jews ascribe to these two prophets the honour of being members of the Great Synagogue, (as they call it,) which was formed after the return out of captivity; we think it more certain, and it was their honour, and a much greater honour, that they prophesied of Christ. Haggai spake of him as the Glory of the latter house, and Zechariah as the Man, the Branch. In them the light of that Morning-Star shone more bright than in the foregoing prophecies, as they lived nearer the time of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and now began to see his day approaching. The LXX. make Haggai and Zechariah to be the penman of Ps. cxxviii. and of Ps. cxlvii, cxlviii, and cxlvi.

HAGGAI, I.

CHAP. I.

In this chapter, after the preamble of the prophecy, we have, 1. A reproach of the people of the Jews for their dilatoriness and slothfulness in building the temple, which had provoked God to contend with them by the judgment of famine and scarcity; with an exhortation to them to resume that good work, and to prosecute it in good earnest, v. 1., 11. 2. The good success of this sermon, appearing in the people's return and close application to that work, wherein the prophet, in God's name, animated and encouraged them, assuring them that God was with them, v. 12., 15.

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, 2. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. 3. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?
1090

HAGGAI, I.

5. Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. 6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is no warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. 7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. 8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. 9. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

It was the complaint of the Jews in Babylon, that they saw not their signs, and there was no more any prophet, (Ps. lxxiv. 9.) which was a just judgment upon them for mucking and misusing the prophets.

We read of no prophets they had in their return, as there were in their coming out of Egypt. Hence H. 13. God stirred them up immediately by his Spirit to exert themselves in that escape; (Ezra i. 5.) for though God makes use of prophets, he needs them not, he can do his work without them. But the lamp of Old Testament prophecy shall yet make some bright and glorious efforts before it expire; and Haggai is the first that appears under the character of an open messenger, and that word of the Lord had been long foreseen, (as when prophecy began, 1 Sam. iii. 1.) and there had been no open vision.

In the reign of Darius Hystaspes, the third of the Persian kings, in the second year of his reign, the prophet was sent; and the word of the Lord came to him, and came by him, to the leading men among the Jews, who are here named, v. 1. The chief governor, 1. In the state; that was Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, of the house of David, who was commander-in-chief of the Jews, in their return out of captivity. 2. In the church; and that was Joshua the son of Josedech, who was now high priest. They were great men, and good men, and yet were to be stirred up to their duty when they grew remiss. What the people also were faulty in they must be told of, that they might use their power and interest for the mớiing of it. The prophets, who were extraordinary messengers, did not go about to set aside the ordinary institutions of magistracy and ministry, but endeavoured to render both more effectual for the ends to which they were appointed, for both ought to be supported. Now observe, 1. What the sin of the Jews was at this time, v. 2. As soon as they came up out of captivity, they set up an altar for sacrifice, and within a year after laid the foundations of a temple, (Ezra iii. 10.) they then seemed very forward in it, and it was likely enough that the work would be done suddenly; but being served with a prohibition some time after from the Persian court, and charged not to go on with it, they not only yielded to the force, when they were actually under it, which might be excused, but, afterward, when the violence of the opposition was abated, they continued very indifferent; to it, had no spirit or courage to set about it again, but seemed glad that they had a pretence to sit still at the altar of burnt-offering. Thus they had got for God, may be driven off from their work by storm, yet they must return to it as soon as the storm is over. These here did not so, but continued loitering, until they were refreshed reminded of their duty. And that which they suggested one to another was, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built; that is, 1. Our time is not come for doing it, we are not yet recovered, after our captivity, our losses are not repaired, nor have we yet got beforehand in the world; it is too great an undertaking for new beginners in the world, as we are,—let us first get our own houses up, before we talk of building churches; and in the mean time let a bare altar serve us, as it did our father Abraham. They did not say that they would not build a temple at all, but, "Not yet; it is all in good time." Note, Many a good word is put by by being put off, as Felix put off the prosecution of his convictions to a more convenient season. They do not say that they will never repent and reform, and be religious, but, "Not yet." And so the great business we were sent into the world to do, is not done, under pretence that it is all in good time; we are not to go about it. 2. Our time was not come, for God had not spoken the doing of it; for (say they) the restraint laid upon us by authority in a legal way is not broken off, therefore we ought not to proceed, though there be a present commandment of authority. Note, There is an aptness in us to misinterpret providential discouragements in our duty, as if they amounted to a discharge from our duty; when they are only intended for the trial and exercise of our courage and faith. It is hard to neglect our duty, but it is worse to vouch Providence for the patronizing of our neglects.

II. What the judgments of God were, by which they were punished for this neglect, v. 6. 9.—11. They neglected the building of God's house, and put that off, that they might have time and money for their secular affairs; and now they are accused from this very expensive piece of work, under this pretence, that they must provide for their families; their children must have meat and portions too, and until they have got beforehand in the world, they cannot think of rebuilding the temple. Now that the punishment might answer to the sin, God in his providence kept them still behindhand. And that poverty which they thought to prevent by not building the temple, God brought upon them for not building it. They were sensible of the smart of the judgments, and every one complained of the unseasonable weather, and the great losses they sustained in their corn and cattle, and the decay of trade; but they were not sensible of the cause of the judgment, and the ground of God's controversy with them; they did not, or would not, see and own that it was for their putting off of the building of the temple that they lay under these manifest tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore God here gives them notice that this was it for which he contended with them. Note, We need the help of God's prophets and ministers to expand to us, not only the judgments of God's mouth, but the judgments of his hands, that we may understand his mind and meaning in his word as well as in his works. We discover to us, not only wherein we have offended God, but wherein God shows himself offended at us. Let us observe, 1. How God contended with them. He did not send them into captivity again, nor bring a foreign
enemies upon them, as they deserved, but took the correcting of them into his own hands; for his mercies are great. 

1. He that gives seed to the sow, does not eat of the sow's flesh; nor does he drink of the sow's milk; and the most industrious often lose the labour of their hands. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. 

2. He that gives bread to the eater, denied his blessing upon the bread they ate, and then that did not nourish them. The cause of the withering and falling of the corn in the field was want of rain; but, beside that, there was a great burnish of heat, which they brought home. 

1. When they laid it in the barn, they were not sure of it; I did blow upon it, saith the Lord of hosts, (v. 9,) and that withered it, as buds are sometimes blasted in the spring by a nipping frost, which we see the effects of; but know not the way of. I did blow it away; so the margin reads it. When we have a helped wealth together, God can scatter it with the blink of his eye, as easily as we can blow away a feather. Note, We can never be sure of any thing in this world; it is exposed, not only when it is in the field, but when it is housed; for there moth and rust corrupt, Matth. vi. 19. 

And if we would have the comfort and continuance of our temporal enjoyment, it is necessary to our first health, and for the first fruit, that God bless them to us, they are blessings indeed, but if he blow upon them, we can expect no good from them, they make themselves wings and fly away. 

2. When they had it upon the board, it was not that to them that they expected; Ye eat, but ye have not enough, either because the meat is washable, and not satisfying, or because the stomach is greedy, which no matter, nor doth digestion, and so are not nourished by it, nor does it answer the end, or you have not enough, because you are not content, nor think it enough. Ye drink, but are not cooled and refreshed by it, ye are stinted, and have not enough to quench your thirst. The new wine is cut off from your mouth, (Joel i. 5,) may, and you drink your water too by measure, and with astonishment; you have no comfort of it, because you have no plenty of it, but are still in fear of failing short. 

3. That which they had upon their bags, did them no good there; Ye clothe you, but there is none warm, your clothes soon wear out, and was old, and grow thin, because God blows upon them; contrary to what Israel's did in the wilderness when God blessed them, and gave them corn, gen. vii. 17. and that is past life, and the earth cowards warm upon us when he quenches the earth. 

Job xxxvii. 17. 

4. That which they had in their bags, which was not laid out, but laid up, they were not sure of; he that earns wages by hard labour, and has it paid him in ready current money, puts it into a bag with holes; it drops through, and wastes away insensibly. Every thing is so scarce and dear, that they spend, (Joel vii. 10,) and so little art and work is so much as they get it. These that lay up their treasure on earth, put it into a bag with holes; they lose it as they go along, and they that come after them pick it up. But if we lay up our treasure in heaven, we provide for ourselves bags that wax not old, Luke xii. 33. 

2. Observe wherefore God thus contended with them, and stopped the current of the favours prepared for them; not upon his own account, but to make them, and to make his people sensible that neglect, and to bring you to a sense of your sin and folly. Note, As they who seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, shall not...
it is done, we ought to take pleasure in the doing of it, and to reckon that indulgence enough to set about it, and go on with it in good earnest; for what greater satisfaction can we have in our own bosoms than in contributing any thing toward that which God will take pleasure in? It ought to have b. on the top of their ambition to be actuated of the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 9. Though they had foolishly neglected the house of God, yet, if at length they will resume the care of it, God will not remember against them their former neglects, but will take pleasure in the work of their hands. Those who have long deferred their return to God, if at length they return with all their heart, must not despair of his favor; (2) That he will not despise them any longer; (3) He will have them saith the Lord. He will be served and worshipped in the temple when it is built, and sanctified in them that come high to him. It is worth while to bestow all possible care, and pains, and cost, upon that by which God may be glorified.

12. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, (as the Lord their God had sent him,) and the people did fear before the Lord. 13. Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord. 14. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came, and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, 15. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

As an ear-ring of gold, (says Solomon,) and an ornament of fine gold, so amiable, so acceptable, in the sight of God and man, is a wise reprover after an obedient ear, Prov. xxv. 12. The prophet here was a wise but faithful reprover, in God's name, and he met with an obedient ear. The foregoing sermon met with the desired success among the people, and that met with due encouragement from God. Observe,

1. How the people returned to God in a way of duty. All those to whom that sermon was preached, received the word in the love of it, and were wrought upon by it. Zerubbabel, the chief governor, did not think himself above the check and command of God's word; he was a man that had been eminently useful in his day, and serviceable to the interest of the church, yet did not plead his former merits, in answer to this reproof for his present remissness, but submitted to it. Joshua's business, as high priest, was to teach, and yet he was willing himself to be taught, and willingly received admonition and instruction. The remnant of the people, (and the whole body of them was but a remnant, i. e. very few of the many thousands of Israel,) they also were very pliable, they all obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and bowed their neck to the yoke of his commandments, and it is here recorded to their honour, v. 12. Their father said, Sons, go work to-day in my vineyard, in my temple; and they no only say, We go, sir, but they went immediately. (1.) They looked upon the prophet to be the Lord's messenger, and the word he delivered to
th Lord's message to them: and therefore received it, not as the word of man, but as the word of Almighty God; they obeyed his words, as the Lord their God had sent him, v. 12. Note, In attending to God's ministers, we must have an eye to him that sent them, and receive them for his sake, while they act according to their commission.

(2.) They did fear before the Lord. Prophecy was a new thing with them, they had had no special messenger from heaven of a great while, and therefore now that they had one, and but one, they paid an extraordinary regard to him; whereas their fathers, who had many prophets, mocked and misused them. It is sometimes so, that when good preaching is most scarce, it does most good, whereas the more that is in plenty, the more is neglected. If we shall receive this prophet, God, within a month or two after, raised them up another, Zech. i. 1. They feared before the Lord; they had a great regard to divine authority, and a great dread of the divine wrath, and were of those that trembled at God's word. The judgments of God which they had been under, though very severe, had not prevailed to make them fear before the Lord, until the word of God was sent to expound his providences, and then they feared; then when they saw their own sin to be the cause of these judgments, then they feared. Note, A holy fear of God will have a great influence upon our obedience to him. Serve the Lord with fear; if we fear him not, we shall not serve him.

(3.) The Lord stirred up their spirits, v. 14. [1.] He excited them to their duty, and put it into their hearts to go about it. Note, Then the word of God has its success, when God by his grace stirs up our spirits to comply with it; and without that grace we should remain stupid, and utterly averse to everything that is good. It is in the day of a divine power that we are made willing. [2.] He encouraged them in their duty, and with those encouragements enlarged their hearts, Ps. cxix. 32. When they heard the word, they feared; but, lest they should sink under the weight of that fear, God stirred them up, and made them cheerful and bold to encounter the difficulties they might meet with. Note, When God has work to do, he will either find a way to make it easy, or he will make it easy; he will take care that his people shall be enabled to do it.

(4.) They applied themselves to their work with all possible vigour; They came, and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts their God; every one, according as his capacity or ability was, lent a hand, some way or other, to further that good work; and this they did with an eye to God as the Lord of hosts, and as their God, the God of Israel. The consideration of God's sovereign dominion over the world by his providence, and his covenant-relation to his people by his grace, should stir up our spirits to act for him, and for the advancement of the interest of his kingdom among men, to the utmost of our power.

(5.) They did this speedily; it was but on the first day of the sixth month that Haggai preached them this sermon, and by the twenty-fourth of the same month, little more than three weeks after, they were all busy, working in the house of the Lord their God, v. 15. To show that they were ashamed of their delays hitherto, now that they were convinced and called, they were resolved to delay no longer, but to strike while the iron was hot, and to set about the work while they were under convictions. Note, Those that have lost time, have need to redeem time; and the longer we loitered in that which is good, when we are convinced of our folly, the more haste we should make.

2. How God met them in a way of mercy. The same prophet that brought them the reproof, brought them a very comforting, encouraging word; v. 13. Then spake Haggai, the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message, in his name, and as from him, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord. That is all he has to say, and that is enough; as that word of Christ to his disciples is, Matt. xxvii. 20. I am with you always, even to the end of the world. I am with you; I will forgive our neglects hitherto, and they shall not be remembered against you; I will remove the judgments you have been under for those neglects, and will appear for you, as I have in them appeared against you. I am with you, to protect you against your enemies that bear ill will to your work, and to prosper you, and to give you success in it; with you, to strengthen your hands, and to incline their hearts towards you, v. 14.

Chap. II.

In this chapter, we have three sermons preached by the prophet Haggai, for the encouragement of those that are forward to rebuild the temple. The Lord will bless the work of his people, and will make them set to work, and to work speedily, and to make the Lord's house, the work of the Lord, to go forward with vigour, and to lead to the setting up of the name of the Lord in the midst of the Gentiles. .

1. In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2. Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? 4. Yet now he strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. 5. According to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. 6. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7. And I will shake all nations and the Desire of all nations shall come. And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. 8. The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. 9. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.
Here is,

I. The date of this message, v. 1. It was sent on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, when the builders had been about a month at work, (since the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month,) and had got it is proud forwardness. Note, Those that are laboring in the service of God shall receive fresh encouragements from him to proceed in it, as their case calls for them. Set the wheels agoing, and God will oil them.

II. The direction of this message, v. 2. The encouragements here are sent to the same persons to whom the reproofs in the foregoing chapter are directed; for they that are wounded by the convictions of sin, the word, shall be healed and bound up by his consolations. Speak to Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the residue of the people, the very same that obeyed the voice of the Lord, (ch. i. 12.) and whose spirits God stirred up to do so; (ch. i. 14.) to them are sent these words of comfort.

III. The message itself. In which observe,

1. The discouragements which they laboured under, who were employed in this work; that which was such a damp upon them, and an ally to their joy, when the foundation of the temple was laid, was still a clog upon them—that they could not build such a temple now as Solomon built, not so large, so stately, so sumptuous a one as that was. This fetched tears from the eyes of many, when the dimensions of it were first laid; (Ezra ii. 2.) and still it would be upbraid the work and their brethren with the great disparity between this house and that; one could remember the gold with which it was overlaid; another the precious stones with which it was garnished; one could describe the magnificence of the porch, another of the pillars—and where are these now? This weakened the hands of the builders; for though our gracious God is pleased with us, if we do in sincerity as well as we can in his service, yet he will not be pleased with ourselves, unless we do as well as others, whose abilities far exceed ours. And it is sometimes the fault of old people, to discourage the services of the present age, by crying up too much the performances and attainments of the former age; with which others should be provoked to emulation, but not exposed to contempt. Say not thou, that the former days were better than these, (Eccles. vii. 10.) but think God that there is any good in these, bad as they are.

2. The encouragement that is given them to go on in the work, notwithstanding; (v. 4.) Yet now, though this house is likely to be much inferior to the former, yet be strong, O Zerubbabel, and be strong, O Joshua. Let not these leading men give way to this suggestion, or be disheartened by it, but do as well as they can, when they cannot do so well as they would; and let all the people of the land be strong too, and work; and if the leaders have but a good heart on it, it is hoped that the followers will have the better heart. Note, Those that work for God ought to exert themselves with vigour, and then to encourage themselves with hope that it will end well.

3. The grounds of these encouragements. God himself says to them, Fear ye not; (v. 5.) and he gives good reason for it.

(1.) They have God with them, his Spirit and his special presence; Be strong, for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, v. 4. This he had said be fore; (ch. i. 13.) I am with you. But we need to have these assurances repeated, that we may have strong consolation. The presence of God with us, as the Lord of hosts, is enough to silence all our fears, and to help us over all the discouragements that may meet us. When we can see that the Jews had hosts against them, but they had the Lord of hosts with them, to take their part and plead their cause. He is with them, for, [1.] He adheres to his promise; his covenant is inviolable; and he will be always theirs, and will appear and act for them, according to the word that he covenanted with them when they came out of Egypt. Though he will sometimes frustrate that covenanted with them, he will not make his faithfulness to fail. [2.] He dwells among them by his Spirit, the Spirit of prophecy; when he first formed them into a people, he gave his good Spirit to instruct them; (Neh. ix. 20.) and still the Spirit, though often grieved, and provoked to withdraw, remained among them. It was the Spirit of God that stirred up their spirits to come out of Babylon, (Ezra i. 5.) and now to build the temple, Hag. i. 14. Note, We have reason to be encouraged as long as we have the Spirit of God remaining among us to work upon us, for so long we have God with us to work for us.

(2.) They shall have the Messiah among them shortly—him that should come. To him bare all the prophets witness, and this prophet particularly foretold, v. 6. He shall go up, &c. See the context. He shall be coming, that it should not be long ere he came; Yet once, it is a little while, and he shall come. The Old Testament church has but one stage more (if we may say so) to travel; five stages were now past, from Adam to Noah, to theoach Abraham, thence to Moses, thence to Solomon’s temple, thence to the captivity, and now yet one stage more, its sixth stage’s journey, and this comes the seal of the Messiah’s kingdom. Let the Son of man, when he comes, find faith on the earth, and let the children of promise continue still looking for him, for now it is but a little while, and he will come; hold out, faith and patience, yet awhile, for he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. And as he then said of his first appearance, so now of his second, Surely I come quickly.

Now. Observe, concerning his coming it is here foretold,

[1.] That it shall be introduced by a general shaking; (v. 6.) I will shake the heavens, and the earth, the sea, and the dry land. This is applied to the setting up of Christ’s kingdom in the world, to make way for which, he will judge among the heathen, Ps. cx. 6. God will once again do for his church as he did when he brought them out of Egypt; he then shook the heavens and earth at Mount Sinai; with thunder and lightnings and earthquakes he shook the sea and the dry land, when lanes were made through the sea, and streams fetched out of the rock. This shall be done again, when, at the sufferings of Christ, the sun shall be darkened, the earth shake, the rocks rend; when, at the birth of Christ, Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled, (Matth. ii. 8.) and he is set for the fall and rising again of many. When his kingdom was set up, it was with a shock to the nations; the oracles were silenced, idols were destroyed, and the powers of the kingdoms were moved and removed, Heb. xii. 27. It speaks the removing of the things that are shaken. Note, The shaking of the nations is often in order to the settling of the church, and the establishment of the things that cannot be shaken.

[2.] That it shall issue in a general satisfaction. He shall come, as the Desire of all nations—desirable to all nations, for in him shall all the families of the earth be blessed with the best of blessings—long expected and desired by the good people in all
HAGGAI, II.

1093

nations, that had any intelligence from the Old Testa-
ment predictions concerning him. Balaam, in the
land of Moab, had spoken of a Star that should
arise out of Jacob, and Job, in the land of Uz, of
his living Redeemer; the concourse of devout men
from all parts at Jerusalem, (Acts ii. 3.) was in
expectation of the setting up of the Messiah's king-
dom about that time. All the nations that are
brought into Christ, and discipled in his name, have
called him, and will call him, all their Salvation,
and all their Desire. This glorious title of Christ
seems to refer to Jacob's prophecy, (Gen. xlix. 10.)
that to him shall the gathering of the people be.
(1.) The house they were building should be
filled with glory, to that degree, that its glory shall
exceed that of Solomon's temple. The enemies of
the Jews followed them with reproach, and cast
contempt upon the house they were building; but
they might very well endure that, when God under-
took to fill it with glory. It is God's prerogative
to fill with glory; the glory that comes from him, is
satisfying, and not vain glory. Moses's tabernacle
and Solomon's temple were filled with glory, when
God in a cloud took possession of them; but this
house shall be filled with glory of another nature.
(1.) Let them not be concerned that this house
had not so much silver and gold about it as Solo-
mon's temple had, v. 8. God needs not the silver
and gold; he would have it, (Surely,) if it is gold
silver is mine, and the gold is mine. All the
silver and gold in the world are his; all that is hid in
the bowels of the earth, for the earth is the Lord's,
and the fitness thereof. All that is laid up in the ex-
chequers, banks, and treasuries of the children of
men, and all that circulates for the maintenance of
trade and commerce; it is the Lord's. Every penny
belonging to his officers, so Christ says, is his;
when gold and silver are dedicated to his honour,
and employed in his service, no addition is made to
him, for it was his before. When David and his
princes offered vast sums for the service of the
house of God, they acknowledge, It is all thine own,
and of thine own, Lord, have we given thee, 1 Chron.
xxix. 14, 16. Therefore God needs not sacrifice,
for every beast of the forest is his, Ps. I. 10. Note,
If we have silver and gold, we must serve and
honour God with it, for it is all his own, we have but
the use of it, the property remains in him; but if we
have not silver and gold to honour him with, we
must honour him with such as we have, and he will
accept us, for he needs it not; all the silver and gold
in the world are his already. The earth is full of
his riches, so is the great and wide sea also.
(2.) Let them be comforted with this, that though
this temple had less gold in it, it should have more
glory than Solomon's; (v. 9.) The glory of this lat-
ter house shall be greater than of the former. This
was never true in respect of outward glory; this
latter house was indeed in its latter times very much
 Beautified and enriched by Herod, and we find the
discovery of riches and splendours of Solomon's
temple, how fine they were; (Mark xiii. 1.) but it
was nothing in comparison with Solomon's temple;
and besides, the Jews own that several of the di-
vine glories of the first temple were wanting in this
—the Ark, the Urim and Thummim, the fire from
heaven, and the Shechinah; so that we cannot con-
ceive how the glory of this latter house should in
 anything excel the former. But, in this, they
were, which would indeed excel all the glories of the
first house—the presence of the Messiah in it, the Son
of God, his being presented there the Glory of his
people Israel, his attending there at twelve years
old, and afterward his preaching and working mir-
cles there, and his driving the buyers and sellers
out of it. It was necessary, then, that the Messiah
should come while the second temple stood; but,
that being long since destroyed, we must conclude
that our Lord Jesus is the Christ, is he that should
come, and we are to look for no other. It was also
the glory of this latter house, First, that, before
the coming of Christ, it was always kept free from
idols and idolatries, and never polluted with those
abominable things, as the first temple often was, (2
Kings xxiii. 11, 12,) and in this its glory excelled
all the glory of that. Note, The purity of the
church, and the strict adherence to divine institu-
tions, are much more its glory than external pomp
and splendour. Secondly, That, after Christ, the
gospel was preached in it by the apostles, even all
the fulness of the gospel, Acts v. 20. So the temple
of Jesus Christ was daily preached, Acts v. 42. Now
the ministration of righteousness and life by the gos-
ipel was unspeakably more glorious than the law,
which was a ministration of death and condemna-
tion, 2 Cor. iii. 9, 10. Note, That is the most valu-
able glory, which arises from our relation to Christ,
and our interest in him. As where Christ is, behold,
a greater than Solomon is there, so the heart in
which he dwells, and makes a living temple; behold,
it is more glorious than Solomon's temple, and will
be so to eternity.

(4.) They should see a comfortable end of their
present troubles, and enjoy the pleasure of a happy
settlement; In this place will I give peace, saith the
Lord of hosts; and he shall be the Propounder of peace,
and peace shall be with us, (v. 10.) This is the pres-
fence of Christ, he will be our peace, and with him
shall be our peace. God is our peace, Eph. ii. 14.

10. In the four and twentieth day of the
ninth month, in the second year of Darius,
came the word of the Lord by Haggai the
prophet, saying, 11. Thus saith the Lord
of hosts, Ask the priests concerning the
law, saying, 12. If one bear holy flesh in
the skirt of his garment, and with his
skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine,
or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And
the priests answered and said, No. 13.
Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean
by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be
unclean? And the priests answered and
said, It shall be unclean. 14. Then an-
swered Haggai, and said, So is this people,
and so is this nation before me, saith the
Lord; and so is every work of their hands;
and that which they offer there is unclean.
15. And now, I pray you, consider from this
day and upward, from before a stone was
laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord;
16. Since those days were, when one came
to a heap of twenty measures, there were
but ten; when one came to the press-fat, for
to draw out fifty vessels out of the press,
there were but twenty. 17. I smote you
with blasting, and with mildew, and with
bail, in all the labours of your hands; yet ye
This sermon was preached two months after that on the former part of the chapter. The priests and Levites preached constantly, but the prophets preached occasionally; both were good and needful; we have need to be taught our duty in season, and out of season. The people were now going on vigorously with the building of the temple, and in hopes shortly to have it ready for their use, and to be employed in the services of it; and now God sends them a message by his prophet, which would be of use to them.

1. By way of conviction and caution. They were now engaged in a very good work, but they are concerned to see to it, not only that it be good for the matter of it, but that it be done in a right manner, for otherwise it would not be accepted of God. God sees there are many among them that spoil this good work, by going about it with unsanctified hands, and with no advantage to themselves by it; these are here convicted, and all are warned thereby to purify the hands they employ in this work, for to the pure only all things are pure, and from the pure only that comes which is pure. This matter is here illustrated by the established rules of the ceremonial law, in putting a difference between the clean and the unclean, which made many of the appointments of the law to be convenient. Hereby it appears that a spiritual use is to be made of the ceremonial law, and that it was intended, not only as a divine ritual to the Jews, but for instruction in righteousness to all, even to us upon whom the ends of the world are come, to discover to us both sin and Christ, both our disease and our remedy. Now observe here,

1. What the matter of the law was. It is ordered to inquire of the priest concerning it; (Ex. 11.) for their lips should keep this knowledge, and the people should inquire the law at their mouth, Mal. ii. 7. Haggai himself, though a prophet, must ask the priest concerning the law. His business, as an extraordinary messenger, was, to expound the provisions of God, and to give directions concerning particular duties, as he had done, ch. 1. 8, 9. But he would not take the priests' work out of their hands, who were the ordinary ministers, and whose business it was to expound the ordinances of God, and to teach the people the meaning of them, and to give the general rules for the observation of them. In a case of that nature, Haggai must himself consult them. Note, God has given to his ministers diversities of gifts, and calls them out to do divers services of God; but they have need one of another, should make use one of another, and be helpful one to another. The prophet, though divinely inspired, cannot say to the priest, I have no need of thee, nor can the priest say so to the prophet. Perhaps Haggai was therefore ordered to consult the priests, that out of their own mouths he might judge both them and the people committed to their charge, and convict them of worse than ceremonial pollution. See Lev. x. 10, 11.

Now the rules of the law, in the cases pronounced, are,

1. That he that has holy flesh in his clothes, cannot by the touch of his clothes communicate holiness; (v. 12.) If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, though the garment is thereby so far made a devoted thing, as that it is not to be common use till it has first been washed in the holy place, (Lev. vi. 27.) yet it shall by no means transmit a holy holiness. Neither must it make them the better to those that use them.

2. That he that is ceremonially unclean by the touch of a dead body, does by his touch communicate that uncleanliness. The law is express, (Numb. xix. 22.) Whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean; yet this Haggai will have from the priest's own mouth; for concerning these things if we find not that God has written, it is good to have the advice of our ministers. The sum of these two rules is, that pollution is easier communicated than sanctification; that is, (says Grotius,) There are many ways of vice, but only one of virtue, and that a difficult one. Bonum oritur ex integris, malum ex quibuscumque defectu—Good issue from purities, evil commences with the slightest defect. Let not men think that living among good people will recommend them to God, if they are not good themselves, but let them fear that touching the unclean thing will defile them, and therefore let them keep at a distance from it.

2. How it is here applied; (v. 14.) So is this people, and so is this nation, before me. He does not call them his people, and his nation, (they are unworthy to be owned by him,) but this people, and this nation. They have thought their offering of sacrifices on the altar would sanctify them, and excuse their neglect to build the temple, and remove the curse which by that neglect they had brought upon their common enjoyments; "No," says God, "your holy flesh and your altar will be so far from sanctifying your meat and drink, your wine and oil, to you, that your common temple of God's temple will bring admonition not only on your common enjoyments, but even on your sacrifices too; so that while you continued in that neglect, all was unclean to you, and so is this people still: and so they will be; on these terms they will still stand with me, and on no other—that if they be profane and sensual, and morally impure, if they have wicked hearts, and live wicked lives, if they bring no genuine prayer and praise, while it is building, and though they offer ever so many and costly sacrifices there when it is built, yet that shall not serve to sanctify their meat and drink to them, and to give them a comfortable use of it; and so, the impurity of their hearts and lives shall make even that work of their hands, and all their offerings, unclean, and an abomination to God." And the case is the same with us. They whose deviations are plausible, but whose conversation is wicked, will find their devotions unable to sanctify their enjoyments, but their wickedness prevailing to pollute them. Note, When we are employed in any good work, we should be jealous over ourselves, lest we render it unclean by our corruptions and mismanagements.

II. By way of comfort and encouragement. If their hearts be right with God, and their eye single in his service, they shall have the benefit of it. God will take away the judgment of famine whereby they have been corrected for their remissness, and will restore them great plenty. This they are called to consider, and to observe whether God would not be to the utmost as good as his word, and by his providence remarkably contemnence and recompense their former concern and industry. To make this the more signal, let them set down the day when they began to work at the building of the temple, to raise the structure upon the foundations that had been laid some time before. On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, they began to pre-
HAGGAI, II. 1097

1. How they were gone behindhand in their estates before this day. Let them remember the time when there was a sensible waste and decay in all they had, v. 16. A man came to his garner, expecting to find a heap of twenty measures of corn; so much he used to have from such a piece of ground, or so much used to be left at that time of the year, or so much he took it for granted there was when he fetched the last from it; but he found it unaccountably diminished, and when he came to measure it, there were but ten measures; it was ran in, and dried away, in the keeping; or vermin had eaten it, or it was stolen. In like manner, he went to the wine-press, expecting to draw fifty vessels of wine, for so much he used to have from such a quantity of grapes; but they did not yield as usual, for he could get but twenty. This agrees with what we had, ch. i. 9. Ye looked for much, and it came to little. Note, It is our folly that we are apt to raise our expectation from the creature, and then our disappointment, and the more of the need of a new day, and much more abundant, but we are commonly disappointed, and the more we expect, the more grievous the disappointment is. In the stores and treasures of the new covenant we need not fear being disappointed, when we come by faith to draw from them.

But this was not all; God did visably contend with them in the weather; (v. 17.) I smote you with blasting, winds and frosts, which made every green thing to wither, and with mildews, which choked the corn when it was knitting, and with hail, which battered it down, and brake it, when it was grown to some maturity; thus they were disappointed in all the labour of their hands, while they neglected to lay their hand to the work of God, and to labour in that. Note, While we take care of God's interest, we cannot expect he should take care of ours. And when he thus walks contrary to us, he expects that we should return to him, and to our duty. But this people either saw not the hand of God in it, (imputing it to chance,) or saw not their own sin as the provoking cause of it, and therefore turned not to him. They were a hard and stubborn people, under the rebukes, so that God's hand was stretched out still, for the people turned not to him that smote them, Isa. ix. 12, 13. They might easily observe, that as long as they continued in neglect of the temple-work, all their affairs went backward. But, 2. Let them now observe, and they should find that from this day forward God would bless them, and make them prosperity, (v. 18, 19.) "Consider now whether you begin to change your way toward God, do you not find God changing his way toward you; from this day, when you fall to work about the temple, consider it, I say, and you shall find a remarkable turn given for the better to all your affairs. Is thy seed yet in the barn? Yes it is, and not yet thrown into the ground; the vine-trees do not as yet bud, the wine and the fig-tree and the olive-tree have not as yet brought forth, so that nothing appears to promise a good harvest and vintage next year; nature does not promise it: but now that you begin to apply yourselves in good earnest to your duty, the God of nature promises it; he has said, From this day I will bless you. It is the best day's work you ever did for yourselves, for from hence you may date the return of your prosperity." He does not say what they shall be, but, in general, I will bless you; and those that know what are the fruits flowing from God's blessing, know they can desire no more to make them happy. I will bless you, and then you shall soon recover all your losses, shall thrive as fast as before you went backward; for the blessing of the Lord, that maketh rich, and those whom he blesseth, are blessed indeed."

Note, When we begin to make conscience of our duty to God, we may expect his blessing; and this twice of life is so known by its fruits, that one may discern almost to a day a remarkable turn of Providence, in favour of those that return in a way of duty, so that they and others may say that from this day they are blessed. See Mal. iii. 10. And whereas we will observe these things, and understand by them the loving-kindness of the Lord.

20. And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai, in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, 21. Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; 22. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

After Haggai's sermon ad populum—"to the people," here follows one, the same day, ad magistratum—"to the magistrates;" a word directed particularly to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, who was a leading, active man in this good work which the people now set about, and therefore he shall have some particular marks put upon him; (v. 21.) Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, speak to him by himself; he has thoughts in his head, far above those of the common people, as wise princes are wont to have, who move in a higher and larger sphere than others. The people of the land are in care about their corn-fields and vineyards; God has secured that they shall prosper, and we hope that will make them easy; but Zerubbabel is concerned about the community and its interests, about the neighbouring nations, and the revolutions of their governments, and what will become of the few and feeble Jews in those changes and convulsions, and how such a poor prince as he is, should be able to keep his ground, and serve his country. "Go to him," says God, "and tell him it shall be well with him and his remnant, and let that make him easy."

1. Let him expect to hear of great commotions in the nations of the earth, and let them not be a surprise to him; behold, he is told of them before; (v. 21, 22.) I will shake the heavens and the earth. This he had said before, (v. 6, 7.) and now says it again to Zerubbabel; let him expect shockings, universal convulsions; the world is like the sea, like the wheel, always in motion, but sometimes in a special manner turbulent. But, blessed be God, if the earth be shaken, it is to shake the wicked out of it, Job xxxviii. 13. In the apocalyptic visions, earthquakes bode no ill to the church. Here the heavens and earth shall not be shaken, but the preservers may be broken and brought down; I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms. The Chaldean monarchy, which had been the throne of kingdoms, a great while, was already overthrown, and the powers that are, and are yet to come, shall in like...
manner be overthrown; their day will come to fall.

(1.) Though they be ever so powerful, the strength of their kingdoms shall be destroyed; they trust in chariots and horses, (Ps. xx. 7.) but their chariots shall be overthrown, and those that ride in them, so that they shall not be able to attack the people of God, whom they persecute, or to escape the judgments of God, which persecute them. (2.) Though there appear none likely to be the instruments of their destruction, yet God will bring it about, for they shall be brought down, every one by the sword of his brother. This reads the doom of all the enemies of God's church, that will not repent to give him glory; it seems likewise designed as a promise of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness; his overthrow of Satan's throne, that throne of kingdoms, the throne of the god of this world; the taking from him all the armour wherein he trusted, and dividing the spoil. And all opposing rule, principality, and power shall be put down, that the kingdom may be delivered up to God, even the Father.

2. Let him depend upon it, that he shall be safe under the divine protection, in the midst of all these commotions, v. 23. Zerubbabel was active to build God a house, and therefore God makes the same promise to him as he did to David on the like occasion—that he would build him a house, and establish it, even in that day when heaven and earth are shaken; this promise refers to this good man himself and to his family. He honoured God, and God would honour him; his successors likewise in the government of Judah might take encouragement from it; though their authority was very precarious as to men, yet God would confirm it. And this would contribute to the stability of the people over whom God had set them. But this promise has special reference to Christ, who lineally descended from Zerubbabel, and is the sole Builder of the gospel-temple. (1.) Zerubbabel is here owned as God's servant, and it is an honourable mention that is hereby made of him, as Moses and David my servants. When God destroys his enemies, he will prefer his servant. Our Lord Jesus is his Father's Servant in the work of redemption, but faithful as a Son, Isa. xlii. 1. (2.) He is owned as God's elect; I have chosen thee into this office; and whom God makes choice of, he will make use of. Our Lord Jesus is chosen of God, 1 Pet. ii. 4. And he is the Head of the chosen remnant; in him they are chosen. (3.) It is promised that, being chosen, God will make him as a signet. Jehoiachin had been as the signet on God's right hand, but was plucked thence, (Jer. xxii. 24.) and now Zerubbabel is substituted in the room of him. He shall be near and dear to God, precious in his sight, and honourable, and his family shall continue till the Messiah spring out of it, who is the Signet on God's right hand. This speaks, [1.] The delight the Father has in him; in him he once and again declared himself to be well-pleased. He is set as a seal upon his heart, a seal upon his arm, is brought near unto him, (Dan. vii. 13.) is hid in the shadow of his hand, Isa. xlii. 2. [2.] The dominion the Father has intrusted him with. Princes sign their edicts, grants, and commissions, with their signet-rings, Esth. iii. 10. Our Lord Jesus is the Signet on God's right hand, for all power is given to him, and derived from him. By him the great charter of the gospel is signed and ratified, and it is in him that all the promises of God are yea and amen.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE PROPHECY OF

ZECHARIAH.

This prophet was colleague with the prophet Haggai, and a worker together with him in forwarding the building of the second temple; (Ezra v. 1.) for two are better than one. Christ sent forth his disciples, two and two. Zechariah began to prophesy some time after Haggai. But he continued longer, soared higher in visions and revelations, wrote more, and prophesied more particularly concerning Christ, than Haggai had done; so the last shall be first: the last in time sometimes proves first in dignity. He begins with a plain, practical sermon, expressive of that which was the scope of his prophesying in the five first verses; but afterward, to the end of ch. vi. he relates the visions he saw, and the instructions he received immediately from heaven by them. At ch. vii. from an inquiry made by the Jews concerning fasting, he takes occasion to show them the duty of their present day, and to encourage them to hope for God’s favour, to the end of ch. viii. After which there are two sermons, which are both called burthen of the word of the Lord; one begins with ch. ix. the other with ch. xii. which, probably, were preached some time after; the scope of which is to reprove for sin, and threatens God’s judgments against the impenitent, and to encourage those that feared God, with assurances of the mercy God had in store for his church, and especially of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

ZECHARIAH, I.

In this chapter, after the introduction, (v. 1.) we have,

1. An awakening call to a sinful people, to repent of their sins, and return to God, v. 2–5. 11. Great encouragement given to hope for mercy. 1. By the vision of the horses, v. 7–11. 2. By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer, v. 12–17. 3. By the vision of the four carpenters that were employed to cut off the four horns, with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered, v. 18–21.

1. In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 2. The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. 3. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. 4. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. 5. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? 6. But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned, and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.
The foundation of Zechariah's ministry; it is
laid in a divine authority; The word of the Lord
came to him. He received a divine commission
to be God's mouth to the people, and with it
instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that
which he was to publish. Christ is called hence the
word of the Lord was to him: it came in the evidence
and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing,
and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this we have
here,
1. The time when the word of the Lord came
first to him, or, when the word that next follows,
came to him: it was in the second year of Darius.
Being a reign of activity, the prophets dared their
words by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel;
but now, by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to
whom they were subjects. Such a melancholy
change had sin made of their circumstances. Ze-
rubabed took not so much upon him as to have public
acts dated by the years of his government. In
things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, compiled
with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to
reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as Dan.
vii. 1.—viii. 1. Zechariah preached his first ser-
mon in the eighth month of this second year of
Darius; Haggai preached his in the sixth month of the
same year, Hag. i. 1. The people being really
obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of
Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet;
the sons of Zerubbabel, and uses what he has,
more shall be given.
2. The name and family of the prophet to whom
the word of the Lord came; he was Zechariah the
son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo, and he was
the prophet; as Haggai is called the prophet, Hag. i.
1. For though in former ages there was one Iddo
a prophet, (2 Chron. xii. 15.) yet we have no rea-
son to think that Zechariah was his messenger,
but should be denominated from him. The learned
Mr. Pembile is clear of opinion, that this Zechariah,
the son of Barachiah, is the same that our Saviour
says was slain between the temple and the altar,
perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the
altar, (Matt. xxiii. 35.) and that our Saviour does
not mean (as is commonly thought) Zechariah the
son of Iddo, for why should Haggai be called
Barachiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's
account persuades us to think so; for, reckoning up
the innocent blood shed by the Jews, he begins at
Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy
prophets. Whereas after Zechariah the son of Jelohi-
dah, many prophets and righteous men were put to
death by them. It is true, there is no mention made
in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but
Josephus might industriously conceal that shame
of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spake in
his prophesying concerning Christ, of his being
sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends,
and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the
prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ.
Probably, being assaulted by his persecutors, he
took sanctuary in the court of the priests, (and some
think he was himself a priest,) and so was slain be-
tween the porch and the altar.
II. The first-fruits of Zechariah's ministry. Be-
fore he came to visions and revelations, and deliv-
ered his prophetic discourses, he preached that
which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin
with that. Before he published the promises of mer-
cy, he published calls to repentance, for thus the
way of the Lord must be prepared. Law must be
first preached, and then gospel.
Now, 1. The prophet here puts them in mind of
the controversy God had had with their fathers; (v. 2.) "The Lord has been sore displeased with
your fathers, and has laid them under the tokens
of his displeasure. You have heard with your
ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have
seen with your eyes the woful remains of it. God's
quarrel with you has been of long standing, and
therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up." Note, The judgments of God, which those that went
before us were under, should be taken as warnings
to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repent-
ance, that we may cut off the entwined of the curse,
and get it turned into a blessing.
2. He calls them in God's name, to return to him,
and make their peace with him, v. 3. God by him
says that to his backsliding people, which he had
often said by his servants the prophets; Turn ye
to me, and I will turn to you in my ways. The
rebellion, and the suppression of it, are two things;
obedience, and I will turn to you in a way of fa-
vour and mercy, peace and reconciliation." Let
the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall
be taken under the protection of the government,
and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects. Let
them change their way, and God will change his.
See Mal. iii. 6. But that which is most observable
here is, that God is called here the Lord of hosts
times three; "Thus saith the Lord of hosts. It is
he that speaks, and therefore ye are bound to re-
gard what he says." Turn ye to me, saith the
Lord of hosts; that speaks the authority and obli-
gation of the command; and I will turn to you, saith
the Lord of hosts; that speaks the validity and value
of the promise; so that it is no vain repetition.
III. The promises. God's almighty power and sove-
reign dominion should both engage and en-
courage sinners to repent, and turn to him. It is
very desirable to have the Lord of hosts our Friend,
and very dreadful to have him our Enemy.
3. He warns them not to persist in their impene-
tence, as their fathers had done; (v. 4.) Be ye no
as your fathers. Instead of being burdened by their
punishment, to encourage sinners to repent; instead
of being comforted by the example of their fathers'
punishment, to let them rather be deterred from them by
the example of their fathers' punishment. We are as
to be governed very much by precedent, and we
are well or ill governed according to the use we
make of the precedents before us. The same ex-
amples to some are a savour of life unto life, to
others a savour of death unto death. Some argued,
"What shall we say now, if our fathers were not
reminded the prophets, and why then shall we mind
them? They made laws against them, and why
should we tolerate them?" But they are here taught
how they should argue; "Our fathers slighted the
prophets, and God was sore displeased with them
for it; therefore let us the more carefully regard
what God says to us by his prophets." Review what
is past, and observe,
(1.) What was the message that God sent by his
servants the prophets to your fathers; The former
prophets cried to your fathers, cried aloud, and did
not spare, not spare themselves, not spare your
fathers; they cried as men in earnest, as men
that would be heard; they spake not as from themselves,
but in the name of the Lord of hosts; and this was
the substance of what they said, the burden of
every song, the application of every sermon—Turn
ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil
doing; the very same that we now preach to you.
He persuaded to leave your sins, resolve to have no
more to do with them. A speedy reformation is the
only way to prevent an approaching ruin; "Turn
ye now from sin to God without delay.
(2.) Here is an argument very clearly regarded by
your fathers; But they did not hear, they did not
heed. They turned a deaf ear to these calls; "They
would not hearken unto me," said the Lord,
"They would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled,
by the word I sent them; say not then that you will
do as your fathers did, for they did amiss;" see Jer.
ZECHARIAH, I.

xiv. 17. Note, We must not follow the examples of our dear fathers, unless they were God's dear children, nor any further than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

(3.) What is become both of your fathers, and of the prophets that preached to them? They are all done away, gone. [2.] They are all where are they? This whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. Note, When we think of our ancestors, that are gone through the world, and gone out of it before us, we should think, Where are they? Here they were, in the towns and countries where we live, passing and re-passing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, eating and drinking at the same tables with us. They are, however, now gone, and the church of this city no longer worshipping God in the same churches. But where are they? They are somewhere still; when they died, there was not an end of them; they are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace; Where are they? These of them that lived and died in sin, are in torment, and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we come not to that place of torment, Luke xvi. 28, 29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ, are in paradise; and if we live and die as they did, we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally. [2.] The prophets also, did they live for ever? No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into carthet vessels, the water of life into carthen pitchers, often crooked, and broken before it come to glorifying souls, as justly as the word of the Prophet that lives for ever, but all other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon will be the last; people are to look upon them as such, and to hear them accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the light with them, that they may walk and work while they have the light. O that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it, that we are dying ministers dealing with dying people about the concerns of immortal souls, and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are gone, that were before us of old, Jehoiada the priest, and Solomon the king, that the glory of many withered and fell; but the word of the Lord endures for ever, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. The prophets that are now, do we live for ever? (So some read it.) No, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you; and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world, both we and our prophets shall live for ever; and to prepare for that world, ought to be our great care and business in this.

(4.) What were the effects of the word which God spake to them by his prophets, v. 6. The preachers died, and the hearers died, but the word of God died not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground. As the rain and snow from heaven, it shall not return void, Isa. lv. 11. He appears to themselves; they knew very well, [1.] That the judgments God had threatened, were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear; My statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets, the precepts, with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, did they not take hold of your fathers? Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them, the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them, or get out of the reach of them. God's words took hold of them, as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution for contempt. Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the threatenings of God's word of no effect, but, sooner or later, they will take place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly take hold of these that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judges, he will overcome. [2.] That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong; They returned and said, (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation, they acknowledged,) Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings, to reckon with us for them, so that he dealt with us, and we were made acquainted both with his ways and his justice; must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. Sero saepius Prhgye—It is late before the Pharagians become wise. This afterw, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men who will look no further than they can see. They would never be persuaded to say in time, "God will be as good as his word, for he is faithful; he will deal with us according to our deserts, for he is righteous." But now they see both plain enough, when the sentence is executed; now he that runs may read, and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present providences and the former predictions which then were slighted, between the present punishments and the former sins which then were persisted in. Now they cannot but say, The Lord is righteous, Dan. xi. 11—13.

7. Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8. I saw by night, and, behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. 9. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. 10. And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. 11. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. 12. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? 13. And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words, and comfortable words. 14. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. 15. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease:
16. Therefore saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. 17. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

We now come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zerubbabel, to awaken the people's attention, and to engage the humble reverence of the word, and their humble inquiries into it, and to fix it more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seem designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple. The scope of this vision (which is as an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, in their present state, when they seemed to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated (v. 7.) the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, three months after he preached that sermon (v. 1.) in which he called them to repentance, from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that the sermon had a good effect, and that they returned to God in a way of duty, the assurances he had given them are confirmed, that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

1. What the prophet saw, and the explication of that.

1. He saw a grove of myrtle-trees; a dark shady grove, down in a bottom, hid by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it, till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were overtopped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has not always been visible, but sometimes hid, as the woman in the wilderness, Rev. xii. 6.

2. He saw a man mounted upon a red horse, standing at the midst of this shady myrtle-grove. This man is no other than the Man Christ Jesus; the same that appeared to Joshua, with his sword drawn in his hand as Captain of the host of the Lord, (Josh. v. 13, 14.) and to St. John, with his bow and his crown, Rev. vii. 2. Though the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it. Was it hid by the hills? He was much more hid in the myrtle-grove, yet hid as in an ambush, ready to appear for the reasonable relief of his people, to their happy surprise. Compare Isa. xlv. 15. Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, and yet Israel's God and Saviour at the same time, their Holy One in the midst of them. He was riding, as a man of war; as a man in haste; riding on the heavens, for the help of his people, Deut. xxxiii. 26. swift as the eagle flying, swift as the eagle; or dyed red with the blood of war, as this same victorious Prince appeared red in his espohel, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. Red as a fiery colour, denoting that he is jealous for Jerusalem, (v. 14.) and very angry at her enemies. Christ, under the law, appeared on a red horse, denoting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to resist unto blood. But, under the gospel, he appears on a white horse, (Rev. vi. 2. and again, ch. xix. 13.) denoting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph; and hangs out the white—not the blood—flag.

3. He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders. Behind him there were some red horses, and some speckled, and some white; angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, in some acts of judgment, others of mercy, others in mixed events. Note, The King of the church has angels at command; angels not only attend him in his glory, but to minister for the good of those that are his.

4. He inquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him, as his instructor, beside those he saw in the vision; so had Ezekiel, (ch. xi. 3.) and Daniel, ch. viii. 16. Zerubbabel asked him, (v. 9.) O my Lord, what are these? And it should seem, this angel that talked with him, was Christ himself; the Man on the red horse, whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zerubbabel addresses himself. Would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application, not to angels, (they are themselves learners,) but to Christ himself, who is alone able to take the book, and open the seals, Rev. v. 7. The prophet's question implies that he had a humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance, and an earnest desire to be informed. O let me know what these are! This he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God, in their present distress.

5. He received from the angel that talked with him, (v. 9.) and from the man that stood among the myrtle-trees, (v. 10.) the interpretation of this vision. Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He immediately said, I will show thee what these be. What knowledge we have, or may have, concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, These are they whom the Lord has sent, they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.) to walk, to run, to fly swiftly, through the earth, to observe what is done in it, and to execute the divine commands. God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

6. What the prophet heard, and what instructions were thereby given him. Faith comes by hearing, and, generally, in visions there was something said.

1. He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, v. 11. They had been out abroad, as flying posts (being hastened by the King of kings' commandment, Esth. iii. 13.) and, being returned, they gave this account of the state of those trees among the myrtle-trees, (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable,) We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest. We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far from being so. For (1.) there is no rush of events, and such a crowd of change's here and there. Those that are employed in the court above, rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below, are never idle, nor lose time, they are still ascending and descending upon the Son of man, (John i. 51. as on Jacob's ladder, Gen. xxviii. 12.) they are still walking to and fro through the earth. Thus active, thus industrious, Satan owns
himself to be to do mischief, Job i. 7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth, we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries, which are raving brutes, seeking to devour us. Though holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet, while they are going on God's errands, they hesitate not to walk to and fro through it. Their own habituation, which those that felt liked not, they will like the better when they return. (2) We find the world of mankind here a continual, never ending, and restless, while all the church is made uneasy, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Those that are strangers to the church, are secure; those that are enemies to it, are successful. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when the king and Human sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed. The children of men are merry an Jovial, but are grieved for the affliction of God's children. Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into, what a spirit of slumber has seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned! They sit still, and are at rest; Luke xvii. 26, &c. 2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for them; Isa. lxi. 19, 20. The state of things is related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of; no, it is the Angel among the myrtle-trees that is the great Intercessor. Upon the report of the angels, he immediately turned heavenward, and said, Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church? (1.) That it is, and he prays for it; Ps. li. 7. Show us thy mercy, O Lord. Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation. (2.) The thing he complains of is, the delay of his mercy; how long wilt thou not have mercy? He knows that mercies through him shall be built up forever, (Ps. lxxxix. 2,) but thinks it long that the building is deferred. (3.) The objects of compassion recommended to the divine mercies are, Jerusalem, the holy city, and the other cities of Judah, that were now in ruins; for God had indi gnation against them, now three-score and ten years. He mentions seventy years, because that was the time fixed in the divine counsels for the continuance of the captivity, and those that were now for a little space grace had been shown them from the Lord their God, to give them some reviving, (Ezra ix. 8,) yet the scars of those seventy years' captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that that is the melancholy string they still harp upon—the divine indignation during those seventy years. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that whereas the captivity began to be expired, he received from Nebukadnezzar's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus; these seventy years are to be computed from the elevation of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation; as that seventy years, as he conceived, were reckoned after the captivity went off, as it came on, gradually: Lord, we are still under the burthen of the seventy years' wrath, and wilt thou be angry with us for ever? 3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, and him the Father hears always; (v. 13,) The Lord answered the Angel, this Angel of the covenant, with good words, and comfortable words, with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favor to them. These were comfortable words to Christ's intercessors; and through the church, did comfort all to that mourn with Zion. God then answers prayer with good words, when he does not immediately appear in great works; and those good words are real answers to prayer. Men's good words will not feed the body, (Jn. ii. 16,) but God's good words will feed the soul, so saying and doing with him are not two things with us, but one. He heard that reply which was given to the Angel, repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people, for their comfort. The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him he signified to his servant John, and by him to the church, Rev. i. 1, 4. Thus all the good words and comfortable words of the gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them to all the world. Now that God would speak comfortably to Jerusalem, Zechariah is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. The voice said, Cry, Cry then. The prophets must now cry as loud to show God's people their gaits, as it was formerly to show them their transgressions, Isa. xl. 2, 3, 6. And if he ask, What shall I cry? He is here instructed, (1.) He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is jealous for Zion with great jealousy, v. 14. He takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been formerly by the iniquities found in his church. The earth sat still, and was at rest, (v. 11,) not relenting at all, or showing the least remorse, for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem; as Joseph's brethren, who, when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread, and this God took very ill, (v. 15,) I am very sore displeased with the heathen, that are at ease, and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more, will he be displeased with those that are at ease in Zion, (Amos vi. 1,) with Zion's own sons, that sympathize not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only not concerned for her, but they were concerned against her; I was but a little displeased with my people, and designed to correct them moderately; but those that were employed as instruments of the correction cast the stones that killed, and maliciously helped forward the affliction, and added to it, persecuting those whom God had smitten, (Ps. lix. 26,) and insulting over those whom he had troubled. See Is. xlvii. 6.—x. 5. Ezek. xi. 15. Note, God is displeased with those who help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity, in such a case, is good dignity. (2.) He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, v. 16. He must cry, "Thus saith the Lord, I am return ed to Jerusalem with mercies. I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purpose, v. 17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction, the Lord, even the Lord of hosts, assures them, [1.] That the temple shall be built, that is now but in the building. This good work which they are now about, though it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him, as formerly. Note, He is to go to any place, to hear that God will build his house in it. [2.] That Jerusalem shall again be built as
a city compact together, which had formerly been its glory, Ps. cxiii. 3. A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem, in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity. [3.] That the nation shall again become populous and rich, though now diminished and impoverished; not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass, shall yet spread abroad, or be diffused; their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them; and this through prosperity; they shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them; they shall crowd them out of their dimension. The four horns, Ezek. xlii. 20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad, through their calamities, so they should now be so through their prosperity. Let thy fountains be dispersed, Prov. v. 16. The cities that should thus increase, God calls his cities; they are blessed by him, and they are fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land. [4.] That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced, by divine consolations; The Lord shall yet comfort Zion. Yet, at length, though her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion, and all her mourners. [5.] That all this will be the fruit of God’s preventing, distinguishing favour; He shall yet choose Jerusalem, shall renew his chace, renew his covenant, and make it appear that he has chosen Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people, when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now build them, when he brings them out of Babylon; not for any worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, Deut. vii. 7, 8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

18. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, four horns. 19. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. 20. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. 21. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

It is the comfort and triumph of the church, (Isa. lix. 19.) that, when the enemy shall come in like a flood, with mighty force and fury, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Now, in this vision, (the second which this prophet had,) we have an illustration of that; God’s Spirit making a stand, and making head, against the formidable power of the church’s adversaries.

1. We have here the enemies of the church bold and daring, bearing contrary ways, to cut off the name of Israel; such the people of God had lately been insulted by; I looked, and, behold, four horns, (v. 18.) which are explained, v. 19. They are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem; that is, the Jews both in the country and in the city, because they were the Israel of God. They have tossed them, (so some read it,) as to make them leap, and show them where they are enraged at. They have scattered them, that no man did lift up his head, v. 21. No man durst show his face, for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them. They are horns, denoting their dignity and domino, horns exalted, denoting also their strength and power and violence. They are four horns, for the Jews are surrounded with them on every side; when they avoid one horn that puts pressure on them, they run upon another. The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, then, having joined themselves to these, set about the building of the temple; but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehum, and Shimshai, and the other Samaritans that opposed the building of the temple, were these horns, Ezra iv. 8. So were Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabsians, that opposed the building of the wall, Neh. iv. 7. Note, The church’s enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New Testament church has seven heads and ten horns; (Rev. xii. 3.) so that they who endeavour to do the church any service, must expect to be pushed at.

2. We have here the friends of the church active and prevailing. The prophet did himself lift up his eyes, and see the four horns, and saw them so formidable, that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but the Lord then showed him four carpenters, or smiths, who were empowered to cut off these horns, v. 20, 21. With an eye of sense we see the power of the enemies of the church; look which way we will, there appears to us that; but it is with an eye of faith that we see it safe, notwithstanding. It is the Lord that does it, for, as he opened the eyes of the prophet’s servant, to see the angelic guards round about his master, 2 Kings vi. 17. Observe, Those that were to fray or break the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out, were, (1.) Carpenters, or smiths, (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron,) men who had skill and ability to do it; whose proper business it was, and their great strength of mind and execution, and tools at hand, to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church, whom he either finds, or makes, fit for it. If there be horns against the church, by which are denoted the force and fury of beasts, there are carpenters for the church, by whom are denoted the wisdom and foreknowledge of men, by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts, and for every kind of business is famed, and has been tamed, of mankind, Jam. iii. 7. (2.) They were four carpenters; as many horns, so many hands to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interests, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these four carpenters understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, who carried on the work of God, in spite of opposition given to it. These horned beasts broke into God’s vineyard, to tread it down; but the good magistrates and the good ministers whom God raised up, though they had not power to cut off the horns of the wicked, (as David did, Ps. lxxxv. 10.) yet they frightened them, and cast them out.

Note. When God has work to do, he will raise up some to do it, and others to defend it, and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have, I. Another vision which the prophet saw, not for his own entertainment, but for his satisfaction, and the edification of the see to whom he was sent, v. 1, 2. II. A sermon upon it in the rest of the chapter. I. A way of exposition of the vision, making it to be a prediction of the replenishing of Jerusalem, and of its safety and honour, v. 3. 5. 2. By way of application. Here is, (1.) A use of exhortation to the Jews that were in Babylon, in their return to their own land, v. 6. 9. (2.) A use of consolation to those that were returned, in reference to the many difficulties they had to struggle with, v. 10.
II. He is informed that this vision means well to Jerusalem; that the measuring-line he saw was not a line of confusion, as that, Isa. xxxv. 11.) not a line to meet out for destruction, as when God purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, he stretched out a line; (Lam. ii. 8.) but it is as when he divided the inheritance by line, Ps. lxxxviii.

55. The angel that talked with the prophet went forth, as he designed, to measure Jerusalem, but another angel went out to meet him, to desire that he would first explain this vision to the prophet, that it might not occasion him any uneasy speculations; 

Run, and speak to this young man; (for, it seems, the prophet entered upon his prophecy when he was young, yet no man ought to despise his youth, when God thus highly honoured it;) he is a young man, not experienced, and may be ready to run away for fear of the visions which will be given him. Let him tell him that Jerusalem shall be both safe and great.

1. As safe and great as numbers of men can make it; (v. 4.) Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls; the inhabitants of it shall increase and multiply and replenish it, to adoration, so as to extend itself far beyond the present dimensions, which now there is an account taken of. The walls of the city, the multitude of men which are the best walls of a city shall there be therein, and of cattle too, to be not only food, but wealth too, for those men. Note, The increase of the numbers of a people is a great blessing, is a fruit of God’s blessing on them, and an earnest of further blessings; (Ps. xlii. 1.) They are multiplied, for he blesses them.

2. As safe and great as the presence of God can make it, v. 5. (1.) It shall be safe, for God himself will be a Wall of fire round about it. Jerusalem had no walls about it at this time, but lay naked and exposed; formerly, when it had walls, the enemies not only broke through them, but broke them down; but now God will be unto her a Wall of fire. Some think it alludes to shepherds that made fires about their flocks, or travellers that made fires about their tents in desert places, to frighten wild beasts from them. God will not only make a hedge about them, as he did about Job, (ch. i. 10.) not only make walls and bulwarks about them, Isa. xxxvi. 1. (those may be battered down,) not only be as the mountains round about them, Ps. cxxxv. 2. (mountains may be got over,) but he will be a Wall of fire round them, which can neither be scaled nor undermined, nor the foundations of it snapped, nor can it be attempted, or approached, without danger to the assailants. God will not only make a wall of fire about her, but he will himself be such a Wall; for our God is a consuming Fire to his and his church’s enemies. He is a Wall of fire, not on one side only, but round about on every side. (2.) It shall be great, for God himself will be the Glory in the midst of it. His temple, his altar, shall be set up and attended there, and his institutions observed, and there then shall the tokens of his special presence and favour be, which will be the glory in the midst of them, will make them truly admirable in the eyes of all about them. God will have honour from them, and put honour upon them. Note, This is that glory of which the Lord had spoken to the Master-Builders; let them be careful that they build in his glory; those that have him in the midst of them, have glory in the midst of them, and thence the church is said to be all glorious within. And those persons and places that have God to be the Glory in the midst of them, have him for a Wall of fire round about them, for upon all that glory there is, and shall be, a defence, Isa. iv. 5. Now Jerusalem was to be a holy city in process of time, became a very flourishing city, and made a very great figure in those parts of the world, much
beyond what could have been expected, considering how low it was brought, and how long it was ere it recovered itself. But it was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is extended far, as towns without walls, by the admission of the Gentiles into it; and which has God, the Son of God, for its Prince and Protector.

6. Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. 7. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. 9. For, behold, I will shake my hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me.

One would have thought that Cyrus's proclamation, which gave liberty to the captive Jews to return to their own land, should have sufficed to bring them all back, and that, as when Pharaoh gave them leave to quit Egypt and their house of bondage there, they should not have left a hoar behind; but it seems it had not that effect; there were about 40,000 whose spirits God kept up, and they went; but many, perhaps the greater part, stayed behind; the land of their captivity was to most of them the land of their nativity, they had taken root there, had gained a settlement, and many of them a very comfortable one; some perhaps had got estates and preferences there, and they did not think they could mend themselves by returning to their own land. Patria ingrata bene est. My country is every spot where I feel myself happy. They had no great affection to their own land, and apprehended the difficulties in their way to it insuperable. This proceeded from a bad cause—a distrust of the power and promise of God, a love of ease and worldly wealth, and an indifference to the religion of their country, and to the God of Israel himself; and it had a bad effect, for it was an implicit censure of those as foolish, rash, and given to change, that did return, and a weakening of their hands in the work of God; such as these could not sing, (Ps. cxxvii.) in their captivity, for they had forgotten thee, O Jerusalem, and were so far from preferring thee before their chief joy, that they preferred any joy before thee. There is therefore another proclamation issued out by the God of Israel, strictly charging and commanding all his free-born subjects, wherever they were dispersed, speedily to return into their own land, and render themselves at their respective posts there. They are loudly summoned, (v. 6.) Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord. This fits upon the promise of the rebuilding and enlarging of Jerusalem. If God will build it for them and their comfort, they must come and inhabit it for him and his glory, and not continue in Babylon. Note. The promises and privileges with which God's people are blessed, should engage us, whatever it cost us, to join ourselves to them, and cast our lot among them. When Zion is enlarged, to make room for all God's Israel, it is the greatest madness imaginable for any of them to stay in Babylon. The captivity of a sinful state is by no means to be continued in, though a man be ever so easy upon temporal accounts; no, come forth, and flee with all speed, and lose no time! Escape for thy life, look not behind thee.

To induce them to hasten their return, let them consider,
1. They are now dispersed, and were concerned to incorporate themselves for their mutual common defence; (v. 6.) I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven, sent some into one corner of the world, and some into another; this has been your condition a long time, and therefore you should now come together, and be with one another. God owns that his scattering them was in wrath, and therefore they must take this invitation as a token of God's being willing to be reconciled to them again; so that they kicked at his kindness, in refusing to accept the call.
2. They are now in bondage, and were concerned to assert their own liberty; and therefore, Deliver thyself, O Zion, by a speedy return to thy own land, and do not destroy thyself by continuing in that polluted, devoted land. Those that would be found among the generation of God's children, must save themselves from the onward generation of this world; it was St. Peter's charge to his new converts, Acts ii. 46.
3. They have seemed to be forsaken and forgotten of God; but God will now make it to appear that he espouses their cause, and will plead it with jealousy, v. 8, 9. It was a discouragement to those who remained in Babylon, to hear of the difficulties and oppositions which their brethren met with, that were returned, by which they were still in danger of being overpowered. And we might as well sit still (think they) as rise up and fall. In answer to this objection, the Angel that talked with the prophet, that is, Jesus Christ, tells him what he had commission to do for their protection, and the perfecting of their salvation, and herein he has an eye to the great redemption which, in the fulness of time, he was to be the Author of. Christ, who is Jehovah, and the Lord of hosts, of all the hosts of heaven and earth, in both which he has a sovereign power, says He, the Father, has sent me. Note. What Jesus has done, and does, for his church against his enemies, he was sent and commissioned by the Father to do. With great satisfaction he often speaks of the Father that sent him.

(1.) He is sent after the glory. After the glorious beginning of the day, and the circle of the sun; and it is the Father's Finger that worketh. Finisher of that work which he is the Author of. Christ is sent, in the first place, to the nation and people of the Jews, to whom pertained the glory. Rom. ix. 4. And he was himself the Glory of his people Israel. But after the glory, after his care of them, he is sent to the nations, to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles, by the power of his gospel to captivate them from the sceptre of sin, and every high thought among them, into obedience to himself.

(2.) He is sent to the nations that spoiled them, to take vengeance on them for the wrongs done to Zion,
when the year of his redeemed comes, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion, 1st, xxxiv. 8. He is sent to shake his hands upon them, to lift upon them the vessels of God; and upon them his heavy hand, to bruise them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, Ps. ii. 9. Some think it intimates how easily God can subdue and humble them with the turn of his hand; it is but shaking his hand over them and the work is done. They shall be a spoil to their servants, shall be enslaved to those whom they had enslaved, and be made tributary against them, and be plundered. In Esther's time this was fulfilled, when the Jews had rule over them that hated them; (Esth. ix. 1.) and often in the time of the Maccabees. And the promise is further fulfilled in Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies, his spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, Col. ii. 15. And it is still in force to the gospel church. Christ will reckon with all that are enemies to it, and, sooner or later, will make them his footstool, Ps. ex. 1. Rev. iii. 9.

(3.) What he will do for his church, shall be an evident proof of God's tender care of it, and affection to it; He that toucheth you, touches the apple of his eye. This is a high expression of God's love to his church. By his resentment of the injury done to it, it appears how dear she is to him, how he interests himself in all her interests, and takes what is done against her, not only as done against himself, but as done against the very apple of his eye, the tenderest part, which nature has made very fine, has put a double guard upon, and taught us to be in a special manner careful of, and which the least touch is a great offence to. This encourages the people of God to pray, (with David, Ps. xviii. 8.) Keep me as the apple of thine eye; and engages them to do as Solomon directs, (Prov. vii. 2.) to keep his law as the apple of their eye. Some understand it thus; "He that toucheth you, touches the apple of your eye; whoever do you an injury, will prove in the issue, to have done the greatest injury to themselves."

(4.) It shall be an evident proof of Christ's mission; Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to be the Protector of his church; that the promises made to the church are yea and amen in him. Christ's victory over our spiritual enemies proves that the Father sent him, and was with him.

10. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. 11. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. 12. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. 13. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holiness.

Here is,

1. Joy proclaimed to the church of God; to the daughter of Zion, that had separated herself from the daughter of Babylon. The Jews that were returned, were in distress and danger, their enemies in the neighbourhood were spiteful against them, their friends that remained in Babylon were cold towards them, shut of them, and declined coming in to their assistance; and yet they are bid to sing, and to rejoice even in tribulation. Note, Those that have recovered their purity, and integrity, and spiritual liberty, though they have not yet recovered their outward prosperity, have reason to sing and rejoice, to give glory to God, and take comfort to themselves. 1. God will have a people among them. If their brethren in Babylon will not come to them, those of other nations shall, and shall replenish Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, that are now at a distance from him, and strangers to him. The Jewish nation, after the captivity, multiplied very much, by the accession of such people to them, the were reclaimed, and were entitled to all the privileges of native Israelites, and perhaps they were equal in number and therefore Paul mentions it as an honour to him, which many Jews had not—that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, Phil. iii. 5. And this was an earnest of the bringing in of the Gentiles into the Christian church; and in that, this and other like promises were to have their full accomplishment. It was therefore strange that that should be so great an offence to the Jews as we see it was in the apostles' times, which was promised them as a blessing in the prophets' times—that many nations should be joined to the Lord. And as there had been one law, so should there be one gospel, one church, and one Lord, that it should be the same, whatever nation they come from, when they join themselves to the Lord, they shall be my people, as dear to God, as ever Israel had been. Note, God will own those for his people, who with purpose of heart join themselves to him; and when many do so, we ought to look upon them, not with a jealous eye, but with a joyful one. Angels rejoice, and therefore so should the daughter of Zion, when many nations are joined to the Lord.

2. They shall have his presence among them; Sing and rejoice, for I come. Those to whom God comes, have reason to rejoice, for he will be to them their chief joy. God will come, not to make them a visit only, but to reside with them, and preside over them; I will dwell in the midst of thee; (v. 10.) and it is repeated, (v. 11.) because it was to have a double accomplishment; (1.) In the dedication of the temple, in their regular observing all God's institutions there, and God's owning them therein. Those have God dwelling in the midst of them, that have his ordinances administered in their purity, and a divine power going along with them; with these tokens of God's presence the Jewish church was not separated from God, after the captivity, as ever. (2.) In the incarnation of Christ, He that promised to dwell among them, is that Lord, whom the Lord of hosts has sent, (v. 11.) and therefore must be the Lord Jesus, who came, and dwelt in the midst of the Jewish nation, the eternal Word, that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This was the great honour reserved for that nation in its last days; the promise of it effectually secured their continuance till it was accomplished. They could not be destroyed while that Blessing was in them; and the prospect of it, according to the promise, was the great support and comfort of them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. It is promised that when Christ comes, and dwells among them, they shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent him; all that were Israelites, were not; but this sufficient proofs were given of it by the miracles Christ wrought, so that they might have known it, and yet there were those that perished in ignorance and unbelief, that would not know it, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

3. They shall have all their ancient dignities and privileges restored to them again, v. 12. (1.) Canaan shall be a holy land; not polluted by the enemies, as it had been formerly, but profaned by the enemies, as it had been of late; it shall be an enclosure again,
and not laid in common. (2.) Judah shall be in this holy land, shall inhabit it, and enjoy the comfort of it, and no longer be lost and scattered in Babylon. (3.) Judah shall be God's portion, which he will delight in, which shall be dear to him, by which he will be served, and in which he will be glorified. The Lord's portion is his people. (4.) God will inherit Judah again as his portion; will claim his interest in the entire dominion of the earth as the worship of all those that had invaded his right. He will protect his people and govern them as a man does his inheritance, and will be at home among them. (5.) He will choose Jerusalem again, as he had chosen it formerly, to put his name there; he will renew and confirm the choice, and continue it a chosen place, till it must resign its honours to the Jerusalem that is from consummation: though the election seemed to be set aside for awhile, yet it shall obtain.

II. Here is silence proclaimed to all the world besides, v. 13. The daughter of Zion must sing, but all flesh must be silent. Observe here, 1. A very awful description of God's appearances for the relief of his people. He is raised up out of his holy habitation; as a man out of sleep, (Ps. xlv. 25, lxxxvii. 63,) or as a man entering with solemn steps upon a hitherto forsaken land, and all through with. Heaven is his holy habitation above, whence we must expect him to appear, Isa. xlv. 1. His temple is so in this lower world, thence from between the cherubim he will shine forth, Ps. lxxx. 1. He is about to do something unusual, unexpected, and very surprising, and to plead his people's cause, which had long seemed neglected. 2. A seasonable caution and direction to him, for this time. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord—before Christ and his grace; let not flesh object against the methods he takes—before God and his providence; the enemies of the church shall be silenced, all iniquity shall stop her mouth, the friends of the church must be silent. Leave it to God to take his own way, and neither prescribe to him what he should do, nor quarrel with him whatever he does. Be still, and know that he is God. Stand still, and see his salvation. See Hab. ii. 20.

Zeph. i. 7. Silently acquiesce in his holy will, and patiently wait the issue, as those who are assured that when God is raised up out of his holy habitation, he will not retract, or sit down again, till he has accomplished his whole work.

CHAP. III.

The vision, in the foregoing chapter, gave assurances of the divine friendship and interest of the Jewish nation, the promises of which terminated in Christ. Now, the vision, in this chapter, concerns their church-state, and their ecclesiastical interests, and assures them that they shall be put into a good pasturage against the mines of this also have an eye to Christ, who is not only our Prince, but the High Priest of our profession, of whom Joshua was a type. Here is, 1. A vision relating to the representative of the church in his showing them the disadvantages he laboured under, and the people in him, with the redress of the grievances of both. 1. He is accused by Satan, but is brought off by Christ, v. 1-5. 2. He appears in filthy garments, but was not ashamed, v. 6. 3. He is assured of being established in his office, if he conduct himself well, v. 6. 7. A sermon relating to Christ, who is here called the Branch, who should be endued with all perfections for his undertaking, and consecrated unto and triumphantly through it, and by whom we should have pardon and peace, v. 8-10.

And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jeru-
accusation, and if any thing be amiss, especially with the priests, Satan will be sure to aggravate it, and make the worst of it. He stood to this extent, to oppose the service he was doing for the public good. He stood at his right hand, the hand of action, to discourage him, and raise difficulties in his way. Note, When we stand before God, to minister to him, or stand up for God, to serve his interests, we must expect to meet with all the resistance that Satan's subtlety and malice can give us. Let us then respond to all this, as Joshua did; and let us be, as Zechariah. 2. A victorious defence is made for him; (v. 2.) The Lord, the Lord Christ, said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee. Note, It is the happiness of the saints, that the Judge is their Friend; the same that they are accused to, is their Patron and Protector, and an Advocate for them, and he will be sure to bring them off. (1.) Satan is here checked by one that has authority, that has conquered him, and many a time silenced him. The accuser of the brethren, of the ministers and the ministry, is cast out, his indictments are quashed, and his suggestions against them, as well as his suggestions to them, showed to be malicious, frivolous, and vexatious; The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. The Lord said to the accuser of the brethren, and the accuser of kings and princes, The Lord the Creator. The power of God is engaged for the making of the grace of Christ effectual. "The Lord restrain thy malicious rage, reject thy malicious charge, and revenge upon thee thine enmity to a servant of his." Note, Those that belong to Christ, have him ready to appear vigorously for them, when Satan appears most vehement against them. He does not keep back his power against him, but stops his mouth immediately with this sharp rebraund; The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. This is the best way of dealing with that furious enemy; Get thee behind me, Satan. (2.) Satan is here argued with. He resists the priest, but let him know that his resistance, [1.] Will be fruitless; it will be to no purpose to attempt any thing against Jerusalem, for the Lord has chosen it, and he will abide by his choice. Whatever is objected against God's people, God saw it, he foresaw it when he chose them, and yet he chose them; and therefore that can be no inducement to him now to reject them; he knew the worst of them when he chose them; and his election shall obtain. [2.] It is unreasonable; for is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Joshua, the son of Nun, he plucked him out of the fire; he chose him for himself, and not a soul, whose representative he is. Christ has not that to say for them, for which they are to be praised, but that for which they are to be hited. Note, Christ is ready to make the best of his people, and takes notice of every thing that is pleadable in excuse of their infirmities; so far is he from being extreme to mark what they do amiss. They have been lately in the fire; no wonder that they are black and smoked, and have the smell of the fire upon them, but they are therefore to be excused, not to be accused. One can expect no other than that those who but the other day were captives in Babylon, should appear very mean and despisible. They have been lately brought out of great affliction; and is Satan so barbarous as to desire to have them cast off? They do not suffer them; the wonderfully delivered out of the fire, that God might be glorified in them; and will he then cast them off, and abandon them? No, he will not quench the smoking flax, the smoking fire-brand; for he snatched it out of the fire, because he intended to make use of it. Note, Narrow escapes from imminent danger are happy presages of power and preservation. A converted soul is a brand plucked out of the fire by a miracle of free grace, and therefore shall not be left to be a prey to Satan.

11. Joshua appears as one polluted, but is puri-

fied; for he represents the Israel of God, who are all as unclean things, till they are cleansed and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Now observe here,

1. The impurity wherein Joshua appeared; (v. 3.) He was clothed, not only in coarse but in filthy garments, such as did very ill become the dignity of his office, and the sanctity of his work. By the law of Moses the garments of the high priests were all of fine linen, and figured for beauty. But Joshua's garments were a shame and reproach to him; yet in them he stood before the Angel of the Lord; he had no clean linen wherein to minister and do the duty of his place. Now this intimates, not only that the priesthood was poor and despised, and loaded with contempt, but that there was a great deal of iniquity claving to the holy things. The returned Jews were so taken up with their troubles, that they thought they needed not complain of their sins, and were not aware that these were the great hinderances of the progress of God's work among them; because they were free from idolatry, they thought themselves chargeable with no iniquity, but God showed them there were many things amiss in them, which retarded the advancement of his favours among them; and though there were spiritual enemies springing against them, more dangerous than any of the neighbouring nations. The Chaldee Paraphrase says, Joshua had sons who took unto them wives, which were not lawful for the priests to take; and we find it was so, Ex. x. 18. And, no doubt, there were other things amiss in the priesthood; (Mal. iii. 2.) yet Joshua was permitted to stand before the Angel of the Lord. Though his children did not as they should, yet the covenant of priesthood was not broken. Note, Christ bears with his people, whose hearts are upright with him, and admits them into communion with himself, notwithstanding their manifold infirmities.

2. The provision that was made for his cleansing. Christ gave orders to the angels that attended him, and were ready to do his pleasure, to put Joshua into a better state. Joshua presented himself before the Lord in his filthy garments, as an object of his pity; and Christ gracedly looked upon him with compassion, and not, as justly he might have done, with indignation. Christ bestowed the filthiness of Joshua's garments, yet did not put him away. Thus God by his grace does what they themselves can never be to be priests to himself; he parts between them and their sins, and so prevents their sins parting between them and their God; he reconciles himself to the sinner, but not to the sin. Two things are here done for Joshua, representing a double work of divine grace wrought in and for believers.

(1.) His filthy garments are taken from him; (v. 4.) the meaning of this is given us in what Christ said, and he said it as one having authority, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee. The guilt of it is taken away by pardoning mercy, (the stench and stain of it by peace spoken to the conscience,) and the power of it broken by renewing grace. When God forgives our sins, he causes our iniquity to pass from us, that it may not appear against us, to condemn us; it passes from us as far as the cast is from the west. When he sanctifies the nature, he enables us to put off the old man, to cast away from us the filthy rags of our corrupt affections and lusts, as things we will never have any thing more to do with, will never gird to us, or appear in. Thus Christ removes those filthinesses of his own in his own blood, as the Melchisedek, God king and priests, Rev. i. 5, 6. Either we must be cleansed from the pollutions of sin, or we shall, as polluted, be put from that priesthood, Ezra ii. 62
(2) He is clothed anew, has not only the shame of his filthiness removed, but the shame of his nakedness covered, I will clothe thee with change of raiment. Joshua had no clean linen of his own, but Christ will provide for him, for he will not let a priesthood of his own instituting be lost, he be either contemptible before men, or unacceptable before God. The change of raiment here is rich, costly raiment, for this is spoken on high days. Joshua shall appear as lovely as ever he appeared loathsome: they that minister in holy things, shall not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; God will make them wise, and humble, and diligent, and faithful, and examples of every thing that is good; and then Joshua is clothed with change of raiment. Thus those whom Christ makes spiritual priests, are clothed with the spots of their place decently and in order. He must be clothed in God in that; and with the graces of his Spirit, which are ornaments to them. The righteousness of saints, both imputed and implanted, is the fine linen, clean and white, with which the bride, the Lamb's wife, is arrayed, Rev. xix. 8.

III. Joshua is in danger of being turned out of office, but, instead of that, he is re-installed and restored to his place, his name is not only not banned, and is furnished with grace sufficient for himself, but, as rectus in curia—acquainted in court, he is restored to his former honours and trusts.  

1. The crown of the priesthood is put upon him, v. 5. This was done at the special instance and request of the prophet; I said, "Let them set a fair mitre upon his head, as a badge of his office. Now the high priest was to be dressed up in all the garments of the high priest." Note, When God designs the restoring and reviving of religion, he stirs up his prophets and people to pray for it, and does it in answer to their prayers. Zechariah prayed that the angels might be ordered to set the mitre on Joshua's head, and they did it immediately, and clothed him with the priestly garments; for no man took this honour to himself, but he that was called of God to it. The Angel of the Lord stood by, as having the oversight of the work which the created angels were employed in. He stood by, as one well pleased with it, and resolved to stand by the orders he had given for the doing of it, and to continue his presence with that priesthood.

2. The covenant of the priesthood is renewed with him, which is called God's covenant of peace. Num. xxv. 12. Mr. Pemble calls it the potent of his office, which is here declared and delivered to him before witnesses, v. 6, 7. The angel of the Lord, having taken care to make him fit for his office, (and all that God calls to any office he either finds fit, or makes so,) invests him in it. And though he is not made a priest with an oath, (that honor is reserved for him who is a Priest all his life,) yet being a type of him, he is inaugurated with a solemn declaration of the terms upon which he held his office. The angel of the Lord protested to Joshua, that if he would be sure to do the duty of his place, he should enjoy the dignity and reward of it. Now see, (1.) What the conditions are, upon which he entered. (a) He is reserved for him who is a Priest all his life, upon his good behaviour; he must walk in God's ways, he must live a good life, and be holy in all manner of conversation; he must go before the people, in the paths of God's commandments, and walk circumspectly. He must also keep God's charge, must carefully do all the services of the priesthood, and must see to it that the inferior priests performed the duties committed to them; and keep himself, and take heed to himself, and to all the flock, Acts xx. 28. Note, Good ministers must be good Christians; yet that is not enough, they have a trust committed to them, they are charged with it, and they must keep it with all possible care, that they may give up their account of it with joy, 1 Tim. vi. 14.

(2) What the privileges are, which he may expect, and be assured of, in the due discharge of his office. His patent runs, Quam du se bene gresserit—During good behaviour. Let him be sure to do his part, and God will own him. [1.] Thou shalt judge my house; there shall preside in the affairs of the temple, and the inferior priests shall be under thy direction." Note, The power of the church, and of church-rulers, is not a legislative, but only a judicial power. The high priest might not make any new laws for God's house, nor ordain any other rites of worship than what God had ordained; but he must judge God's house, he must see to it that those laws which were ordained he properly observed, must protect and encourage those that did observe them, and inquire into and punish the violation of them. [2.] "Thou shalt also keep my courts; thou shalt have oversight of what is done in all the courts of the temple, and shall keep them pure and in good order for the worship to be performed in them. Note, Ministers are God's stewards, and they are to keep the courts, in honour of him who is the chief Lord, and for the preserving of equity and good order among his tenants. [3.] "I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by, among these angels that are inspectors and assistants in this installment." They shall stand by while Joshua is at work for God, and shall be as a guard to him; or, he shall be highly honoured and esteemed by those who serve God, Gal. iv. 14. Ministers are called angels, Rev. i. 20. They that walk in God's ways, may be said to walk among the angels themselves, for they do the will of God as the angels do it, that are in heaven, and are their fellow-servants, Rev. xix. 10. Some make it a promise of eternal life, and of a reward of his fidelity in the future state. Heaven is not only a palace, a place to receive in, but a paradise, a garden, a place to walk in, and there are walks among the angels, in society with that holy and glorious company. See Ezek. xxviii. 14.

8. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at; for behold, I will bring forth my servant, The BRANCH. 9. For, behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 10. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.
ed upon, and was derived from, the priesthood of Christ. See, 

1. To whom this promise of Christ is directed; (v. 8.) "Hear now, O Joshua. Thou hast heard with pleasure what belongs to thyself; but behold, a greater than Joshua is at hand, hear now concerning him; that, and the rest of the priests, thy fellow

2. By Joshua. The building; all the interior priests, take notice of this, for they are men wondered at." They are set for signs, for types and figures of Christ's priesthood: what God now did for Joshua and his fellows, was a happy even of those who sat before the ark; but it should not be so interpreted, with a pleasing wonder, by all that had understanding at the times: or they are men wondered at for their singularity, hooted at as strange sort of people, because they run not with others to the same excess of riot; (1 Pet. iv. 4.) or for their strange afflictions, and surprising deliverance out of them, as Ps. lxxi. 7. I am a wonder unto many. They are men of wonder, they are a wonder to themselves, are amazed to think how happily their condition is altered. God's people and ministers are, upon many accounts, men wondered at. The high priest and his fellows here, (as the prophet and his children, Isa. viii. 18.) are for signs and for wonders. But men's wonder at them will cease when the Messiah comes, as the stars are of the fulness of the sun; for his name shall be called Wonderful.

II. The promise itself, which consists of several parts, all designed for the comfort and encouragement of Joshua and his friends, in that great and good work of building the temple, which they were now engaged in. An eye to Christ, and a believing dependence upon him, and their kindred, would carry them through the difficulties they met with in that and their other services.

1. The Messiah shall come; Behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch. He has been long hid, but the fulness of time is now at hand, when he shall be brought forth into the world, brought forth among his people Israel. God himself undertakes to bring forth a Branch; he shall be brought forth by himself, and stand by him. He is God's Servant, employed in his work, obedient to his will, and entirely devoted to his honour and glory. He is the Branch: so he was called, Isa. iv. 2. The Branch of the Lord, (Isa. xi. 1.) A Branch out of the roots of Jesse, (Jer. xxiii. 5.) A righteous Branch; and, Jer. xxxiii. 15. The Branch of righteousness; whose beginning was small as a tender branch, but in time should become a great tree, and fill the earth, Isa. lxxiii. 2. He is the Branch from which all our fruit must be gathered.

2. Many eyes shall be upon him. He is the Stone laid before Joshua, alluding to the foundation, or chief corner-stone, of the temple, which, probably, was laid, with great solemnity, in the presence of Joshua and his people. (See note on Jer. xvii. 10.) The beginning of a tree, but the Foundation, which is the beginning of a building; and, when he shall be brought forth, seven eyes shall be upon him. The eye of his Father was upon him, to take care of him, and protect him, especially in his sufferings; when he was buried in the grave, as the foundation-stones are under ground, the eyes of Heaven were still upon him; buried out of man's sight, and not out of God's. The eyes of all the prophets and Old Testament saints were upon this one stone; Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, and he saw it, and was glad. The eyes of all believers are upon him, they look unto him, and are saved, as the eyes of the sting Israelites were upon the brazen serpent. Some understand this one stone to have the seven eyes in it, as the wheels had in Ezekiel's vision, and thinks it denotes that perfection of wisdom and knowledge which Jesus Christ was endued with, for the good of his church; his eyes run to and fro through the earth.

3. God himself will beautify him, and put honour upon him; I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts. This stone the builders refused, as rough and unsightly; but God undertakes to smooth and polish it, nay, and to carve it so that it shall be the Head Stone of the corner, the most beautiful in all the building. Christ was God's Workmanship; and abundance of his wisdom appears in the contrivance of our redemption, which is foreshadowed in the engraving of a precious stone, and this stone is a precious stone, though laid for a Foundation; and the graving of it seems to allude to the precious stones in the breastplate of the high priest, which had the names of the tribes graven upon them; as the engraving of a signet, Exod. xxviii. 21. 22. In that breastplate there were twelve stones laid before Aaron, and for that appears, those were lost: but there shall be one worth them all laid before Joshua; and that is Christ himself; this precious Stone shall sparkle as if it had seven eyes; there shall appear a perfection of wisdom and prudence in the oracles that proceed from the breastplate of judgment; and God will engrave the engraving thereof; he will inscribe Christ with all his elect, and every one appearing in the engraving of his Name, and in the engraving of his Father, for that he has now, as in the days of the high priest, when he went in before the Lord, with the names of all Israel graven in the precious stones of his breastplate. When God gave a remnant to Christ, to be brought through grace to glory, then he engraved the graving of this precious stone.

4. By him sin shall be taken away, both the guilt and the iniquity of all that land in one day. When the high priest had the names of Israel graven on the precious stones he was adorned with, he is said to bear the iniquity of the holy things: (Exod. xxviii. 38.) but the law made nothing perfect, Heb. x. 1. He bore the iniquity of the land, as a type of Christ; but he could not remove it, the doing of that was reserved for Christ, that blessed Lamb of God, the sin of the land, upon whom he laid his hands, and he did it in one day, that day in which he suffered and died; that was done by the sacrifice offered that day, which could not be done by the sacrifices of ages before, no, not by all the days of atonement which from Moses to Christ returned every year. This agrees with the angel's prediction, (Dan. x. 24.) He shall finish transgressions, and make an end of sin. And some make the engravings where with God engraved him, to signify the wounds and stripes which were given to his blessed body, which he underwent for our transgression, for our iniquity, and by which we are healed.

5. The effect of all this shall be the sweet enjoyment which all believers shall have of themselves, and the sweet communion they shall have with one another; (2 John 7.) and may man his neighbour under the vine, and the fig-tree, which yields most pleasant fruit, and whose leaves also afford a refreshing shade for arbours. When iniquity is taken away, (1.) We reap precious bennfits and privileges from our justification, more precious than the products of the vine or the fig-tree, Rom. v. 1. (2.) We rejoice ourselves in a sweet assurance of our accession to him, who reconciled us to God by the blood of his own body, Eph. ii. 15. (3.) We are delivered from the fear of evil spirits, which before were willing to afflict those who gave iniquity, (2 Cor. xi. 14.) What should terrify us when iniquity is taken away, when nothing can hurt us? We sit down under Christ's shadow with delight, and by it are sheltered from the scorching heat of the curse of the law. We live as Israel in the peaceable reign of Solomon; (1 Kings iv. 24, 28.) for he is the Prince of peace. (5.) We ought to invite others to come to partake
with us in the enjoyment of these privileges, to call every man his neighbour to come and sit with him, for mutual converse, under the vine and fig-tree, and to share with him in the fruits he is surrounded with. Gospel-grace, as far as it comes, makes men neighbourly; and those that have the comfort of acquaintance with Christ themselves, and communion with God through him, will be forward to court others to it. Let us go unto the house of the Lord.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter we have another comfortable vision, which, as it was explained to the prophet, had much in it for the encouragement of the people of God in their present straits, which were so great, that they thought their case helpless, that their temple could never be rebuilt nor their city replenished; and therefore the scope of the vision is to show that God would, by his own power, perfect the work, though the assistance given to it by its friends were ever so weak, and the resistance given to it by its enemies were ever so strong. Here is, 1. The awakening of the prophet to observe the vision, v. 1. 2. The visions itself, of a candlestick with seven lamps, which were supplied with oil, and kept burning, immediately from two olive-trees that grew by it, one on either side, v. 2, 3. 3. The general encouragement with which the vision was given to the people to go on in that good work, assuring them that it should be brought to perfection at last, v. 4–10. 4. The particular explanation of the vision, for the illustration of these assurances, v. 11–14.

1. And the angel that talked with me came again and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2. And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and beheld a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it; and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which were upon the top thereof; 3. And two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof; 4. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? 5. Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. 7. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it. 8. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. 10. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Here is, 1. The prophet prepared to receive the discovery that was to be made him; The angel that talked with him came and waked him, v. 1. It seems though he had in appearance within an angel, and in matters of great and public concern, yet he grew dull, and fell asleep, as it should seem, while the angel was yet talking with him. Thus the disciples, when they saw Christ transfigured, were heavy with sleep, Luke ix. 32. The prophet's spirit, no doubt, was willing to have attended to that which was to be seen and heard; but the flesh was weak; his body could not endure the depth of his contemplations; the strangeness of the visions perhaps stupefied him, and so he was overcome with sleep, or perhaps the sweetness of the visions composed him, and even sung him asleep. Daniel was in a deep sleep when he heard the voice of the angel's words, Dan. x. 9. We shall never be fit for converse with spirits till we are get clear of these bodies of flesh. It should seem, the angel let him lose himself a little, that he might be fresh to receive new discoveries; but then waked him, to his surprise, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. Note, We need the Spirit of God, not only to make known to us divine things, but to make us take notice of them. He wakens morning by morning, he wakens mine ear, Isa. i. 4. We should beg of God that, wherever a church is, that he would waken us, and we should then stir up ourselves.

II. The discovery that was made to him, when he was thus prepared. The angel asked him, What seest thou? v. 2. When he was awake, perhaps he had not taken notice of what was presented to his view, if he had not thus been excited to look about him. When he observed, he saw a golden candlestick; such as one as was in the temple formerly, and such like that which was finished due time be furnished. The church is a candlestick, set up for the enlightening of this dark world, and the holding forth of the light of divine revelation to it; the candle is God's, the church is but the candlestick, but all of gold, denoting the great worth and excellency of the church of God. This golden candlestick had seven lamps branching out from it, so many sockets, in each of which was a burning and shining light. The Jewish church was but one, and though the Jews that were dispersed, it is probable, had synagogues in other countries, yet they were but as so many lamps belonging to one candlestick; but now, under the gospel, Christ is the Centre of unity, and not Jerusalem, or any place; and therefore seven particular churches are represented, not as seven lamps, but as seven sentences, seven candlesticks, Rev. i. 20. This candlestick had one bowl, or common receiver, on the top, into which oil was continually dropping, and from it, by seven secret pipes, or passages, it was diffused to the seven lamps. So that, without any further care, they received oil as fast as they wasted it; (as in those which we call fountain ink-horns, or fountain-pens) they never wanted, nor were ever out of oil and light; and so it is with always honest and religious conversation. And the bowl too was continually supplied, without any care or attendance of a man; for (v. 3.) he saw two olive-trees, one on each side the candlestick, that were so fat and fruitful, that of their own accord they poured plenty of oil continually into the bowl, which by two larger pipes (v. 12.) dispersed the oil to the lamps, and so to the lamps of the good people, who attended this candlestick, to furnish it with oil, it turned not for man, nor waited for the sons of men; the scope of which is to show that God easily can, and often does, accomplish his gracious purposes concerning his church by his own wisdom and power, without any art or labour of man; and that though sometimes he makes use of instruments, yet
he neither needs them, nor is tied to them, but can do his work without them, and will, rather than it should fail.  

11. The inquiry which the prophet made concerning the meaning of this, and the gentle reproof given him for his dulness; (v. 4, 5) I answered and spake to the angel, saying, What are these, my lord? Behold, he called him my lord; those that would be taught, must, give honour to their teachers; he saw what he did not understand. Note, It is very desirable to know the meaning of God's manifestations of himself and his mind, in his word, by his ordinances and providences; What mean ye by these services, by these signs? And those that would understand the mind of God, must be inquisitive—Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, if we not only hear, but, as Christ, ask questions upon what we hear, Luke iv. 46. The angel answered him with a question, Knowest thou not what these be? Intending that if he had considered and compared spiritual things with spiritual, he might have guessed at the meaning of these things; for he knew that there was a golden candelstick in the tabernacle, which it was the priests' constant business to supply with oil, and to keep it burning in the tabernacle, when the tabernacle itself was not there; for he, saw, in vision, such a candelstick, with lamps always kept burning, and yet no priest to attend it, nor any occasion for them, he might discern the meaning of this to be, that though God had set up the priesthood again, yet he could carry on his own work for, and in, his people, without them. Note, We have reason to be ashamed of ourselves, that we do not more readily apprehend the meaning of divine discoveries. The angel asked the prophet this question, to draw from him an acknowledgment of his own dulness and darkness, and slowness to understand, and he had it immediately; 'I said, No, my lord; I know not what these be.' Visions had their significance, but often dark, and hard to be understood, and the prophets themselves were not always aware of it at first. But those that would be taught of God, must see and acknowledge their own ignorance, and their need to be taught, and must apply themselves to God for instruction. To him that gave us the cabinet we must apply ourselves for the key wherewith to unlock it. God will teach the meek and humble, not those that are conceited of themselves, and lean on the broken reed.  

IV. The general intention of this vision. Without a critical descent upon every circumstance of the vision, the design of it is to assure the prophet, and by him the people, that this good work of building the temple should, by the special care of Divine Providence, and the immediate influence of divine grace, be brought to a happy issue, though the enemies of it were the greatest, and the instruments thereof few and feeble. Note, In the explication of visions and parables, we must look at the principal scope of them, and be satisfied with that, if that be clear, though we may not be able to account for every circumstance, or accommodate it to our purpose. The angel lets the prophet know, in general, that this vision was designed to illustrate and confirm what the Lord had to say to Zerubbabel, to encourage him to go on with the building of the temple. Let him know that he is a worker together with God in it, and that it is a work which God will own and crown.  

1. God will carry on and complete this work, as he had begun their deliverance from Babylon, not by external force, but by secret operations and internal influences upon the minds of men. He says this, who is the Lord of hosts, and could do it, vi et armis—by force, has leviathan at command; but he will do it, not by human might or power, but by his own Spirit. What is by his Spirit done, by might and power, but it stands in opposition to envious force. Israel was brought out of Egypt, and into Canaan, by might and power, in both these works of wonder great slaughter was made; but they were brought out of Babylon, and into Canaan, the second time, by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts working upon the spirit of Cyrus, and inclining him to proclaim liberty to them, and working upon the spirits of the Captains, and inclining them to give to the liberty offered them. It was by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts that the people were excited and animated to build the temple; and therefore they are said to be helped by the prophets of God, because, as the Spirit's mouth spake to their hearts, Ezra vi. 2. It was by the same Spirit that the heart of DAVID was inclined to do that good work, and that the sworn enemies of it were infuriated in their counsels, so that they could not hinder it as they designed. Note, The work of God is often carried on very successfully, when it is carried on very silently, and without the assistance of human force; the gospel-temple is built, not by might or power, (for the weapons of our Warfare are not carnal,) but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, whose work on men's consciences is mighty to the pulling down of strong holds; thus the excellency of the power is of God, and not of man. When instruments fail, let us therefore leave it to God to do his work himself by his own Spirit.  

2. All the difficulties and oppositions that lie in the way, shall be got over and removed, even those that seem insuperable; (v. 7.) Who art thou, 0 great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. See here, (1.) How the difficulty is represented; it is a great mountain, impassable and immovable. A heap of rubbish, like a great mountain, which must be got away, or the work cannot go on. The enemies of the Jews are proud and hard as great mountains; but when God has work to do, the mountains that stand in the way of it shall dwindle into mole-hills. See here, (2.) How these difficulties are despised; 'Who art thou, 0 great mountain, that thou should stand in God's way, and think to stop the progress of his work? Who art thou that lookest so big, that thus threatenest, and art thus feared? Before Zerubbabel, when he is God's agent, thou shalt become a plain. All the difficulties shall vanish, and all the obstructions be got away; even the highest mountain shall be levelled, when the way of the Lord is to be prepared,' Isa. xl. 4. Faith will remove mountains, and make them plain. Christ is our Zerubbabel; mountains of difficulty were in the way of his undertaking, but before him they were all levelled; nothing is too hard for his grace to do.  

The same angel that has begun this good work, will perfect it; He shall bring forth the head-stone; (v. 7.) and again, (v. 9.) The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, he it spoken to his honour; perhaps with his own hands he laid the first stone, though it has been long retarded, and is still much opposed, yet it shall be finished at last, he shall live to see it finished, may, and his hands shall also finish it; herein he is a type of Christ, who is both the Author and Finisher of our faith; and his being the Author of it is an assurance to us that he will be the Finisher, for, as for God, his work is perfect; has he begun, and shall he not make an end? Zerubbabel shall himself bring forth the head-stone with shoutings, and loud acclamations of joy, among the spectators. The Roman emperors, but Christ, is the true builder; that is the burden of the triumphant songs which the church sings. It may be taken, (1.) As magnifying free grace, and giving to that all the glory
of what is done; when the work is finished, it must be thankfully acknowledged that it was not by any policy or power of our own that it was brought to perfection, but that it was grace that did it—God's good will towards us, and his good work in us and for us. Grace, grace, must be cried, not only to the head-stone, but to the foundation-stone, the cornerstone, and to every stone in God's building; from first to last it is nothing of works, but all of grace, and all our crowns must be cast at the feet of free grace. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us. (2.) As depending upon free grace, and desiring the continuance of it, for what is yet to be done. Grace, grace, is the language of prayer as well as of praise; now that this building is finished, all happiness attend it! Peace be within its walls, and in ord to the grace. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon it! Note, What comes from the grace of God, may, in faith, and upon good grounds, be committed to the grace of God, for God will not forsake the work of his own hands.

4. This shall be a full ratification of the prophecies which went before concerning the Jews' return, and their settlement again. When the temple is finished, then thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath done good to thee, as thou hast seen and heard, by the accomplishment of scripture-prophecies is a convincing proof of their divine original. Thus God confirms the word of his servant, by saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, Is. xlv. 26. No word of God shall fail to the ground, nor shall there fail one jot or tittle of it; Zechariah's prophecies of the approaching day of deliverance to the church, would soon appear, by the accomplishment of them, to be of God.

5. This shall effectually silence those that looked with contempt upon the beginning of this work, v. 19. Who, where, is he now that despised the day of small things, and thought his work would never come to any thing? The Jews themselves despised the foundation of the second temple, because it was likely to be so far inferior to the first, Ezra iii. 12. Their enemies despised the wall, when it was in the building, Neh. ii. 19.—iv. 2, 3. But let them not do it. Note, In God's work, the day of small things is not to be despised. Though the instruments be weak and unlikely, God often chooses such, by them to bring about great things. As a great mountain becomes a plain before him, when he pleases, so a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, comes to fill the earth, Dan. ii. 53. The kingdom of God is within men, and the latter end greatly to increase; a grain of mustard-seed may become a great tree. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and will be the day of great things.

6. This shall abundantly satisfy all the hearty well-wishers to God's interest, who will be glad to see the temple go on, in the day of small things. They that despised of the finishing of the work, shall rejoice, when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, the latter end greatly to increase; a grain of mustard-seed may become a great tree. Let not the dawning light be despised, for it will shine more and more to the perfect day. The day of small things is the day of precious things, and will be the day of great things.

7. This shall highly magnify the wisdom and care of God's providence, which is always employed for the good of his church. Zerubbabel does his part, does as much as man can do to forward the work, but it is with those seven, those seven eyes of the Lord, which we read of, ch. iii. 9. He could do nothing, if the watchful, powerful, gracious providence of God did not go before him, and go along with him in it. Except the Lord had built this house, Zerubbabel and the rest had laboured in vain, Ps. cxxxvii. 1. These eyes of the Lord are they that run to and fro through the whole earth, that take cognizance of all the creatures and all their actions, (2 Chron. xvi. 9,) and inspire and direct all, according to the divine counsels. Note, We must not think that God is so taken up with the affairs of his church as to neglect the world; it is a comfort to us, that the same all-wise, almighty Providence that governs the nations of the earth, is in a particular manner conversant about the church. Those seven eyes that run through the earth, are all upon the stone that Zerubbabel is laying straight with his plummet, to see that it be well laid. And those that have the plummet in their hand, must look up to these eyes of the Lord, must have a constant regard to Divine Providence, and act in dependence upon its guidance, in submission to its dispositions.

11. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? 12. And I answered again, and said unto him, What are these two olive-branches, which, through the two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves? 13. And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 14. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

Enough is said to Zechariah, to encourage him, and to enable him to encourage others, with reference to the good work of building the temple which they were now about, and that was the principal intention of the vision he saw; but still he is inquisitive about the particulars, which we will ascribe, not to any vain curiosity, but to the value he had for the discharge of his own duty and the honour of exalting himself and them. Those that know much of the things of God, cannot but have a humble desire to know more. Now observe, 1. What his inquiry was. He understood the meaning of the candlestick and its lamps. It is Jerusalem, it is the temple, and their salvation is to go forth as a lamp that burns; but he wants to know what are those two olive-trees, (v. 9.) the two olive-branches, v. 12. Observe here, (1.) He asked. Note, Those that would be acquainted with the things of God, must be inquisitive concerning those things. Ask, and you shall be told. (2.) He asked twice; his first question having no reply given to it. Note, If satisfactory answers be not given to our inquiries and requests quickly, we must renew our inquiries with an assurance of the importance of them, and the vision shall at length speak, and not lie. (3.) His second query varied somewhat from the former. He first asked, What are these two olive-trees, but afterward, What are these two olive-branches? Those boughs of the tree, that hung over the bowl, and distilled oil into it. When we inquire concerning the grace of God, it must be rather as it is communicated to us by the fruitful boughs of the word and ordinances, for
that is one of the things revealed, which belong to us and to our children, than as it is resident in the good Olive where all our springs are, for that is one of the secret things, which belong not to us. (4) In his inquiry, he mentions the observations he had made upon the vision; he took notice not only of what was obvious at first sight, that the two olive-trees grew, one on the right side, and the other on the left side, of the candlestick, (so high, so readily, is divinity,) but his second view was, when he, upon a more narrow inspection, that the two olive-branches from which in particular the candlestick did receive of the root and fatness of the olive, (as the apostle says of the church, Rom. xi. 17,) did empty the golden oil, the clear bright oil, the best in its kind, and of great value, as if it were aurum fixatifum—liquid oil, oil of themselves through the two golden fishes. Or, as the margin reads it, which by the hand of the two golden fishes empty out of themselves oil into the gold, into the golden bowl on the head of the candlestick. Our Lord Jesus emptied himself, to fill us; his precious blood is the golden oil in which we are supplied with all we need. A second angel was given to his inquiry. Now again the angel obliged him expressly to own his ignorance, before he informed him (v. 13). "Knowest thou not what these be? If thou knowest the church to be the candlestick, canst thou think the olive-trees, that supply it with oil, to be any other than the grace of God?" But he owned he either did not fully understand it, or was afraid he did not rightly understand it; I. Said, No, I know not, nor may Lord; have mercy on me, and shew me what this be. These are the two sons of oil, (so it is in the original,) the two anointed ones, (so we read it,) rather, the two oil ones. That which we read (Isa. v. 1) a very fruitful hill, is, in the original, the horn of the son of oil, a fat and fatting soil. (1.) If by the candlestick we understand the visible church, particularly that of the Jews at that time, for whose comfort it was primarily intended, these sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth, are the two great ordinances and offices of the magistracy and ministry, at that time lodged in the hands of those two great and good men, Zerubabel and Joshua. Kings and priests were anointed; this prince, this priest, were oil ones, endued with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and a vessel of the work to which they were called. They stood before the Lord of the whole earth, to minister to him, and to receive direction from him; and a great influence they had upon the affairs of the church at that time; their wisdom, courage, and zeal were continually emptying themselves into the golden bowl, to keep the lamps burning; and when the lamps burned, it was as if they were raised up to carry on the same work; Israel shall no longer be without prince and priest. Good magistrates and good ministers, that are themselves anointed with the grace of God, and stand by the Lord of the whole earth, as faithful adherents to his cause, contribute very much to the maintaining and advancing of religion, and the shining forth of the word of life. (2.) If by the candlestick we understand Christ, translated into the Greek, the first-born, of true believers, these sons of oil may be meant of Christ and the Spirit, the Redeemer and the Comforter. Christ is not only the Messiah, the Anointed One himself, but he is the Good Olive to his church; and from his fulness we receive, John i. 16. And the Holy Spirit is the Union or Anointing which we have received, 1 John ii. 20, 27. From God, the Olive-Tree, by the Spirit, the Olive-Branch, all the golden oil of grace is communicated to believers, which keeps their lamps burning, and without a constant supply of which they would soon go out. They stand by the Lord of the whole earth, who is in a special manner the church's Lord; for the Son was to be sent by the Father, and so was the Holy Ghost, in the time appointed, and they stand by him ready to go.

CHAP. V.

Hilberto, we have seen visions of peace only, and all the words we have heard have been in much word and comfortable words. But the pillar of cloud and fire has a black and dark side toward the Egyptians, as well as a bright and pleasant side toward Israel; so have Zechariah's visions; for God's prophets are not only his undoubted ambassadors, to treat of peace with the sons of peace, but also to proclaim war again those that delight in war, and persist in their rebellion. In this chapter, we have two nations which are marked, the nation of God from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. God will do great and kind things for his, which the faithful sons of Zion shall rejoice in; but let the sinners of Zion be afraid; for, 1. God will deal severely with those particular persons among them that were wicked and profane, and that hated to be returned in these times of reformation; while God is showing kindness to the body of the nation, and loading that with his blessings, they and their families shall, notwithstanding, stand the curse, which the prophet sees in a flying roll, v. 1-4. If the body of the nation be leader of them, and wickedness prevail among them, it shall be carried off and hurried away with a swift destruction, under the pressing weight of divine wrath, represented by a talent of lead, upon the mouth of an eagle, carried upon the wing I know not where, v. 5-11.

1. THE N then turned, and lifted up nine eyes, and looked, and behold, a flying roll. 2. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. 3. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side, according to it; and every one that swarreth shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. 4. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof.

We do not find that the prophet now needed to be awakened, as he did, ch. iv. 1. Being awakened, then, he kept wakeful after; nay, now he needs not up, so much as called to look about him, for now much accord he turns, and lifteth up his eyes. This good men sometimes get by their infirmities, they make them the more careful and circumspect afterwards. Now observe,

1. What it was that the prophet saw; he looked up into the air, and behold, a flying roll; a vast large scroll of parchment which had been rolled up, and is therefore called a roll, wide, now unrolled and expanded; this roll was flying upon the wings of the wind, carried swiftly through the air in open view, as an eagle that shoots down upon her prey; it is a roll like Ezekiel's, that was written within and without, with lamentations, and mourning, and woe, Ezek. ii. 9, 10. As the command of the Lord is in writing, for certainty and perpetuity, so is the curse of the law, it writeth bitter things against the sinner; "What I have written, I have written, and what is written remains." The angel, to engage the prophet's attention, and to raise in him a desire to have it explained, asks him what he sees?
And he gives him this account of it, I see a flying roll, and as near as he can guess by his eye, it is seventy cubits long, that is ten yards, and ten cubits broad, that is five yards. The scriptures of the Old Testament and the New are rolls, in which God has written to us the great things of his law and gospel. Christ is one of the great rolls, the New Testament, all the great rolls, have much in them; they are flying rolls, the angel that had the everlasting gospel to preach, flew in the midst of heaven, Rev. xiv. 6. God's word runs very swiftly, Ps. cxlvii. 15. Those that would be let into the meaning of these rolls, must first tell what they see, must go as far as they can themselves; What is written in the law, how readeth the prophet, and thou shalt be made to understand what thou readest.

II. How it was expounded to him, v. 3, 4. This flying roll is a curse; it contains a declaration of the righteous wrath of God against those sinners especially who by swearing affront God's majesty, or by stealing invade their neighbour's property. Let every Israelite rejoice in the blessings of his country with trembling; for if he swear, if he steal, if he live in any course of sin, he shall see them with his eyes, but shall not have the comfort of them, for against him the curse is gone forth. If I be wicked, no me for this. Now observe here,

1. The extent of this curse; the prophet sees it flying; but which way does it steer its course? It goes forth over the face of the whole earth; not only of the kind of Israel, but the whole world; for these were the guilty world as a thick cloud, not only keeping off the sun-beams of God's favour from them, but big with thunders, lightnings, and storms, ready to destroy them! How welcome then would the tidings of a Saviour be, who came to redeem us from the curse of the law, by himself made a curse for us, and, like the prophet, eating this roll! The vast length and breadth of this roll intimate a multitude of curses sinners he expected God will make their plagues wonderful, if they turn not.

2. The criminals against whom particularly this curse is levelled. The world is full of sin in great variety, so was the Jewish church at this time; but two sorts of sinners are here specified as the objects of this curse. (1.) Thieves; it is for every one that steals, that by fraud or force takes that which is not his own, especially that robs God, and converts to his own use what was devoted to God and his honour, which was a sin much complained of among the Jews at this time. Mal. iii. 8. Neh. xiii. 10. Sacrilege is, without doubt, the worst kind of thiev ery. He also that robs his father or mother, and withal, It is no transgression. (Prov. xxvii. 24.) let him know that against him this curse is fixed, for his own against every one that steals. The letter of the eighth commandment has no penalty annexed to it; but the curse here is a sanction to that command. (2.) Swearers. Sinners of the former class offended against the second table, these against the first; for the curse meets these that break either table. He that swears rashly and profanely, shall not be excused, much less he that swears falsely; (v. 5.) and he will be cut off upon himself by his perjury, and so shall his doom be; God will say Amen to his imprecation, and turn it upon his own head. He has appealed to God's judgment, which is always according to truth, for the confirming of a he, and to that judgment he shall go, which he has so impiously affronted.

3. The enforcing of this curse, and the equity of it; I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, v. 4. He that pronounces the sentence, will take care to see it executed. His bringing it forth denotes, (1.) His giving it forth, makes it very long ago; for it is a most serious God that will warn it. (2.) His giving it the setting on; he brings it forth with power, and orders what execution it shall do: and who can put by or resist the curse which a God of almighty power brings forth?

4. The effect of this curse; it is very dreadful. (1.) Upon the sinner himself; Every one that steals, and is not corrected, but destroyed, comes from the hand of the living. The curse of God is a cutting thing, a killing thing. He shall be cut off as a side, cut off from this place, from Jerusalem, and so he that steals from this side; it is the same word; from this place; God will not spare the sinners he finds among his own people; nor shall the holy city be a protection to the unholy; or, they shall be cut off from hence, from the face of the whole earth, or curse fly. Or, He that steals shall be cut off on this side, and he that swears on that side; they shall all be cut off, one as well as another, and both according to the curse; for the judgments of God's hand are exactly agreeable with the judgments of his mouth. (2.) Upon his family; It shall enter into the house of the thief, and him that swears. God's curse comes even on a plaintiff that sues in an unrighteous cause. Having got possession, it shall keep it, and unless he repent and reform, there is no way to throw it out, or cut off the entail of it. Nay, it shall so remain in it as to consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, which, though ever so strong, though the timber be heart of oak, and the stones hewn out of the rocks of adamant, yet they shall not be able to stay before the curse of God. We have heard the stone and the timber complaining of the owner's extortion and oppression, and growing under the burden of it. Hos. ii. 11. Now here we have them delivered from that bondage of corruption. While they were in their strength and beauty, they supported, sorely against their will, the sinner's pride and security; but, when they are consumed, their ruins will, to their satisfaction, be standing monuments of God's justice, and lasting witnesses of the sinner's injustice. Note, Sin is the ruin of houses and families; especially the sins of injury and perjury. Who knows the power of God's anger, and the operations of his curse? Even timber and stones have been consumed by them; let us therefore stand in awe, and not sin.

5. Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. 6. And I said, What is it? And he
said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. 7. And behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. 8. And he said, this is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah, and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. 9. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; (for they had wings like the wings of a stork;) and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. 10. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whether do these bear the ephah? 11. And he said unto me, To build it a house in the land of Shinar; and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

The foregoing vision was very plain and easy, but in this are things dark, and hard to be understood; and some think that the scope of it is to foretell the final destruction of the Jewish church and nation, and the dispersion of the Jews, when, by crucifying Christ and persecuting his gospel, they should have filled up the measure of their iniquities; therefore it is industriously set out in obscure figures and expressions, lest the plain denounced of the second overthrow of temple and state, might discourage them too much from going forward in the present restoration of both.” So Mr. Pembile.

The prophet was contemplating the power and tendency of these deceivers, as they would carry off thieves and swearers, when he bid to turn, and he shall see greater desolations than these made by the curse of God for the sin of man; Lift up thine eyes now, and see what is here, v. 5. What is this that goeth forth? Whether over the face of the whole earth, as the flying roll, (v. 3.) or only over Jerusalem, is not certain. But, it seems, the prophet now refers the eye of the mind to the dimness of his sight, could not well tell what it was, but asked, What is it? v. 6. And the angel tells him both what it is, and what it means.

1. He sees an ephah; a measure wherewith they measured corn; it contained ten sheers, (Exod. xvi. 36.) and was the tenth part of a homer; (Ezek. xlv. 11.) it is put for any measure used in commerce, Dact. xxv. 14. And this is their resemblance, the resemblance of the Jewish nation, over all the earth, wherever they are now dispersed, or, at least, it will be so when their ruin draws near. They are filling up the measure of their iniquity, which God has set them; and when it is full as the ephah of corn, they shall be delivered into the hands of those to whom God had sold them for their sins: they are mixed to destruction, as of corn measured to the market, or to the mill. And some think that the mentioning of an ephah, which is used in buying and selling, intimates that fraud and deceit, and extortion in commerce, was a sin abounding much among them, as that people are known to be notoriously guilty of it at this day. This is a proper representation of them through all the earth. There is a measure set them, and they are filling it up apace. See Matt. xxvii. 33. 2 Thess. ii. 16.

2. He sees a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah; representing the sinful church and nation of the Jews in their latter and degenerate age, when the faithful city became a harlot. He that weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, measures nations and churches as in an ephah; so exact is he in his judicial dealings with them. God’s people are called, The corn of his floor, Isa. xxi. 10. And here he puts this corn into the bushel, in order to his parting with it. The angel says of the woman in the ephah, This is wickedness, it is a wicked nation; else God would not have rejected it; and it is his own hand and power, he is himself the plator of it; and the prophet is happy in himself in this sense, that though he live in a wicked and corrupt generation, yet he may live for evermore, as the king and priest in the state, and their posterity, till the kingdom of God be set up in the earth. How is the gold become dim! Israel was holiness to the Lord; (Jer. ii. 3.) but now this is wickedness; and wickedness is no where so scandalous, so odious, and, in many instances, so outrageous, as when it is found among professors of religion.

He sees the woman thrust down into the ephah, and a talent, or large weight of lead, cast upon the mouth of it, by which she is secured, and made a close prisoner in the ephah, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to show that the wrath of God against impudent sinners is, (1.) Unavoidable, and what they cannot escape; they are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse, as this woman in the ephah; he could find no issue out of his hands, (Job xxxvi. 15.) but he cannot. (2.) It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under. Guilt is upon the sinner as a talent of lead, to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem’s peace, Now they are hid from thine eyes, that threw a talent of lead upon them. He sees the substance of the woman thus pressed to death in it, carried away into some far country. (1.) The instruments employed to do it were, two women, who had wings like those of a stork, large and strong, and, to make them fly the more swiftly, they had the wind in their wings, denoting the great violence and expedition with which the Romans destroyed the Jewish nation. God has not only winged his messengers, but he also gives wings to them, which carries them forward along the lines of their course and order, and that among them who employs in this lower world; and when he does so, he forwards them with the wind in their wings; his providence carries them on with a favourable gale. (2.) They bore it up in the air; denoting the terrors which pursued the wicked Jews, and their being a public example of God’s vengeance to the world. They carried it up, so they would not only carry it away, but carry them with their wings, unworthy of either, and abandoned by both; for the Jews, when this was fulfilled, pleased not God, and were contrary to all men, 1 Thess. ii. 15. This is wickedness, and this comes of it; heaven thrust out wicked angels, and earth sped out wicked Canaanites. (3.) When the prophet inquired whither they carried their prisoner whom they had now in execution, (v. 10.) he was told that they did not proceed to build it a house in the land of Shinar; This intimates that the punishment of the Jews should be a final dispersion; they should be hurried out of their own country, as the cliff which the wind drives away, and should be forced to dwell in far countries, particularly in the country of Babylon, whither many of the scattered Jews went, after the destruction of their land by the Babylonians, and went also to other countries, especially in the Levant parts; not to sojourn, as in their former captivity, for seventy years, but to be nailed down for perpetuity. There the ephah shall be established, and set upon her own base. Which intimates, [1.] That their calamity shall continue from generation to generation, and that they shall be so dispersed, thus, as well as a wickedness itself, it is abominable wickedness. [2.] That their iniquity shall continue too, and their hearts shall be hardened in it; blindness is hardened upon Israel, and they are settled upon the lees of their own unbelief; their wicked
ness is established upon its own basis. God has given them a spirit of slumber, (Rom. xi. 8.) lest at any time they should convert, and be healed.

**CHAP. VI.**

The two kingdoms of providence and grace are what we are all very nearly interested in, and therefore are concerned to acquaint ourselves with all our temporal affairs being in a necessary subjection to Divine Providence, and all our spiritual and eternal concerns in a necessary dependence upon divine grace; and these two are represented to us in this chapter—the former by a vision, the latter by a type. Here is, 1. God, as King of nations, ruling the world by the ministry of angels, in the vision of the four chariots, v. 1. - 8. II. God, as King of saints, ruling the church by the mediation of Christ, in the figure of Joshua the high priest crowned, the ceremony performed, and then explained concerning Christ, v. 9. - 15.

1. **AND I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.** 2. In the first chariot were red horses, and in the second chariot black horses, 3. And in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. 4. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? 5. And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. 6. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country: and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. 7. And the bay went forth, and sought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get ye hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. 8. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quitted my spirit in the north country. The prophet is forward to receive this vision, and, as if he expected it, he turned, and lifted up his eyes, and looked. Though this was the seventh vision he had had, yet he does not think he has had enough; for the more we know of God and his will, the more desirous we shall be to get a further acquaintance with God. Now observe here,

1. **The sight that the prophet had of four chariots drawn by horses of divers colours; together with the explication of the sight, v. 1. - 5.** He did not look long, but he discovered that which was worth seeing, and which would serve very much for this occasion, the four chariots of the four monarchical. The Babylonian monarchy, they think, is here represented by the red horses, which are not afterward mentioned, because that monarchy was now extinct. The second chariot with the black horses, is the Persian monarchy, which went forth northward against the Babylonians, and quieted God's Spirit in the north country, by executing his judgments on Babylon, and freeing the Jews from their captivity. The white, the Greeks, go forth after them, in the north, for they overthrew the Persians. The grisled, the Romans, who conquered the Grecian empire, are said to go forth toward the south; because Egypt, which lay southward, was the last branch of the Grecian empire that was subdued by the Romans. The bay horses had been with the grisled, but afterward went forth by themselves; and by these they understand the Goths and Vandals, who with their victorious arms walked to and fro through the earth; or the Selucidae and Lagidae, the two branches of the Grecian empire. Thus Greeks and others.

But I incline rather to understand this vision more generally, as designed to represent the administration of the kingdom of providence in the government of this lower world. The angels are often called the chariots of God, as Ps. lxxviii. 17. - xviii. 10. The various providences of God concerning nations and churches, are represented by the different colours of horses, rev. vi. 2, 3, 5. And so we may observe here,

1. That the counsels and decrees of God are the spring and original of all events, and they are immovable, as mountains of brass. The chariots came from between two mountains; for God performs the thing that is appointed for us: his appointments are the originals, and his performances are but copies from them; he does all according to the counsel of his will. We could as soon grasp the mountains in our arms, as comprehend the divine counsels in our finite understandings; and as soon remove mountains of brass as alter any of God's purposes; for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? Whatever the providences of God are concerning us, as to public or private affairs, we should see them all coming from between the mountains of brass, and therefore see it as much our folly to quarrel with them as it is our duty to acquiesce in them. Who may say to God, What dost thou, or why doest thou so? Acts ii. 23. - iv. 28.

2. That God executes his decrees in the works of providence, which are as chariots, in which he rides as a Prince in an open chariot, to show his glory to the Gentiles; in which he rides forth conquering, and to conquer, and triumphing over all the enemies of his glory and government. God is great and terrible in his doings; (Ps. lxxvii. 3.) and in them we see the goings of our God, our King, Ps. lxxxviii. 24. His providences move swiftly and strongly as chariots, but all directed and governed by his infinite wisdom and understanding. As the chariots of the Persian monarch, so the chariots of God, are swift and strong; but they do not run away, nor are they driven by the wind; they do not carry us where we will, as chariots by their drivers; nor are they chariots of fire, and horses of fire, to carry one prophet to heaven, and guard another on earth. They are so observant of, and obsequious to, the will of God, as well managed horses are to their rider or driver. Not that God needs them or their services, but he is pleased to make use of them, that he may put honour upon them, and encourage our trust in his providence.

3. That the holy angels are the ministers of God's providence, and are employed by him, as the armies of heaven, for the executing of his counsels among the inhabitants of the earth; they are the chariots, or, which comes all to one, they are the horses that draw the chariots, great in power and might, and who, like the horse that God himself describes, (Ps. xxii. 24.) which is a charger by his driver, and terrible, but cannot be terrified, or made afraid, they are chariots of fire, and horses of fire, to carry one prophet to heaven, and guard another on earth.

4. That the events of providence have different
aspects, and the face of the times often changes. The horses in the first chariot were red, signifying war and bloodshed, _blood to the horse-bridles_, Rev. xiv. 20. Those in the second chariot were black, signifying the dismal, melancholy consequences of war; it puts all into mourning, lays all waste, introduces famines and pestilences, and dissolves, and makes whole lands to languish. Those in the third chariot were white, signifying the return of comfort, and peace, and prosperity, after these dark and dismal times; though God cause grief to the children of men, yet will he have compassion. Those in the fourth chariot were of a mixed colour, grizzled and bay; some speckled and spotted, and ash-coloured, signifying events of different compliances in men, and counterchanges; a day of prosperity, and a day of adversity, set the one over against the other; the cup of providence in the hand of the Lord is full of mixture, Ps. lxxxv. 8.

5. That all the instruments of Providence, and all the events of it, come from God, and from him they receive their commissions and instructions; (v. 3.) These are the four spirits of heaven, the four winds, (so some,) which seem to blow as they list, from the various points of the compass; but God has them in his hands, and brings them out of his treasures. Or, rather, These are the angels that go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth, to attend upon him, and minister to him; to behold his glory in the upper world, and to spread his glory in this lower world, which is their business. They stand before him as the Lord of the whole earth, to receive orders from him, and give up their accounts to him concerning their services on this earth, for it is all within his jurisdiction. But, when he appoints, they go forth as messengers of his counsels, and ministers of his justice, and the secrets of motions and impulsion upon the spirits of men, by which the designs of Providence are carried on, some think, are these four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from God, and fulfill what he appoints, who is the God of the spirits of all flesh.

6. That there is an admirable beauty in providence, and one event serves for a balance to another; (v. 4.) The black horses went forth, carrying with them very dark and melancholy events, such as made every person and every thing look black; but presently the white went forth after them, carrying joy to them that mourned, and by a new turn given to affairs, making them to look pleasant again. Such are God's dealings with his church and people; if the black horses go forth, the white ones presently go after them, for us affliction abounds, consolation much more abounds.

7. That the common, general aspect of providence is mixed and compounded. The grizzled and bay horses were both in the fourth chariot; (v. 5.) and though they went forth, at first, toward the south country, yet, afterward, they sought to walk to and fro through the earth, and were directed to do business in the opposite to and fro through the earth, we shall find the events of providence neither all black, nor all white, but ash-coloured, or grey, mixed of black and white—such is the world we live in, that before us is unmixed. Here we are singing, at the same time, of mercy and judgment, and we must sing unto God of both, (Ps. ci. 1.) and liberty to accommodate ourselves to God's will and designs in the business of our lives, rejoiceing in our comforts as though we rejoiced not, because they have their allays, and weeping for our afflictions as though we wept not, because there is so much mercy mixed with them.

8. That God is well pleased with all the operations of his own providence; (v. 6.) These have quieted my spirit, these black horses which speak extraordinary judgments, and the white ones which speak extraordinary deliverances, both which went toward the north country, while the common mixed providences went all the world over. These have quieted my spirit in the north country, which had often been the most remarkable genius of God's presence, with reference to the church; that is, by these uncommon appearances and actions of providence God's wrath is executed upon the enemies of the church, and his favours are conferred upon the church, both which had long been deferred, and in both God had fulfilled his will, accomplished his word, and so quieted his Spirit. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; and, as he speaks, Isa. i. 24, made himself easy.

9. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 10. Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; 11. Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; 12. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold, the man, whose name is The BRANCH: and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; 13. Even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. 14. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord. 15. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

God did not only at sundry times, but in divers manners, speak in time past by the prophets of his church. In the former part of this chapter, he spake by a vision, which the prophet only saw himself; here, in this latter part, he speaks by a sign, or type, which many saw, and which, as it was explained, was an illustrious prediction of the Messiah, as the Priest and King of his church. Here is,

1. The significant ceremony which God appoints—and the high priest, v. 10, 11. It is observable that there should be two eminent types of Christ in the Old Testament, that were both named Joshua, the same name with Jesus; and by the LXX, and in the New Testament, rendered Jesus, Acts vii. 45. Joshua, the chief captain, a type of Christ, the Captain of our salvation, and Joshua, the chief priest, a type of Christ, the high priest of our profession, and both, in their day, saviours, and leaders into Canaan. And this is peculiar to Joshua the high priest, that here was something done to him by the divine appointment, on purpose that he might be a type of Christ; a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was both a king and a priest. Joshua was far from being ambitions of a crown, and the people of
having a crowned head over them; but the prophet, to the great surprise of both, is ordered to crown Joshua as if he had been a king. And as Zerubbabel's prudence and pietie kept this from happening and affecting some, so Zerubba-bel's prudence and pietie kept him, (so God's providence kept the kings of Persia from taking umbrage at it,) as raising a rebellion against them. In doing what we are sure is God's displeasure, as this we, we may well venture men's displeasure.

1. Here were some Jews come from Babylon, that brought an offering to the house of God; and out of the corn that was used for giving up their bretheren, that came from Babylon on a visit to Jerusalem, they ought to have bid a final farewell to Babylon, and to have come and settled with their brethren in their own land; and for their remissness and indifferency in not doing so, they thought to atone by this visit. Perhaps they came as ambassadors from the body of the Jews that were in Babylon, who lived there in ease and fulness; and hearing that the building of the temple went on so long for want of money, they sent them with an offering of gold and silver for the service of the house of God. Note, Those that by reason of distance, or otherwise, cannot forward a good work by their persons, must, as they are able, forward it by their purses; if some find hands, let others fill them.

1. A place is appointed for the prophet to meet them. They thought to bring their present to the priest, God's ordinary minister; but God has a prophet, an extraordinary one, ready to receive them and it; which would be an encouragement to them, who, in their captivity, had so often complained. We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet; and would invite them and others to settle in their own land, which then began to look like a promise; and the Spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah was ordered to give them the meeting, the same day they came, (for when they arrived, they would lose no time, but present their offering immediately,) and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God now accepted their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Joshua, the son of Zephaniah, who, probably, was receiver-general, when the Spirit of prophecy was revived in it. Zechariah was ordered to give them the meeting, the same day they came, (for when they arrived, they would lose no time, but present their offering immediately;) and to bid them welcome, assuring them that God now accepted their gifts. He was to meet them in the house of Joshua, the son of Zephaniah, who, probably, was receiver-general, when the Spirit of prophecy was revived in it.

II. The signification which God gave of this ceremony. Every one would be ready to ask, "What is the meaning of Joshua's being crowned thus?" And the prophet is as ready to tell them the meaning of it. Upon this speaking sign is graced a prediction, and the sign was used, to make it the more taken notice of; and the better remembered. Now the promise is,

1. Though we in the fulness of time, raise up a great high priest, like Joshua, Tell Joshua that he is but the figure of one that is to come, a faint shadow of him; (v. 12.) Speak unto him in the name of the Lord of hosts, that Man whose name is, The BRANCH, shall grow up out of his place, out of Bethlehem the city of David, the place appointed for his birth; though the family be a root in a dry ground, yet this Branch shall spring out of it; as, when it is light, the plant is to be seen; when it is springing out of the roots, in which they lay buried out of sight, and out of mind. He shall grow up for himself, (so some read it,) propriis virtute—by his own vital energy; shall be exalted in his own strength.

2. That as Joshua was an active, useful instrument in building the temple, so the Man, the Branch, shall be the Master-Builder, the sole Builder of the spiritual temple, the gospel-church. He shall build the temple of the Lord; and it is repeated again, (v. 13.) Even he shall build the temple of the Lord: he shall grow up to do good, to be an instrument of God's glory, and a great Blessing to mankind. Note, The gospel-church is the temple of the Lord, a spiritual house, (1 Pet. ii. 5.) a holy temple, Eph. ii. 21. In the temple God made Dispensation, the laws of his service and worship were given, the service and homage of his people; in the gospel-church, the light of divine revelation shines by the word, and the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise are offered. Now Christ is not only the Foundation, but the Founder, of this temple, by his Spirit and grace.

3. They shall bear his glory. Glory is a burden, but not so heavy as to bear it, who upholds all things. The cross was his glory, and he bore that; so was the crown an exceeding weight of glory, and he bears that. The government is upon his shoulders, and in it he bears the glory, Is. ix. 6. They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house, Is. xxii. 24. It becomes him, and he is far better—well able to bear it.

The glory of the priesthood and royalty had been divided between the house of Aaron and that of David; but now he alone shall bear all the glory of both. That which he shall bear, which he shall undertake, shall be indeed the glory of Israel; and they must wait for that, and, in prospect of it, must be content in the want of that external glory which they formerly had. He shall bear such a glory as shall make the glory of this latter shall be greater than that of the former. He shall lift up the glory; it may be read;) the glory of Israel had been thrown down and depressed, but he shall raise it out of the dust.

4. That he should have a throne, and be both Priest and King upon his throne. A throne denotes both dignity and dominion, an exalted honour, with an extensive power. (1.) This Priest shall be a High Priest over Israel, and shall sit upon his father's right hand, and reign in his stead, in dignity and dominion to his dignity as a King. He shall sit and reign upon his throne. Christ, as a Priest, ever lives to make intercession for us; but he does it sitting at his Father's right hand, as one having authority, Heb. viii. 1. We have such a High Priest as Israel never had, for he is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, which puts a prevailing plea into his prayer for us. His hand, as it were, is within the veil, is one that sits and rules there. Christ, who is ordained to offer sacrifices for us, is authorized to give law to us. He will not save us unless we be willing that he should govern us. God has prepared him a throne in the heavens; and if we could have any benefit by that, we must prepare him a throne in our hearts, and be willing
and glad that he should sit and rule upon that throne; and to him every thought within us must be brought into obedience. (2) This King shall be a Priest: a Priest upon his throne: with the majesty and power of a King; he shall have the tenderness and simplicity of a Priest, who, being taken from among men, is ordained for men, and can have compassion on the ignorant, Heb. v. 1, 2. In all the acts of his government as a King; he prosecutes the intentions of his grace as a Priest. Let not therefore those that are his, look upon his throne, though a throne of glory and a throne of judgment, with terror and amazement; for as there is a rainbow about the throne, so he is a Priest upon the throne.

11. The temple, the Branch; that is, (1.) Between Jehovah, and the Man, the Branch; between the Father and the Son; the counsels concerning the peace to be made between God and man, by the mediation of Christ, shall be concerted, shall appear to have been concerted, by infinite wisdom in the covenant of redemption; the Father and the Son understood one another perfectly well in that matter: or, rather, (2.) Between the Priest and the throne, between the priestly and kingly-office of Jesus Christ. The Man, and Branch, must grow up to carry on a counsel of peace, peace on earth, and, in order to that, peace with heaven. God's thoughts towards us were thoughts of peace, and, in prosecution of them, he exalted his Son Christ Jesus to be both the centre and summit of all his glory and grace. Go and serve the Lord, with this proviso, that he should be a Priest upon his throne; and by executing the two offices of a Priest and King, should bring about that great undertaking of man's reconciliation to God, and happiness in God. Some think it alludes to the former government of the Jews' state, wherein the king and priest, several officers, did take care, one of them for matters of peace, and prosperity in church and state, as did Zerubbabel and Joshua; now, I may add, the prophets of God helping them; so shall the peace and welfare of the gospel-church, and of all believers, be wrought, though not by two several persons, yet by virtue of two several offices meeting in one—Christ purchasing all peace by his priesthood, and maintaining and defending it by his kingly office, and by his prophetic office serviceable to both in this great design.

6. That there should be a happy coalition between Jews and Gentiles in the gospel-church, and they should both meet in Christ, the Priest upon his throne, as the Centre of their unity; (v. 15.) They that are far off, shall come, and build in the temple of the Lord. Some understand it of the Jews that were now afar off in Babylon, that stood behind in captivity, to the great discouragement of their brethren that were returned, who wanted their help in building the temple. Now God promises that many of them, and some of other nations too, proselyted to the Jewish religion, should come in, and lend a helping hand to the building of the temple, and may make help of them; and kings of Persia contributed to the building of the temple, (Ezra vi. 8,) and the furnishing of it, Ezra vii. 19, 20. And, in after-times, Herod the Great, and others that were strangers, helped to beautify and enrich the temple. But it has a further reference to that temple of the Lord, which the Man, the Branch, was to build: the Gentiles, strangers afar off, shall help to build it, for wrong them, and can have no share in it, but God will raise up ministers that shall be workers together with Christ about that building; and all the Gentile converts shall be stones added to this building, so that it shall grow up to a holy temple, Eph. ii. 20—22. When God's temple is to be built, he can fetch in those that are afar off, and employ them in the building of it.

7. That the accomplishment of this would be a strong confirmation of the truth of God's word; Ye shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent us unto you. That promise, that those that were afar off should come, and assist in building the temple of the Lord, and the end of the earth to it, as it were, the g. s. a. of a sign; by this they might be assured that the other promises should be fulfilled in due times; this should be fulfilled now very speedily; it was so, for those that had been their enemies and accusers, in obedience to the king's edict, became their helpers, and did speedily what they were ordered to do for the furtherance of the work, and by that means the work was speedily finished. Now by this surprising assistance which they had from afar off in building the temple, they might know that Zechariah, who told them of it before, was sent of God, and that therefore his word concerning the Man, the Branch, should be fulfilled.

8. That those promises were strong obligations to obedience; 'For this shall come to pass—you shall have help in building the temple, if you will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.' You shall have the help of foreigners in building the temple, if you will but set about it in good earnest yourselves. The assistance of others, instead of being an excuse for our slothfulness, should be a spur to our industry. 'You shall have the benefit and comfort of all those promises, if you make concern yourself a thorough happiness for your souls; put yourselves upon a good behaviour; and though their God is coming toward them in a way of mercy, they cannot expect him to proceed in it, unless they conform to his laws. Note, That which God requires of us, to qualify us for his favour, is, obedience to his revealed will; and it must be a diligent obedience. We cannot obey the voice of God without a great deal of care and watchfulness: and the obedience thus be accepted of God unless it be laboured by us.

III. The provision that was made to preserve the remembrance of this. The crowns that were used in this solemnity, were not given to Joshua, but must be kept for a memorial in the temple of the Lord, v. 14. Either they were laid up in the temple-treasury, or, (as the Jew's tradition is,) they were made and hung up by Joshua, in the view of all, in perpetuum rei memoriam—a perpetual memorial; for a traditional evidence of the promise of the Messiah, and this typical transaction used for the confirmation of that promise. The crowns were delivered to them who found the materials, (and some think their names were engraved on the crowns,) to be preserved as a public testimony of their pious liberality, and an encouragement to others in like manner to bring presents to the house of God. Note, Various means were used for the support of the faith of the Old Testament saints, who waited for the consolation of Israel, till the time, the set time, for it came.

CHAP. VII.

We have done with the visions, but not with the revelations, of this book; the prophet sees no more such signs as he had seen before, but still the word of the Lord is spoken by him. In this chapter, we have, 1. A case of conscience proposed to the prophet by the children of the captivity concerning fasting: whether they should continue their solemn fasts which they had observed during the 70 years of their captivity, v. 1—3. 11. The answer to this question; which is given in this and the next chapter, and this answer was given, not at once, but by parables and signs, and it should be, and was, as it was observed, for here are four distinct discourses which have all of them reference to this case, each of them prefaced with the word of the Lord came, in this chapter, v. 4, 8, and ch. viii. 1, 18. The method of them is very observable. In this chapter, the great discourse shows the mismanagements of their fasts, v. 4—7. 2. He exhorts them to reform their lives, which would be the best way of fasting, and to take heed of these sins which
brought those judgments upon them, which they kept these fasts in memory of, v. 8. And then, in the next chapter, having searched the wound, he binds it up, and heals it, with various assurances of great mercy. God had set in store for them, by which he would turn their fasts into feasts.

1. A ND it came to pass, in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chislev; 2. When they had sent unto the house of God, Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the Lord, 3. And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years! 4. Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, 5. Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? 6. And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? 7. Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

This occasional sermon, which the prophet preached, and which is recorded in this and the next chapter, was above two years after the former, in which he gave them an account of his visions, as appears by comparing the date of this, (v. 1.) in the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, with the date of that, (ch. i. 1.) in the eighth month of the second year of Darius; not that Zechariah was told all that while; (it is expressly said that he and Haggar continued prophesying till the temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius, Ezra vi. 14, 15.) but during that time he did not preach any sermon that was afterward published, and left upon record, as this is. God may be honoured, his work done, and his interests served, by word of mouth as well as by writing; and by inculcating and pressing what has been taught, as well as by advancing something new. Now here we have,

I. A case proposed concerning fasting. Some persons were sent to inquire of the priests and prophets, whether they should continue to observe their yearly fasts, particularly that in the fifth month, as they had done. It is uncertain whether the case was put by those that yet remained in Babylon, who, being deprived of the benefit of the solemn feasts which God's ordinances appointed them, made up the want by the solemn fasts which God's provisions called them to; or by those that were returned, but lived in the country, as some rather inclined to think, because they are called the people of the land, v. 5. But as to that, the answer given to the messengers of the captive Jews, might be directed, not to them only, but to all the people. Observe,

1. Who they were, that came with this inquiry—Sherezer and Regem-melech: persons of some rank and figure; for they came with their men, and did

*Note* that it below them, or any disparagement to them, to be sent on this errand, but rather an addition to their honour, to be, (1.) Attendants in God's house, there to do duty, and receive orders. The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. (2.) Agents for God's people, to negotiate their affairs. Men of estates, having more to do than others, must bring to employ their time in the service of the public; by doing good they make themselves truly great; the messengers of the churches were the glory of Christ, 2 Cor. viii. 23.

2. What the errand was, upon which they came. They were sent, perhaps, not with gold and silver, (as those, ch. vi. 10, 11.) or if they were, that is none of their concern, but upon the great errand which should bring us all to the house of God, (1.) To intercede with God for his mercy. They were sent to pray before the Lord, and, some think, (according to the usage then,) to offer sacrifice, with which they offered up their prayers. The Jews, in captivity, prayed toward the temple; (as appears, Dan. vi. 10.) but now that it was in a fair way to be rebuilt, and their representatives to pray in it, remembering that God had declared that it should be called a house of prayer for all people, Isa. i. 7. In prayer, we must set ourselves as before the Lord, must see his eye upon us, and have our eye up to him. (2.) To inquire of God concerning his mind. Note, When we offer up our requests to God, it must be with a readiness to receive instructions from him; for if we turn away our ear from hearing his law, we cannot expect that our prayers should be acceptable to him. We must therefore desire to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life, that we may inquire there, (Ps. xxvi. 4.) asking, not only, Lord, what wilt thou do for me? but, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

3. Whom they consulted. They spake to the priests that were in the house of the Lord, and to the prophets; the former were an oracle for ordinary cases, the latter for extraordinary; they were blessed with both, and would try if either could acquaint them with the mind of God in this case. Note, God having given diversities of gifts to men, and all to profit with, we should make use of all as there is occasion. They were not so wedded to the priests, their stated ministers, as to distrust the prophets, who appeared, by the gifts given them, well qualified to serve the church; nor yet were they so much enamoured with the prophets as to despise the priests, but they spake both to the priests and to the prophets, and, in consulting both, gave glory to the God of Israel, and that one Spirit who works all in all. God might speak to them either by Urim, or by prophets, (1 Sam. xxviii. 6.) and therefore they would not neglect either. The prophets and the priests were not jealous one of another, nor had any difference among themselves; let not the people make differences between them, but thank God they had both. The prophets did indeed reprove what was amiss in the priests, but at the same time told the people that the priests' lives should keep knowledge, and they must inspire the law at his mouth, as to the stranger of the Lord of hosts, Mal. ii. 7. Note, Those that would know God's mind, should consult God's ministers, and in doubtful cases ask advice of those whose special business it is to search the scriptures.

4. What the case was, which they desired satisfaction in; (v. 3.) Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, if I were doing duty thereby? (1.) What had been their custom, practice, not only during the seventy years of the captivity, but to this time, which was twenty years after the liberty proclaimed them; they kept up so
lême, stated fasts for humiliation and prayer, which they religiously observed, according as their opportunities were, in their closets, families, or such assemblies for worship as they had. In the case here, they mentioned only one, that of the fifth month; but it appears by ch. viii. 19, that they observed four annual fasts. One in the fourth month, (June 17.) to remember the breaking up of the temple, (Jer. lii. 6.) another, the fifth month, (July 4.) in remembrance of the burning of the temple; (Jer. lii. 12, 13.) another in the seventh month, (September 5.) in remembrance of the killing of Gedaliah, which completed their dispersion; and another in the tenth month, (December 10.) in remembrance of the beginning of the captivity. N. N. the Lord was very commendable in them to keep these fasts, thus to humble themselves under those humbling providences, by which God called them to weeping and mourning; thus to accommodate themselves to their troubles and prepare themselves for deliverance. It would likewise be a means of possessing their children betimes with a due sense of the hand of the Lord gone out against them.

5. What was their present doubt—whether they should continue these fasts or no. The case is put as by a single person: Should I weep? But it was the case of many, and the satisfaction of one would be a satisfaction to the rest; or, perhaps, many had left it off; but the querist will not be determined by the practice of others, if God will have him continue it, he believes the fast will be described by his weeping, separating himself. A religious fast must be distinguished, not only by abstinence, here called a separating ourselves from the ordinary, lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by weeping. Should I still keep such days to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years? It is said (v. 5.) to be seventy years, it began from the last captivity His before, is described by his weeping, separating himself. A religious fast must be distinguished, not only by abstinence, hence called a separating ourselves from the ordinary, lawful comforts of life, but by a godly sorrow for sin, here expressed by weeping. Should I still keep such days to afflict the soul as I have done these so many years? It is said (v. 5.) to be seventy years, it began from the last captivity His before, is described by his weeping, separating himself.

b) Nothing is to be said for the continuance of these fasts; fasting and praying are good work at any time, and do good; we have always both cause enough, and need enough, to humble ourselves before God. To throw off these fasts would be on the change of the length of time, and a cause of their being more so. They were still in distress, and under the tokens of God's displeasure; and it is unwise for the patient to break off his course of physic, while he is sensible of such remains of his distemper. But, (2.) There is something to be said for the putting off these fasts. God had changed the method of his providences concerning them, and was returned, and put them to comfort, not to mercy to them; and ought not they then to change the method of their duties? Now that the bridegroom is returned, why should the children of the bride-chamber fast? Every thing is beautiful in its season. And as to the fast of the fifth month, (which is that particularly inquire of,) that, being kept in remembrance of the burning of the temple, might seem to be superseded rather than any of the other, because the temple was now in a fair way to be rebuilt. But, having long kept up this fast, they would not leave it off without advice, and without asking and knowing God's mind in the case. No, a good method of religious services, which we have found beneficial to ourselves and others, ought not to be altered without good reason, and therefore not without mature deliberation.

II. An answer given to this case. It should seem that though the question looked plausible enough, they who proposed it were not conscientious in it, for they were more concerned about the ceremony than about the substance; they seemed to boast of their fasting, and to upbraided God Almighty with it, that he had not sooner returned, in mercy, to them; for we have done it these so many years. As those, 1st. liii. 3. Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? And some think that unbelief, and distrust of the promises of God, were at the bottom of their inquiry; for, if they had given them the credit that was due to them, they needed not to doubt but they had laid aside, now that the occasion of them was over. And therefore the first answer to their inquiry is a very sharp reproof of their hypocrisy, directed, not only to the people of the land, but to the priests, who had set up these fasts, and perhaps some of them were for keeping them up, to serve some purpuses of their own. Let them all take notice that, whereas the people had been so much mistaken, and many of them, for they were not acceptable to him, unless they had been observed in a better manner, and to better purpose.

1. What they did that was good, was not done aright; (v. 5.) You fasted and mourned. They were not chargeable with the omission or neglect of the duty, as their adversaries would have them. They have had the fasts ever from the time they came out of captivity; (Thy fasts were continually before me, Ps. 1. 6.) but they had not managed them aright. Note, Those that come to inquire of their duty, must be willing first to be told of their faults. And those that seem zealous for the outside of a duty, ought to examine themselves faithfully whether they have the regard there was taught to have to the inside of it. (1.) They had no eye to God in any of this fasting; Did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? He appeals to their own consciences, they will witness against them, that they had not been sincere in it, much more will God, who is greater than the heart, and knows all things. You know very well that you did not at all fast to me; in fasting did you fast to me? There was the same carcass and form of the duty, but none of the life, and soul, and power of it. Fors was it to me, even to me? The repetition intimates what a great deal of stress is laid upon this as the main matter, in that and other holy exercises, that they be done to God, even to him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end, in them, seeking to please him and to obtain his favour, and shewing by the sincerity of our intentions to approve ourselves to him. When they were in the very fast was but a jest. To fast, and not fast to God, was to mock him and provoke him, and could not be pleasing to him. These that make fasting a cloak for sin, as Jezebel's fast, or by it make their court to men for their applause, as the Pharisees, or that rest in outward expressions of humiliation, while their hearts are unhumbled, as Ahaz, do they fast to God, even to him? Is the fasting by which God has chosen? Isa. lvi. 5. If the solemnities of our fasting, though frequent, long, and severe, do not serve to put an edge upon devout affections, to quicken prayer, to increase godly sorrow, and to alter the temper of our minds, and the course of our lives, for the better, they do not at all answer the intention, and God will not accept them as performed to him, even to him. (2.) They had the same eye to themselves in their fasting, that they had in their eating and drinking; (v. 6.) "When ye did eat, and when ye did drink, on other days, (nay, perhaps, on your fast-days, in the observation of which you could, when you saw cause, dispense with yourselves, and take a liberty to eat and drink,) did ye not eat and drink to be sorrowful, and to fast, and drink for yourselves? Have ye not always done as you had a mind yourselves? Why then do ye now pretend a desire to know the mind of God? In your religious feasts and thanksgivings ye have had no more an eye to God than in your fasts." Or, rather
it refers to their common meals; they did no more design the honour of God in their fasting and praying than they did in their eating and drinking; but self was still the centre in which the lines of all their actions, natural, civil, and religious, met. They needed not be in such care about the continuance of their fasts, unless they had kept them better. Note, We miss our end in eating and drinking, when we eat and drink ourselves, as we sought to have others eat and drink to the glory of God, (1 Cor. x. 31.) that our bodies may be fit to serve our souls in his service.

2. The principal good thing they should have done was left undone; (v. 7.) "Should you not hear the words which the Lord has cried by the former prophets? Yes, that you should have done on your fast-days; it was not enough to weep and mourn, as you used to do on your fast-days, in token of your sorrow for the judgments you were under, but you should have searched the scriptures of the prophets, that you might have seen what was the ground of God's controversy with your fathers, and might have taken warning by their miseries not to tread in the steps of their iniquities. You ask, Shall we do as we have done, in fasting? No, you must do that which you do not yet do, do less of your sins, and reform your lives, that is it that we now call you to, and it is the same that the former prophets called your fathers to." To affect them the more with the mischief that sin had done them, that they might be brought to repent of it, he puts them in mind of the former flourishing estate of their country; Jerusalem was then inhabited, and in prosperity, that is now desolate and in distress; the cities round about, that are now in ruins, were then inhabited too and in peace; the country likewise was very populous. Men inhabited the south of the plain, which was not at all fortified, and yet they lived safely, and which was fruitful, and so they lived plentifully; but then God by the prophets cried to them, as one in earnest, and importunate with them, to amend their ways and doings, or else their prosperity would soon be at an end. "Now," says the prophet, "you should have taken notice of that, and have inferred that what was required of them for the preventing of the judgments, and which they did not, is required of you for the removal of the judgments; and if you do it not, all your fasting and weeping signify nothing."

3. And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, 9. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: 10. And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. 11. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. 12. Yea, they made their heart as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.

13. Therefore it is come to pass, that, as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts. 14. But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not: thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned; for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

What was said, v. 7. that they should have heard the words of the former prophets, is here enlarged upon, for warning to these hypocritical inquirers, who continued their sins, when they very precisely asked, whether they should continue their fasts. This prophet had before put them in mind of their fathers' indiscretion in the calls of the prophets; and of the name of it; (ch. i. 4.-6.) and now here again, for others harms should be our warnings. God's judgments upon Israel of old for their sins were written for admonition to us Christians; (1 Cor. 10, 11.) and the same use we should make of the like providences in our own day.

1. This prophet here repeats the heads of the sermons which the former prophets preached to their brethren. Thus the very same things were required of them now. Thus does the Lord of hosts speak to you now, and thus he did speak to your fathers, saying, Execute true judgment. The duties here required of them, which would have been the lengthening of the tranquility of their fathers, and must be the restoring of their tranquility, are, not keeping fasts and offering sacri-

fices, but being justly and lovingly disposed towards one another. What the scribes and publicans were bid to do, that which they were bound to do by the light and law of nature, though there had been no prophets sent to insist upon them; duties which had a direct tendency to the public welfare and peace, and which they themselves would be the gainers by, and not God. (1.) Magistrates must administer justice impartially, according to the maxims of the law, and the merits of the cause, without respect of persons; "Judge judgment of truth, and execute it when you have judged it." (2.) Neighbours must have a tender concern for one another, and must not only do one another no wrong, but be ready to do one another all the good offices that lie in their power. They must show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother, as the case called for it. The infirmities which are in the bodies of our brethren are to be tended with compassion. Hanc veniam petimusque damasque vicissim—This kindness we ask and exer-

cise. (3.) They must not bear hard upon those whom they have advantage against, and who, they know, are not able to help themselves. They must not, either in commerce, or in course of law, oppress the widow, the fatherless, the stranger, and the poor, v. 10. The weakest must not therefore be thrust to the wall, because they are weakest. No thanks to men, not to defy right to those who are in a capacity to demand it, and recover it; but we must, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake, give those their own, who have not power to force it from us. Or, it intimates that that which is but exac-
tness with others, is execution upon the widows and the fatherless; nay, that not relieving and helping and doing what is good, is, in effect, oppressing them. (4.) They must not only not do wrong to any, but they must not so much as desire it, or think of it; "Let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. Do not project it, do not wish it, may, do not so much as please yourself with the fancy of it." The law of God lays a restraint upon the heart, and forbids the mind to entertain any malicious, sanguinary, ill-natured thought; (Deut. xv. 9.) Beware that there be not o thought in thy heart against thy brother.
2. He describes the wilfulness and disobedience of their fathers, who persisted in all manner of wickedness and injustice, notwithstanding these exhortations and admonitions frequently given them in God's name; various expressions to this purport are here heaped up, (v. 11, 12,) setting forth the stubbornness of the defiled mind which is enmity against God, and is not in subjection to the law of God, neither indeed can be. They were obstinate and refractory, and persisted in their transgressions of the law, purely from a spirit of contradiction to the law. (1.) They would not, if they could help it, come within hearing of the prophets, but kept at a distance; or, if that could not be done, they resolved they would not heed it; they refused to hearken, and looked another way as if they had not been spoken to. (2.) If they did hear what was said to them, and, as it seemed, inclined at first to comply with it, yet they flew off when it came to the setting to, and, like a bullock unconsumed to the yoke, they fled away the shoulder, and would not submit to the easy yoke and light burden of God's commandments. They gave a withdrawing shoulder; (so the word is;) they seemed to fly their shoulder to the work, but they presently withdrew it again, as those, Jer. xxxiv. 10, 11. They were like a deceitful bow, as that son that said, I go, Sir; but went not. (3.) They filled their own minds with prejudices against the word of God, and of the prophets, as very likely, and with what authority, to convince themselves against every sermon they heard. They stopped their ears, that they should not hear, as the deaf adder; (Ps. lxxv. 4,) and none are so deaf as those that will not hear, that make their own ear heavy, as the word is. (4.) They resolved that nothing which was said to them, for the enforcing of these injunctions, should make any impression on them, who would have been persuaded, through one had been sent to them from the dead. The words of the prophets were not regarded by them, though they were words which the Lord of hosts sent and directed to them, though he sent them immediately by his Spirit in the prophets; so that in despising them they affronted God himself, and resisted the Holy Ghost. Note, The reason why men are not good, is, because they will not give ear to the word of God. They persist in that course which they know not to be right; and therefore if thou scornest, thou alone shall bear it.

3. He shows the fatal consequences of it to their fathers; Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of hosts. God was highly displeased with them, and justly; he required nothing of them but what was right in itself, and beneficial to the nation; and therefore that he yet they refused, and they persisted in that course which he knew not to be right, was an impiety or manner too. What master could bear to be so abused by his own servant? Such an impiety cannot to the gospel as this was to the law and the prophets, was that which brought wrath to the uttermost upon the last generation of the Jewish church, 1 Thess. ii. 16. Great sins against the Lord of hosts, whose authority is incontestable, bring great wrath from the Lord of hosts, whose power is irresistible. And the effect was, (1.) As they had turned a deaf ear to God's word, so God turned a deaf ear to their prayers, v. 13. As he cried to them in their prosperity, to leave their sins, and they would not hear, he persisted in his iniquities; so they cried unto him in the day of their trouble, to remove his judgments, and he would not hear, but lengthened out their calamities. Even they that set God at defiance in the height of their pride, when pangs came upon them cried unto him. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee. But God has said it, and will abide by it. He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination, Prov. xxvii. 9.-v. 14. &c. Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the success of prayer, Ps. lxxvi. 18. (2.) As they flew off from their duty and allegiance to God, and were of desultory and unsettled spirits, so God dissipated them, and threw them about as chaff before a whirlwind; he scattered them among all the nations whom they knew not, and whom therefore they could not expect to receive any kindness from, v. 14. (3.) As they violated all the laws of their land, so God took away all the glories of it; Their land was desolate after them, and no man passed through or returned. All that country was the kingdom of the two tribes, after the dispersion of the remaining Jews, upon the slaughter of Gedaliah, was left utterly uninhabited; there was not a man, woman, or child, left there; of the cities, they ceased at the end of seventy years' captivity; nay, it should seem, the very roads that lay through the country, were deserted; none passed or repassed; which, as it had an intimation of mercy in it, (though they were cast out of it, yet it was kept empty for their return,) so, for the present, it made the judgment appear much the more dismal; for what a barren wilderness of land, what a desolate land, after many years uninhabited! And they might thank themselves; it was they that by their own wickedness laid the pleasant land desolate. It was not so much the Chaldeans that did it, no, they did it themselves; the desolations of a land are owing to the wickedness of its inhabitants, Ps. civ. 34. This came of their wilful disobedience to the law of God. And the present generation saw how desolate sin had made that pleasant land, and yet would not take warning.

CHAP. VIII.
The work of ministers is, rightly to divide the word of truth, and to give every one his portion. So the prophet is here instructed to do, in the further answer he gives to the case of conscience proposed about continuing the public fasts. His answer in the foregoing chapter, is by way of reproof to those that were disobedient, and would not obey the truth. But here he is ordered to change his voice, and to speak by the word of the Lord, and to the willing and obedient. There are two words here from the Lord of hosts, and they are both good words, and comfortable words. In the first of these messages, (v. 1.) God says to the Jews, that they who have been reformed, replenished; (v. 2-8,) that the country shall be rich, and the affairs of the nation shall be successful their reputation retrieved, and their state in all respects the reverse of what it had been for many years past; (v. 9-13,) he then exhorts them to reform what was amiss among them, that they might be ready for these favours designed them, v. 16, 17. In the latter of these messages; (v. 14,) he shows his people how Israel should be restored, by the return of mercy, v. 19. And that thenceupon they should be replenished, enriched, and strengthened by the accession of foreigners to them, v. 20-23. A AGAIN the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 2. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous.
for her with great fury. 3. Thus saith the 
Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will 
dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jeru-
salem shall be called, A city of truth: and 
the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The 
worthy mountain. 4. Thus saith the Lord of 
hosts, There shall yet old men and old wo-
men dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and 
every man with his staff in his hand for very 
age. 5. And the streets of the city shall be 
full of boys and girls playing in the streets 
thereof. 6. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, 
If it be marvellous in the eyes of the rem-
nant of this people in these days, should it 
also be marvellous in my eyes? saith the 
Lord of hosts. 7. Thus saith the Lord of 
hosts, Behold, I will save my people from 
the east country, and from the west coun-
try; 8. And I will bring them, and they 
shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and 
they shall be my people, and I will be their 
God, in truth and in righteousness.

The prophet, in his foregoing discourses, had left 
his readers under a high charge of guilt and a deep 
sense of wrath; he had left them in a melancholy 
view of the desolations of their pleasant land, which 
was the effect of their fathers' disobedience: but, 
because he designed to bring them to repentance, 
not to drive them to despair, he here sets before 
them the great things God had in store for them, 
certainly something to hope for; that their case 
of conscience would shortly determine itself, and that 
God's providence would as loudly call them to joy 
and gladness as ever it called them to fasting and 
mourning.

I. It is here promised that God will appear for 
Jerusalem, and will espouse and plead her cause. 
1. He will be revenged on Zion's enemies; (v. 2.) 
I may read for Zion by Zion, for that is, "I have 
of late been heartily concerned for her cause, 
and the public interests, with great jealousy. The great wrath 
that was against her, (ch. vii. 12.) now turns against 
her adversaries. I am now jealous for her with 
great fury, and can no more bear to have her abused 
in her afflictions than I could bear to be abused by 
er her provocations." This he had said before, (ch. i. 14, 
15.) that they might promise themselves as much 
freedom in the power of his anger, when it was turned 
to them, as they had felt from it, when it was against 
them. The sins of Zion were her worst enemies, 
and had done her the most mischief; and therefore 
God, in his jealousy for her honour and comfort, 
will take away her sins, and then, whatever 
other enemies injured her, it was at their peril. 2. He 
will be resident in Zion's palaces; (v. 3.) * I am 
resident in Zion, after I had seemed so long to stand 
at a distance, and I will again dwell in the midst of 
Jerusalem as formerly." This secures to them the 
tokens of his presence in his ordinances, and the 
in stances of his favour in his providences.

II. That there shall be a wonderful reformation 
in Jerusalem, and religion, in the power of it, shall 
prevail and flourish there. Jerusalem, that had dealt 
adversely both with God and man, shall become 
so famous for fidelity and honesty, that it shall be 
called and known by the name of a city of truth, 
and the inhabitants of it shall be called children that 
will not lie. The faithful city had become a harlot, 
(15. i. 21.) but shall now become a faithful city 
again; faithful to the God of Israel, and to the wor-
ship of him only. This was fulfilled; for the Jews, 
after the captivity, though there was much amiss 
among them, were never guilty of idolatry. Jeru-
salem shall be called the mountain of the Lord of 
hosts, owning him and owned by him, and therefore 
the holy city. And, besides, a clear and distinct pro-
certated to God, and not, as it had been, the mount 
of corruption, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. Note, The city of 
God ought to be a city of truth, and the mountain 
of the Lord of hosts a holy mountain. Those that 
profess religion and relation to God, must study to 
adorn their profession by all instances of godliness 
and holiness.

III. That there shall be in Jerusalem a great in-
crease of people, and all the marks and tokens of a 
profound tranquillity. When it is become a city of 
truth, and a mountain of holiness, it is then peace-
able and prosperous, and every thing in it looks bright 
and pleasant. 1. You may look with pleasure upon 
the generation that is going off the stage, and see 
them fairly quitting it in the ordinary course of 
nature, and not driven off by war, famine, or pesti-
ence; (v. 4.) In the streets of Jerusalem, that had 
been filled with the bodies of the slain, or deserted 
and left desolate, shall now dwell old men, and old 
women, who have not been cut off by untimely 
deaths, (either through their own intemperance or 
God's vengeance,) but have the even thread of their 
days span out to full length; they shall feel no dis-
agreeable continuance of any part of their lives, 
and shall pass through the whole course of their 
in a full age, as a shock of corn in his season. They 
shall have every one his staff in his hand, for very 
age, to support him, as Jacob, who worshipped, 
leaning upon the top of his staff, Heb. xii. 21. Old 
age needs a support, and should not be ashamed 
to use it, but should furnish itself with divine graces, 
which will be the strength of the heart, and a better 
support than a staff in the hand. Note, The hoary 
bridegroom, as a name of age, signifies the end of 
some period, and the exit of some generation, so it is to the places where they live. It is a grace-
ful thing to a city, to see abundance of old people 
in it; it is a sign, not only of the healthiness of the 
air, but of the prevalence of virtue, and the suppres-
sion and banishment of these many vices which cut 
off the number of men's months in the midst; it is a 
sign, not only that the climate is temperate, but that 
the religion is of the purest stream; see Isa. x. 24. 
The pleasure upon the generation that is rising up 
in their rooms; (v. 5.) The streets of the city shall 
be full of boys and girls playing in the streets. This 
immates, (1.) That they shall be blessed with a 
multiplicity of children; their families shall increase 
and multiply, and replenish the city, which was an 
eariy product of the divine blessing, Gen. i. 28. 
Haply is that man, happy the nation, whose quiver 
full of these arrows! They shall have of both sexes, 
boys and girls, in whom their families shall after-
ward be joined, and another generation raised up. 
(2.) That their children shall be healthful, and 
strong, and active; their boys and girls shall not lie 
sick in bed, or sit pining in the corner, but (which is 
a pleasant sight to parents) shall be hearty and 
cheerful, and play in the streets. It is a pleasant 
playing age, let us not grudge it them, much good 
may it do them, and no harm; evil days will come 
time enough, and years of which they will say that 
they have no pleasure in them; in consideration of 
which, they are concerned not to spend all their time 
in play, but to remember their Creator. (3.) That 
they shall have great plenty, and meat enough for 
all their mouths. In time of peace, when the 
children are seen, as the days of their 
foresaid, in the streets of the 
city, Lam. ii. 11, 12. If they are playing in 
the streets, it is a good sign that they want for nothing. 
(4.) That they shall not be terrified with the 
alarms of war, but enjoy a perfect security. There shall 
be no breaking in of invaders, no going out of 
desert
ers, no complaining in the streets; (Ps. cxliv. 14.) for when there is playing in the streets, it is a sign that there is little care or fear there. Time was, when the enemy hunted their steps so close, that they could not go in their strength (Lam. viii. 11), but now they shall play in the streets, and fear no evil. (5.) That they shall have love and peace among themselves. The boys and girls shall not be fighting in the streets, as sometimes in cities, that are divided into factions and parties, the children soon imbibes and express the mutual resentment of the parents; but they shall be innocently and lovingly playing the warren, the dove, and the damsel, one another. (6.) That the sports and diversions used, shall be all harmless and inoffensive; the boys and girls shall have no other play than what they are willing that persons should see in the streets, no play that seeks corners, no playing the ball, or playing the wanion, for it is the mountain of the Lord, the holy mountain, but honest and modest recreations, which they have no reason to be ashamed of. (7.) That childish, youthful sports shall be confined to the age of childhood and youth. It is pleasing to see the boys and girls playing in the streets, but it is ill-favoured to see men and women playing there, who should fill up their time with work and business. It is well enough for children to be playing in the market-place, crossing the streets; (Matt. xi. 16.) but it is no fit place for men, who are able to work in the yard, should stand all the day idle there. Matth. xx. 3.

IV. That the scattered Israelites should be brought together again from all parts whither they were dispersed; (v. 7.) I will save my people from the east country, and from the west; I will save them from among them that are reproaching them, in Babylon, and in Egypt, and in every country whither they were driven; they shall neither be detained by the nations among whom they sojourn, nor shall they incorporate with them; but I will save them, will separate them, and will bring them to their own land again; by the prosperity of their land will I invite them back, and at the same time incline them to return; and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, shall choose to dwell there, because it is the holy city, though upon many other accounts, it was more eligible to dwell in the country; and therefore we find (Neh. xi. 2.) that the people blessed all the men who willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

V. That God would renew his covenant with them, and be merciful to them, and make them so to him: They shall be my people, and I will be their God. That is the foundation and crown of all these promises, and is inclusive of all happiness. They shall obey God's laws, and God will secure and advance all their interests. This contract shall be made, shall be new-made, in truth, and in righteousness. Some think that the former speaks God's part of the covenant, he will be their God in truth, he will make good all his promises of favour to them; the latter, it is thought, speaks man's part of the covenant; they shall be his people in righteousness, they shall be a righteous people, and shall abound in the fruits of righteousness, and shall not, as they have done, deal treacherously and unjustly with their God. See Hos. ii. 19, 20. God will never have the covenant in a way of grace, as he has promised them; and they shall never leave or forsake him in a way of duty, as they have promised him. These promises were fulfilled in the flourishing state of the Jewish church, for some ages, betwixt the captivity and Christ's time; they were to have a further and a fuller accomplishment in the gospel-church, that heavenly Jerusalem, which is from above, and is the mother of us all; but the fullest accomplishment of all will be in the future state.

All these precious promises are here ratified, and the doubts of God's people silenced, with that question, (v. 6.) If it be marvellous in the eyes of this people, should it be marvellous in mine eyes? It seems unlikely to say that ever Jerusalem should be thus repaired, should be thus replenished, is it therefore impossible with God? The remnant of these people, and God's people in this world are but a remnant; being few and feeble, thought all this was too good news to be true, especially in these days, these difficult days, these cloudy and dark days. Considering how bad the times are, it is highly improbable, it is morally impossible; not that they should ever come to be so good as the prophet speaks. How can these things be? How can dry bones live? But should it therefore appear so in the eyes of God? Note, We do both God and ourselves a deal of wrong, if we think that, when we are nonplussed, we are so, and that he cannot get over the difficulties which to us seem insuperable. With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible; so far are God's thoughts and ways above ours.

9. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. 10. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in, because of the affliction; for I set all men every one against his neighbour. 11. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. 12. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. 13. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. 14. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not; 15. So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah; fear ye not. 16. These are the things that ye shall do, Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: 17. And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love not false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.

God, by the prophet, here gives further assurances of the mercy he had in store for Judah and Jerusalem. Here is line upon line for their comfort, as before there was for their conviction. These verses contain strong encouragements, with reference to the difficulties they now laboured under. And we may observe,

1. Who they were, to whom these encourage
ments did belong—to those who, in obedience to the
call of God by his prophets, applied themselves in
good earnest to the building of the temple; (v. 9.)
4. "Let your hands be strong, that are busy at work
for God; you that hear in these days these words by
the temple, might be built, God told a disbeliever
to them as your fathers were, in the former days, to
the words of those prophets that were sent to them;
you may take the comfort of the promises, and shall
have the benefit of them, who have obeyed the pre-
cepts given you in the day that the foundation of
the house of the Lord was laid, when you were told
that, having begun with it, you must go on; that
the temple might be built. God told a disbeliever
must go on with it, and you have laboured hard for
some time, in obedience to the heavenly vision:
now you are they whose hands must be strengthen-
ed, and whose hearts must be comforted, with these
precious promises; to you is the word of this consola-
tion sent." 
Note, Those, and those only, that are
employed for God, may expect to be encouraged by
him; those who lay their hands to the plough of
duty, shall have them strengthened with the pro-
11. mises of mercy; and those who avoid their fathers'
faults, not only cut off the entail of the curse, but
have it turned into a blessing.
II. What the discouragements were, which they
had hitherto laboured under, v. 10. These are
mentioned as a foil to the blessings God was now
about to grant by setting the old men to work, and
the more strange—to the glory of God, and the
more sweet—to their comfort. The truth was,
the times had long been very bad, and the calamities
and difficulties of them were many and great. 1.
Trade was dead; there was nothing to be done,
and therefore nothing to be got. Before these days
of reformation began, there was no hire for men, or
any hire for beasts; The fruit of the earth (though
it had long lain fallow, and therefore, by the
think, should be more fertile) were thin and poor,
so that the husbandman had no occasion to hire
harvest-people to reap his corn, or teams to carry it
home, for he could be scarcely said to have any.
Merchants had no goods to import or export, so
that they needed not to hire either men or beasts;
hence the poor people, who lived by their labour,
and were therefore employed for themselves and their
families. 2. Travelling was dangerous, so that all
commerce both by sea and land was cut off; nay,
durst stir abroad so much as to visit their
friends, for there was no peace to him that went out,
or came in, because of the affliction. The Samari-
tans, and Ammonites, and their other evil neigh-
bours, made inroads upon them in small parties, and
seized all they could lay their hands on; the
roads were infested with highwaymen, and both city
and country with house-breakers, so that neither
men's persons nor their goods were safe at home or
abroad. 3. There was no such thing as friendship
or good neighbourly among them; I set all men
every one against his neighbour. In this there was
a great deal of sin, for these wars and fightings came
from men's encroachment they shall now have
opportunity to do in the good work they are about, and
hope that it shall yet be well with them; "Thus
and thus you have been harassed and afflicted, but
now God will change his way towards you, v. 11.
Now that you return to your duty, God will comfort
you according to the time that he has afflicted you;
the ebbing tide shall flow again." 1. God will not
proceed in his controversy with them; I will not be
to them as in my former days. Note, It is with us
well or ill, according as God is to us for every
creature is that to us, which he makes it to be.
And if we are not, they shall have all they can desire,
not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight.
The heavens shall give their dew, without which
the earth would not yield her increase; which is a
constant intimacy to us of the beneficence of
the God of heaven to men on earth, and of their
dependence upon him. It is said of a sweeping rain,
that it leaves no food; (Prov. xxviii. 3.) but here
the gentle dew waters the earth, that it may give
seed to the sower and bread to the eater. And thus
God will cause the remnant of this people to possess
all these things. They are but a remnant, a residue,
very few, one would think scarcely worth looking
after; but now that they are at work for God, he
will take care that they shall want nothing which is
fit for them. This confirms what the prophet's colossus had seen, (v. 9.)
8. From this day will I bless you. Note, God's peo-
ple that serve him faithfully, have great possessions;
"All is yours, for you are Christ's." 3. They shall
recover their credit among their neighbours; (v. 13.)
Ye were a curse among the heathen. Every one
charged and condemned them, spake ill of them,
and wished ill to them, upon the account of their
disgrace; that they were as ever you were; for
they were made a form of execution, so that if
a man would load his enemy with the heaviest
curse, he would say, God make thee like a Jew!
"But now, I will save you, and you shall be a bless-
11. ing. Your restoration shall be as much taken
notice of to your honour, as ever your desolation and
dispersion were to your reproach; you shall be
applauded and admired as more than ever you were
before; be courted and caressed as much as ever you were slighted and abandon-
ed." Most men smile or frown upon their neigh-
bours, according as Providence smiles or frowns
upon them; but those whom God plainly blesses as
his own, shows favour to, and puts honour upon, we
ought also to respect and be kind to. The bless-
ed of the Lord are the blessing of the land, and shall
be so accounted by us. This is here promised to the
house both of Israel and Judah; for many of the ten
tribes returned out of captivity with the two tribes,
and shared with them in those blessings; and, it is
probable, beside what came at first, many, very
many, flock ed to them afterward, when they saw
their affairs take this turn. 4. God himself will
determine to do them good, v. 14, 15. All their
fears are to be cast out, they shall be neither
apt to be tempted, nor to be tempted; God had toward them, Jer. xxix. 11.
Compare these promises with the former threatenings. (1.)
When they provoked him to anger with their sins,
said he that he would punish them, and so he did;
11. it was his declared purpose to bring destroying
judgments upon them, and because they repeated
not of their rebellions against him, he repeated not
of his threatenings against them, but let the sentence
of the law take its course. Note, God's punishing
of sinners is never a sudden and hasty resolve, but
it is always the product of thought, and there is a
counsel in that part of the will of God. If the sinner
turn not, God will not turn. (2.) Now that they
pleased him with their services, he said that he
1129

ZECHARIAH. VIII.

18. And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me, saying, 19. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts: therefore love the truth and peace.

20. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people and the inhabitants of many cities.

21. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also.

22. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.

23. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.

These verses contain two precious promises, for the further encouragement of these pious Jews that were weary in building the temple.

1. That a happy period should be put to their fasts, and there should be no more occasion for them, but they shall be converted into thanksgiving days, v. 19. This is a direct answer to the inquiry, whether the conversion of the Jews from the abomination of the heathen would be good and the Lord accept it, v. 1; and this new era is signalized by that memorable event (you shall rejoice) as of which we shall now hear (v. 20). It is a part of the cut off or broken time, which, for many years, had been the age of the prophet's prophecies. "These verses contain two precious promises, for the further encouragement of these pious Jews that were weary in building the temple.

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2. That the Jews should have a share in the good of the Gentiles, v. 21. For though the church of the Gentiles was to be a part of the kingdom of Jerusalem, it was not to be considered as separated from it, and independent of it. 

22. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. 

23. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.
though now it was but just peeping out of its ruins, but it would be accomplished more fully in the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ, and the incorporating of them with the believing Jews in one great body, under Christ the Head; a mystery which is made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets, (Rom. xvi. 26.) and by this among the rest, which makes it strange that, when it was accomplished, they should go up in surprise and stumbling back to the Jews.

1. Who they are, that shall be added to the church; people, and the inhabitants of many cities; (v. 20.) not only a few ignorant country people that may be easily imposed upon, or some idle people that have nothing else to do; but intelligent, insidious citizens, men of business and acquaintance with the world, such as the Gentiles are; you, many people, and strong nations, (v. 22.) some of all languages, v. 23. By this it appears that they are brought into the church, not by human persuasion, for they are of different languages, not by external force, for they are strong nations, able to have kept their ground if they had been so attacked, but purely by the effectual working of divine truth and grace. Note, God's church is a universal church; and the number of the assembly of the church of the first-born some will find out of all nations and kindreds, Rev. vii. 9.

2. How their accession in the church is described; They shall come to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; (v. 21.) and, to show that this is the main matter in which their conversion consists, it is repeated, (v. 22.) They shall come and seek the Lord of hosts with Jezreels of the gate, and pray before the Lord. No mention is made of their offering sacrifices, not only because these were not expected from the proselytes of the gate, but because, when the Gentiles should be brought in, sacrifice and offering should be quite abolished. See who are to be accounted converts to God, and members of the church; and all that are converts to God are members of the church. (1.) They are such as seek the Lord of hosts, such as inquire for God their Maker, covet and court his favour, and are truly desirous to know his mind and will, and sincerely devoted to his honour and glory; this is the generation of them that seek him. (2.) They are such as pray before the Lord; such as make conscience, and make a business, of the duty of prayer; such as cast themselves upon the Lord, and lay all the burden of the world, but without it; such as by prayer pay their homage to God, own their dependence upon him, maintain their communion with him, and fetch in mercy and grace from him. (3.) They are such as herein have an eye to the divine revelation and institution, which is signified by their doing this in Jerusalem, the place which God had chosen, where his word was, where his temple was; that type of Christ and his mediation, which all faithful worshippers will have a believing regard to.

3. How unanimous they shall be in their accession to the church, and how zealously in exciting one another to it; (v. 21.) The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, as formerly when they went up from all parts of the country to worship at the yearly feasts; and they shall say, Let us go, and seek the Lord, and we will go also. This intimates, (1.) That those who are brought into an acquaintance with Christ themselves, should do all they can to bring others acquainted with him; thus Andrew invited Peter to Christ, and Philip invited Nathanael. True grace hates monopolies. (2.) That those who are rightly sensible of their need of Christ, and of the favour of God to Christ, who stir up themselves and others without delay to hasten to him; Let us go speedily to pray; it is for our lives, and the lives of our souls, that we are to petition, and therefore it concerns us to lose no time; in a matter of such moment, delays are dangerous. (3.) That our communion with God is very much assisted and furthered by the communion of saints. It is pleasant to go to the house of God in company; (Ps. Iv. 14. with the multitude, Ps. xlii. 4,) and it is of good use to those that do so, to excite one another to go speedily, and lose no time; we should be glad to go with them. Let us go, says, I will go also. What good we put others upon doing, we must see to it that we do ourselves; else we shall be judged out of our own mouths. Not, Do you go, and I will stay at home; but, Do you go, and I will go with you. A singular pattern (says Mr. Pembile) of zealous charity, that neither leaves others behind, nor turns others before it.

4. Upon what induction they should join themselves to the church; not for the church's sake, but for Christ's. The church is one thing, Christ another, and of different nations and languages shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, begging of him not to go away, but to take them along with him; this speaks the great honour they have for a Jew, as one of the chosen people of God, and therefore well worthy their acquaintance; they cannot all come to take him by the hand, or embrace him in their arms, but a few may, to take hold of the skirt of his robe, to touch the hem of his garment, Matt. viii. 20. We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you. The gospel was preached to the Jews first, (for of that nation the apostles were,) and by them it was carried to the Gentiles. St. Paul was a Jew whose skirt many took hold of, when they welcomed him as an angel of God, and begged him to take them along with him to Christ; but the Greeks took hold of Philip's skirt, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus, John xii. 21. Note, It is the privilege of the saints, that they have God with them, have him among them—the knowledge and fear and worship of him; they have his favour and gracious presence; and this should invite us into communion with them; it is good being with those who have God with them, and those who join themselves to the Lord, shall not be cast out, but must join themselves to his discharge; if we take God for our God, we must take his people for our people, cast in our lot among them, and be willing to take our lot with them.

CHAP. IX.

At this chapter begins another sermon, which is continued to the end of ch. xi. It is called, "The burden of the word of the Lord;" for every word of God has weight in it, to those who regard it, and will be a heavy weight upon them, and, if they do not, a dead weight. Here I. A prophecy against the Jews' unrighteous neighbours, the Syrians, Tyrians, Philistines, and others, (v. 1. v. 6.) with an intimation of mercy to some of them, in their conversions, and of others, and of God's enemies, and of their people, in their protection, v. 8. II. A prophecy of their righteous King, the Messiah, and his coming, with a description of him, (v. 9.) and of his kingdom, the nature and extent of it, v. 10. III. An account of the obligations the Jews lay under to Christ for their deliverance out of their captivity in Babylon, v. 11, 12. IV. A prophecy of the victories and successes God would grant to the Jews, should they trust themselves to his dispositions; if we take God for our God, we must take his enemies, and our deliverance by Christ, v. 13. 15. V. A promise of great plenty, and joy, and honour, which God had in reserve for his people, (v. 16, 17.) which was written for their encouragement.

1. THE burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrack, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes
of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord. 2. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. 3. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. 4. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. 5. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful; and Ekron, for her expectation, shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. 6. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod; and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 7. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God; and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. 8. And I will encamp about my house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

After the precious promises we had in the foregoing chapter, of favour to God's people, their persecutors, who hated them, come to be reckoned with, those particularly that bordered close upon them.

1. The Syrians had been bad neighbours to Israel, and God has a controversy with them. The word of the Lord shall be a burden in the land of Hadrach, that is, of Suriah: but it does not appear why it was so called. That that kingdom is meant, is plain, because Damascus, the metropolis of that kingdom, is said to be the rest of this burden; that is, the judgments here threatened shall light and lie upon that city. Those are miserable, upon whom the burden of the word of the Lord rests, upon whom the weight of God's judgments doth press, who, in the sight of God, is a weight that they cannot shake off, nor bear up under; there are those whom God causes his fury to rest upon; whom the wrath of God makes its mark, it will be sure to hit; whom it makes its rest, it will be sure to sink. And the reason of this burden's resting on Damascus, is, because the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, (or rather, even of all the tribes of Israel,) are toward the Lord; because the people of God by faith and prayer look up to him for succour and relief, and depend upon him to take their part against their enemies. Note, It is a sign that God is about to appear remarkably for his people, when he raises their believing expectations from him and dependence upon him; and when by his grace he turns them from idols to himself; (Isa. xvii. 7, 8.) At that time the eyes of men were set upon Damascus, and prayed thither, and disputed with the Jews, then the word of the Lord might be said to rest there, and then the eyes of men, of other men besides the tribes of Israel, began to be toward the Lord; see Acts ix. 22. Hamath, a country which lay north of Damascus, and which we often read of, shall border thereby; (v. 2.) it joins to Syria, and shall share in the burden of the word of the Lord, that rests upon Damascus. The Jews have a proverb, Wo to the wicked man, and wo to his neighbour, who is in danger of partaking in his sins and in his plagues; wo to the land of Hadrach, and wo to Hamath, and their borders.

II. Tyre and Zidon come next to be called to an account here, as in other prophecies, v. 2.—4. Observe here,

1. Tyrus flourishing, thinking herself very safe, and ready to set God's judgments, not only at a distance, but at defiance; for, (1.) She is very wise; it is spoken ironically; she thought she was wise, and able to outwit even the wisdom of God; it is granted that her king is a great politician, and that her statesmen are so. Ezek. xxviii. 3. But with all their wit and policy they shall not be able to evade the judgments of God, when they come with commission; there is no wisdom or counsel against the Lord; may, it is his honour to take the wise in their own craftiness. (2.) She is very strong, and well fortified by her commerce and art; Tyre did build herself a strong hold, which, she thought, could never be brought down, or get over. (3.) She is very rich, and money is a defence, it is the sinews of war, Eccl. vii. 12. By her vast trade she has heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets: she has an abundance of it; heaps of silver as common as heaps of sand. xxxvi. 16. Solomon made silver to be in Jerusalem as the stones of the streets; but Tyre went further, and made fine gold to be as the mire of the streets. It were well if we could all learn so to look upon it, in comparison with the merchandise of wisdom and grace, and the gains thereof.

2. Tyre falling, after all; her wisdom, and wealth, and strength, shall not be able to secure her; (v. 4.) The Lord will cast her out of that strong hold wherein she has fortified herself, will make her poor; (so some read it;) there have been instances of those that have fallen from the height of plenty to the depth of poverty, and great riches have come to nothing. God will smite her power in the sea; her being surrounded by the water shall not secure her, but she shall be devoured with fire, some burnt with fire, and others drowned, and the flames being sent in the midst of the water, was, one would have thought, in danger of being some time or other overflowed or washed away by that; yet God chooses to destroy it by the contrary element; sometimes he brings ruin upon his enemies by those means which they least expect. Water enough was nigh at hand to have quenched the flames of Tyre, and yet by them she should be devoured; for who can put out the fire which the breath of the Almighty blows up?

III. God next contends with the Philistines, with their great cities and great lords, that bordered southward upon Israel.

1. They shall be alarmed and affrighted by the word of the Lord lighting and resting upon Damascus; (v. 5.) the disgrace of Israel had many a time been so upon Tyre and Zidon, and now God's arrows had triumphed in them; but now Ashkelon shall see the ruin of her friends and allies, and shall fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; concluding that their own turns come next, now that the cup of trembling goes round; what will become of their house when their neighbour's is on fire? They had looked upon Tyre and Zidon as a bulwark to them; when their cities were ruined, their expectations from them were ashamed; as our expectations from all creatures will be in the issue.
in servitude, they shall recover their ancient dignity, and be victorious, as David, and other governors in Judah formerly were; and Ekron, that is, the Philistines, shall be as the Jebusites, and the rest of the devoted nations were brought into subjection under them.

However, this is plainly the sense of v. 8, that God will take his people under his special protection, and therefore will weaken their neighbours, that it may not be in their power to do them a mischief; I will encamp about my house because of the army. Note, God’s house lies in the midst of an enemy’s country, and his church is a city among thorns; and therefore God’s power and goodness are observed in the special preservation of it. The camp of the apostles is likened to the guard and the numerous armies of the powers of darkness that are set against it round about, would certainly be swallowed up, if the angels of God did not encamp about it, as they did about Elisha, to deliver it, Rev. xx. 9. Ps. xxxiv. 7. When the times are unusually perilous, when armies are marching and counter-marching, and all bearing ill will to Zion, then Providence will as it were come to its guards upon the church of God, because of him that passes by, and because of him that returns, that, whether he return a conqueror or conquered, he may do it no harm. And as none that pass by shall hurt them, so no oppressor shall pass through them any more; they shall have no enemy within themselves to rule them with rigour, and to make their lives bitter to them with sore bondage, as of old in Egypt. This was fulfilled, when, for some time after the struggles of the Maccabees, Judea was a free and flourishing state; or perhaps when Alexander the Great, struck with an awe of Jaddus the high priest, favoured the Jews, and took them under his protection, at the same time when he wasted the neighbouring countries. And the reason given for all this is, For now have I seen with mine eyes, how that I carefully distinguished between my people and other people, with whom before they seemed to have had their lot in common, and have made it to appear that I know them that are mine.” This agrees with Ps. xxxiv. 15. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; now his eyes, which run to and fro through the earth, shall fix upon them, that he may show himself tender of them, and strong on their behalf; 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

9. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

That here begins a prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom, is plain from the literal accomplishment of the ninth verse in, and its express application to, Christ’s delivering his captives and triumphant into Jerusalem, Matt. xxi. 5. John xii. 15.

1. Here is notice given of the approach of the Messiah promised, as matter of great joy to the Old Testament church; Behold, thy king cometh
unto thee. Christ is a King; invested with regal powers and prerogatives; a sovereign Prince, an absolute Monarch; having all power both in heaven and on earth. He is Zion's King; God has set him upon his holy hill of Zion, Ps. ii. 6. In Zion his glory as a King shines; hence his low went forth, even the word of the Lord; in the gospel-church, his spiritual kingdom is administered, it is by him that the ordinances of the church are instituted, and its officers commissioned; and it is taken under his protection, he fights the church's battles, and secures its interests, as its King. "This King has been long in coming, but now behold, he cometh; he is at the door, there are but a few ages more to run out, and he that shall come, will come; he cometh unto judgment; he cometh to humble men's hearts, and shall dwell within thy borders; he will come to his own. And therefore rejoice, rejoice greatly, and shout for joy, look upon it as good news, and be assured it is true; please thyself to think that he is coming, that he is on his way toward thee; and be ready to go forth to meet him with acclamations of joy; as one not able to conceal it, it is so great, nor ashamed to own it; it is so just; cry Hosanna to him; Christ's approaches ought to be the church's applauses.

2. Here is such a description of him as renders him very amiable in the eyes of all his loving subjects, and his coming to them very acceptable. (1.) He is a righteous Ruler; all his acts of government will be exactly according to the rules of equity, for him there is no partiality. (2.) He is a Fearful Protector to all those that have faith and true allegiance to him, for he has salvation; he has it in his power, he has it to bestow upon all his subjects; he is the God of salvation; treasures of salvation are in him. He is serva-

utes; saved himself; (so some read it;) rising out of the grave by his own power, and so qualifying himself to be our Saviour. (3.) He is a meek, humble, tender Father to all his subjects; his children, he is lowly; he is poor and afflicted; (so the word signifies;) so it denotes the meanness of his condition; having emptied himself, he was despised and rejected of men. But the evangelist translates it so as to speak the temper of his spirit; he is meek, not taking state upon him, or resenting injuries, but humbling himself from first to last; condescending to the mean, compassionate to the miserable; this was the character of the great Prophet; (Matt. xix. 28.) Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and no less so as a King. It was a proof of this, that, when he made his public entry into his own city, (and it was the only passage of his life that had any thing in it magnificent in the eye of the world,) he chose to ride, not upon a stately horse, or in a chariot, as great men used to ride, but upon an ass; a beast of servitude, but a poor silly and contemptible one, low and slow, and in those days ridden only by the meaner sort of people; nor was it an ass fitted for use, but an ass's colt, a little, foolish, unmanageable thing, that would be more likely to disgrace his rider than be any credit to him, and that not his own neither; nor helped off, as sometimes a man's horse is, by good furniture, for he had no saddle, no housings, no harness, no equipage, but his disciples' clothes thrown upon the colt; for he made himself of no reputation when he visited us in great humility.

3. His kingdom is here set forth in the glory of it; this King has, and will have, a kingdom, not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom of his own, and not be subject to adversity or adversity by external force, by an arm of flesh or carnal weapons of warfare; no, he will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horses from Jerusalem, (v. 10.) for he shall have no occasion for them while he himself rides upon an ass. He will, in kindness to his people, cut off their horses and chariots, that they may not cut themselves off from God by putting that confidence in them, which they should put in the power of God only. He will himself undertake their protection, will himself be a Wall of fire about Jerusalem, and give his angels charge concerning it; (those chariots of fire and horses of fire;) and then the chariots and horses they had lied in their pride in, shall be cut off, shall lie in ruins, and be no more needed. (2.) It shall be propagated and established by the preaching of the gospel, the speaking of peace to the heathen; for Christ came, and preached peace to them that were far off, and to them that were near; and so established his kingdom by proclaiming on earth peace, and good will toward men. (3.) His kingdom, as far as it prevails in the minds and hearts of his people, makes them peaceable, and slay all enemies; it will cut off the battle-axe, and beat swords into plough-shares; it will not only command the peace, but will create the fruit of the lips, peace. (4.) It shall extend itself to all parts of the world, in defiance of the opposition given to it. The chariot and horse that came against Ephraim and Jerusalem, to oppose the progress of Zion's King, shall be cut off; his gospel shall be preached to the world, and be received among the heathen, so that his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, as was foretold by David, Ps. lxxii. 8. The preachers of the gospel shall carry it from one country, one island, to another, till all the representatives of the world be enlightened and reduced by it.

4. Here is an account of the great benefit prepared for mankind by the Messiah, which is redemption from extreme misery, typified by the deliverance of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon: (v. 11.) As for thee also, thee, O daughter of Jerusalem; or thee, O Messiah the Prince, by the blood of thy covenant, by force and virtue of the covenant made with Abraham, sealed with the blood of composition, and the covenant made with Israel at mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of sacrifices, in pursuance and performance of that covenant, I have now of late sent forth thy prisoners, thy captives out of Babylon, which was to them a most uncomfortable place, as a pit in which was no water. It was part of the covenant, that if in the land of their captivity they should be delivered, they should receive mercy of the Lord; Lev. xxvii. 40. Thy prisoners they were, and they were released out of captivity; and this was but a shadow of the great salvation wrought out by thy king, O daughter of Zion. Note, A sinful state is a state of bondage; it is a spiritual bondage; it is a pit, or a dungeon, in which there is no water, no comfort at all to be had; we are all by nature prisoners in this pit; the scripture has concluded us all under sin, and bound us over to the justice of God. God is pleased to deal upon new terms with these prisoners, to enter into another covenant with them; the blood of Christ is the blood of that covenant, purchased it for us, and shall be declared and cut off as altogether effectual provision is made for the sending forth of these prisoners upon easy and honourable terms, and proclamation made of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, like Cyrus's proclamation to the Jews in Babylon, which all those whose spirits God stirs up, will come, and take the benefit of.

12. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee; 13. When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow
ZECHARIAH, IX.

with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. 14. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. 15. The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with slingstones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. 16. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his hand. 17. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

The prophet, having taught those that were returned out of captivity, to attribute their deliverance to the blood of the covenant, and to the promise of the Messiah, (for therefore they were so wonderfully helped, because that blessing was in them, was yet in the womb of their nation,) now comes to encourage them with the prospect of a joyful and happy settlement, and of glorious times before them; and such a happiness they did enjoy, in a great measure, for some time; but these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel which we enjoy by Jesus Christ.

1. They are invited to look into Christ, and fly into him, as their City of refuge; (v. 12.) Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope. The Jews that were returned out of captivity into their own land, were yet, in effect, but prisoners; (We are servants this day, Neh. i. 56.) yet prisoners of hope or expectation, for God had given them a little reviving in their bondage, Ezra ix. 8, 9. Those that yet continued in Babylon, detained by their affairs there, yet lived in hope some time or other to see their own land again; now these are directed to turn their eyes upon the Messiah, set before them in the promise as their strong Hold to shelter themselves in him, and to pray for his deliverance of the mercy which by his grace, and for his sake, was so gloriously begun; Look unto him, and be ye saved, Isa. xlv. 22. The promise of the Messiah was the strong hold of the faithful long before his coming; they saw his day at a distance, and were glad, and the believing expectation of this redemption in Jerusalem was long the support and consolation of Israel-call. Sinners are often called prisoners of hope; their case is bad, but it is not desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning them, Christ is a strong Hold for them, a strong Tower, in whom they may be safe and quiet from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of their spiritual enemies; to him they must turn by a lively faith, to him they must fly, and trust in his name.

11. They are assured of God's favour to them; "Even to-day do I declare, when things are at the worst, and you think your case deplorable to the last degree, that I will render you double unto thee; to thee, O Jerusalem, to every one of you prisoners of hope, I will give you comforts double to the sorrows you have experienced; or, blessings double to what I ever bestowed upon your fathers, when their condition was at the best; the glory of your latter state, as well as of your former house, shall be greater, shall be twice as great as of old. And therefore, in the most distressful circumstance of your affair, be lifted up by the coming of the Messiah, the preaching of his gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom; these spiritual blessings in heavenly things were double to what they had ever enjoyed in their most prosperous state. As a pledge of this, in the fulness of time, God here promises to the Jews victory, plenty, and joy, in their own land, which yet should be but a type of their future blessings, of all victories, riches, and joys, in the kingdom of Christ."

1. They shall triumph over their enemies; the Jews, after their return, were surrounded with enemies on all sides, they were as a steepled bird, all the birds of the field were against them, their land lay between the two potent kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, branches of the Grecian monarchy, and will frequently be distressers of them. Now, as God had promised, was foretold, D. m. xi. But it is here promised that out of them all the Lord would deliver them; this promise had its primary accomplishment, in the times of the Maccabees, when the Jews made head against their enemies, kept their head above water, and, after many struggles and difficulties, came to be head over them. It is promised,

1. That they shall be instruments in God's hands, for the defeating and baffling of their persecutors; "I have bent Judah for me, as my bow of steel, that bow I have filled with Ephraim as my arrows, have drawn it up to its full bent, till the arrow be at the head," for some think that that is signified by the phrase of filling the bow; the expressions here are very fine, and the figures lively; Judah had been taught the use of the bow, (2 Sam. iv. 18.) and Ephraim had been famous for it, Ps. lxviii. 9. But let them not think that they gain their successes by their own bow, for they themselves are no more than God's bow and his arrows; tools in his hands, which he makes use of, and manages, as he pleases, which he holds as his bow, and directs to the mark as his arrows. The best and bravest of men are but what God makes and what he directs to perform his service.

The preachers of the gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth, he went on, conquering and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2. The following words explain this; I have raised up and spirited thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece. This was fulfilled when against Antiochus, one of the kings of the Grecian monarchy, the people that kept their God, were armed with great inventions and exploits, Dan. xi. 32. And they in the hand of an almighty God were made as the sword of a mighty man, which none can stand before; wicked men are said to be God's sword, (Ps. xvii. 13.) and sometimes good men are made so, for he employs both as he pleases.

2. That God will be Captain, and Commander in chief, over them, in every expedition and engagement; (v. 14.) The Lord shall be seen over them, he shall make it appear that he presides in their affairs, and that in all their motions they are under his direction, as apparently, though not as sensibly, as he was seen over Israel in the pillar of cloud and fire, when he led them through the wilderness.

[1.] Is their army to be raised, or must they be brought into the field? The Lord shall blow the trumpet, to gather the forces together, to proclaim
the war, to sound the alarm, and to give directions which way to march, which way to move; for if God blow the trumpet, it shall not give an uncertain sound. [22.] But the army taking the field, and entering upon action? Whatever enterprise the campaign is opened with, God shall go forth at the head of their forces, with whirlwinds of the south, which were of incredible swiftness and fierceness; and before these whirlwinds, thy sons, O Greece shall be as chaff. [3.] Is the army actually engaged? God's arrows shall go forth, as a lightning, so strong shall be the noise, that it is irresistible: his lightnings shall go forth as arrows; see Ps. xlviii. 14. He sent out his arrows, and scattered them; he shot out his lightnings, and consumed them. This alludes to that which God had done for Israel of old, when he brought them out of Egypt, and into Canaan, and had its accomplishment, partly in the wonderful successes which the Jews had against their neighbours that attacked them in the time of the Maccabees, by the special appearances of the Divine Providence for them; and perfectly in the glorious victories gained by the cross of Christ, and the preaching of the cross over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whereby we are made more than conquerors. [4.] Are they in danger of being overpowered by the enemy? The Lord of hosts shall defend them, and their God shall save them, (v. 16.) so that their enemies shall not prevail over them, or prey upon them. God shall be unto them for defence as well as offence, the Shield of their help as well as the Sword of their excellency; and this as the Lord of hosts, who has power to defend them, and as their God, who is engaged by promise to defend them, and by the property it is in them. He shall save them in that day, that critical, dangerous day, as the flock of his people, with the same care and tenderness that the shepherd protects his sheep with. Those are safe whom God saves. [5.] Did their enemies hope to swallow them up? It shall be turned upon them, and they shall devour their enemies, and shall subdue with sling-stones, for want of better weapons, those that come forth against them. The stones of the brook, when God pleases, shall do as great execution as the best train of artillery; for the stars in their courses shall fight on the same side. Goliath was subdued with a sling-stone. Having subdued, they shall devour, shall drink the blood of their enemies, as it were, and, as conquerors do, what they want to do, they shall make a noise as through their best weapons. Instead of huzzas and acclamations to glory in their victories, and proclaim them. We read of those that shout for mastery, and of the shout of a king among God's people. They shall be filled with blood and spoil, as the bowls and basins of the temple, or the corners of the altar, were used to be filled with the blood of the sacrifices; for their enemies shall fall as victims to divine justice. 2. They shall triumph in their God. They shall take the comfort, and give God the glory, of their successes. So some read v. 15. They shall eat, they shall quietly enjoy what they have got; God will give them power to eat it, after they have subdued the sling-stones, that is, their enemies that slung stones at them; and they shall drink, and make a noise, a joyful noise, as through their best weapons. The Lord their Maker and Protector, as through wine, as men are merry at a banquet of wine. Being not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but filled with the Spirit, they shall speak to themselves and one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, as those that are drunk do with vain and foolish songs, Eph. v. 18, 19. And, in the future, they shall often come and make sacrifices to the honour of God, so that they shall fill both the bowls and the corners of the altar with the fat and blood of their sacrifices. And when they thus triumph in their successes, their joy shall terminate in God as their God, the God of their salvation. Their shall triumph. (1.) In the love he has for them, and the relation wherein they stand to him; that they are the flock of his people, and he is their Shepherd, and that they are to him as the stones of a crown, which are very precious, and of great value, and which are kept under a strong guard: never was any king so pleased with the jewels of his crown, as God is, and God has chosen his people for a crown; compare Ps. xxiii. 5, 6, with Rev. iv. 10. He shall make them, and in whom he glories. They are a crown of glory, and a royal diadem, in his hand, Isa. lxiii. 2, 3. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day, when I make up my jewels, Mal. iii. 17. And they shall be lifted up as an ensign upon his hand, as the royal standard is displayed in token of triumph and joy. God's people are his glory, so he is pleased to set his approbation abroad, and he is pleased to proclaim them. He sets them up as a banner upon his own hand, waging war against those who hate him, to whom it is a flag of defence, and a centre of unity to all that love him, to all the children of God, that are scattered abroad, who are invited to come, and enlist themselves under this banner, Isa. xi. 10, 12. (2.) In the provision he makes for them, v. 15. This is the day of salvation, the day of the Lord, how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! This is the substance, this the buthren, of the songs wherewith they shall make a noise before the Lord. We are here taught, [1.] To admire and praise the amableness of God's being. How great is his beauty! All the perfections of God's nature conspire to make him infinitely lovely in the eyes of all that know him. They are to him as the stones of a crown; but what is he to them? Our business in the temple is to behold the beauty of the Lord; (Ps. xxxvii. 4.) and how great is that beauty! How far does it transcend all other beauties, particularly the beauty of his holiness. This may refer to the Messiah, to Zion's King that cometh. See that King in his beauty, (Isa. xxxiii. 17.) who is fairer than the children of men, the fairest of ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Though, in the eye of the world, he had no form or comeliness, in the eye of faith, how great is his beauty! [2.] To admire, and give thanks for, the gifts of God's favour and grace; his beauty as well as his beauty; for how great is his goodness! How rich in mercy is he? How deep, how full, are its springs! How various, how plenteous, are its stores! What a great deal of good does God do! How rich in mercy is he! Here is an instance of his goodness to his people; Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids; that is, God will bless his people with an abundance of the fruits of the earth, whereas they had been afflicted with scarcity to that degree, that the young men and the maidens were ready to die for want of food. Lam. ii. 13, 21.—iv. 7, 8.—v. 10. Now they shall have bread enough and to spare; not water only, but wine, new wine, which shall make the young people grow, and be cheerful; and (which some have observed to be the effect of plenty and the cheapness of corn) the poor, when they shall have where to turn, shall want no meat, no drink for hunger. What good gifts God bestows upon us, we must serve him cheerfully with, and must trace the streams up to the fountain, and, when we are refreshed with corn and wine, must say, How great is his goodness! CHAP. X. The scope of this chapter is much the same with that of the chapter before—to encourage the Jews that were returned, with hopes that, though they had been under
divine rebukes for their negligence in rebuilding the temple, and were now surrounded with enemies and dangers, he doth now direct them to the building and doth prosper them prosperous at home and victorious abroad. Now, 1. They are here directed to eye the great God in all events that concerned them; and, both in the evils they suffer, and in the graces they receive, to acknowledge his hand, v. 1. 2. They are encouraged to expect strength and success from him, in all their struggles with the enemies of their church and state, and to hope that the issue would be glorious at last, v. 5. 12. 1. ASK ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. 2. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie; therefore they comfort in vain: they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. 3. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. 4. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle-bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Gracious things and glorious ones, very glorious and very gracious, were promised to this poor afflicted people, in the foregoing chapter; now here he intimated to them that he will, for these things, be inquired of by them, and that he expects they shall not only be inquired of by them, but also in all his ways, toward them, and not idols that were rivals with him for their respects. 1. He directs them to apply themselves to God by prayer for rain in the season thereof. He had promised, in the close of the foregoing chapter, that there should be great plenty of corn and wine, whereas, for several years, by reason of unseasonable weather there has been great scarcity of both; but the earth will not yield its fruits, unless the heavens water it, and therefore they must look up to God for the dew of heaven, in order to the fitness and fruitfulness of the earth; (v. 1.) Ask ye of the Lord rain. Do not pray to the clouds or to the stars for rain, but to the Lord; for he it is that hears the heavens, when they hear the earth, Hos. ii. 21. Seasonable rain is a great mercy, which we must ask of God; rain, in the time of the latter rain, when there is most need of it; the former rain fell at the seed-time, in autumn; the latter fell in the spring, between March and May, which brought the corn to an ear, and filled it. If either of these rains failed, it was very bad with that land; for from the end of May to September they never had any rain at all. Jerome, who lived in Judah, says, that he never saw so great a year for the melting down the earth as 566, and that he taught that year to ask for it in the time it was to come. Note, We must, in our prayers, dutifully attend the course of Providence; we must ask for mercies in their proper time, and not expect that God should go out of his usual way and method for us. But since sometimes God denied rain in the usual time, as a token of his displeasure, they must pray for it then as a token of his favour, and they shall not pray in vain. Ask, and it shall be given you; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, which, though they are without rain themselves, are yet presages of rain; lightnings, (so the margin reads it,) for he maketh lightnings for the rain. He will give them showers of rain in great abundance, and so give to every one grass in the field; for God is universally good, and makes his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.

2. He shows them the folly of making their addresses to idols, as their fathers had done; (v. 2.) The idols have spoken vanity; the Teraphim, which they courted and consulted in their distress, were so far from being able to command rain for them, that they could not so much as tell them when they should have rain. They pretended to promise them rain at such a time, but it did not come. The diviners, who were the prophets of those idols, have shown a lie; these pretended to insight, and they have told false dreams, such as the event did not answer, which proved that they were not from God. Thus they comforted in vain those that consulted the lying oracles; all the vanities of the heathen, put together could not give rain, Jer. xiv. 22. Yet this was not the worst of it; they not only got nothing by the false gods, but they lost the favour of the true God; for therefore they went their way into captivity as a flock driven into the fold, and they were troubled with one vexation after another, as scattered sheep are, because there was no shepherd, no prince, to rule them, no priest to intercede for them, none to take care of them, and keep them together. They that wandered after strange gods, were made to wander into strange nations. He shows them he stood against all the events that concerned them, the judgments, plagues, and calamities against them, and those that made for them, v. 3. Let them consider, (1.) When everything went cross, it was God that walked contrary to them; (v. 3.) Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds that should have fed the flock, but neglected it, and starved it. “I was displeased at the wicked magistrates and ministers, the idol shepherds.” The captivity in Babylon was a token of God’s anger against them; in it likewise he punished the goats, those of the flock that were filthy and mischievous, they were set on the left-hand, to go away into punishment. Though the body of the nation suffered in the captivity, yet it was only the goats and the shepherds that God was angry with, and that he punished; the same affliction to others came from the love of God, and was but a fatherly chastisement, which to them came from his wrath, and was a judicial punishment. (2.) When things began to change for the better, it was God that gave them the happy turn. He has now visited his flock with favour, to inquire after them, and provide what he finds proper for them, and he has made them as his goodly horse in the battle; has blessed them, taken care of them, managed and made use of them, and given them as the horse he rides on; has made them valuable in themselves, and formidable to those about them, as his goodly horse. It is God that makes us what we are, and it is with us as he appoints.

4. He shows them that every creature is to them what God makes it to be; (v. 4.) Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail. (1.) All the creatures of the earth are God’s property; out of him came all the combined force of their enemies; every oppressor together (and the oppressors of Israel were not a few) did but what his hand and his counsel determined before to be done; nor could they have had such power against them, unless it had been given them from above. (2.) All the power likewise that was engaged for them, was devised by him, and depended on him. Out of him came forth the corner-stone of the building, the power of magistrates, which keeps the several parts of the state together. Princes are often called the corners of the people, as 1 Sam. xiv. 38. marg. Out of him came forth the nail that fixes the state, the nail in the sure place, (Isa. xxii. 23.)
the nail in his holy place, Ezra ix. 8. Out of him came forth the battle-axe, the military power, and out of him every oppressor, or exactor, that has the civil power in his hand. Therefore to God the Fountain of power, we must always have an eye, and see every man’s judgment proceeding from him.

3. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. 4. And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them: for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. 5. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it and be glad: their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. 6. I will blass for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. 7. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries: and they shall live with their children, and turn again. 10. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, and place shall not be found for them. 11. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. 12. And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.

Here are divers precious promises made to the people of God, which took further than to the state of the Jews in the latter days of their church, and have certain reference to the spiritual Israel of God, the gospel-church and all true believers.

1. They shall have God’s favour and presence, and shall be owned and accepted of him. This is the foundation of all the rest; The Lord is with them, and is pleasing to them, and they shall not be cast off, but bless, and be glad: their heart shall rejoice in him. Again, (v. 6.) I have mercy upon them. All their dignity and joy are owing purely to God’s mercy; and mercy, as it supposes misery, so it excludes merit. They had been cast off, the effect of which could not but be misery; they had been justly cast off, and therefore could plead no merit in their case; and yet, though they had been cast off, the curse; yet it is promised, They shall be as though I had not cast them off. The transgressions of their fathers, for which they had been rejected, shall not only not be visited upon them, but shall not be so much as remembered against them. God will be as perfectly reconciled to them as if he had never contended with them, and the falling out of these lovers shall rather be the renewing, than the weakening, of love. They shall have such a full as-

3. Those of them that are dispersed, shall be gathered together into one body; (v. 6.) I will strengthen the house of Judah, and so I will save the house of Joseph. Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our salvation by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are enabled to the work of salvation by the grace and power God gives us; and yet, when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our Strength, and so becomes both our Song and our Salvation.

2. They shall be victorious over their enemies, that would draw them from either their duty to God, or their comfort in God: (v. 5.) They shall be as mighty men, that are both strong in body, and bold in spirit, men of vigour, men of valour, effective men. They of Ephraim, as well as they of Judah, shall be like a mighty man, (v. 10.) that dares to go about a difficult enterprize, and is able to go through with it. They shall, as mighty men, tread down their enemies in the battle, as the dirt that is thrown out of the houses is trodden with other dirt in the mire of the streets. And they shall therefore fight, because the Lord is with them. Some would argue that they may therefore sit still and do nothing, because the Lord is with them; but it is written, (v. 6.) I will bring them again. And then the riders on horses shall be confounded. The cavalry of the enemies shall be routed, and put into disorder, by the infantry of the Jews. The preachers of the gospel of Christ went forth to war a good warfare, they charged bravely, because God was with them; and the riders on horses, that opposed them, were confounded, for God chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise and mighty. But whence have they all this might? How come they to be so able, so active? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his might, that they are so; (v. 6.) I will strengthen the house of Judah, and so I will save the house of Joseph. Note, God saves us by strengthening us, and works out our happiness by working in us to do our duty. And thus we are enabled to the work of salvation by the grace and power God gives us; and yet, when all is done, God must have the glory of all. God is our Strength, and so becomes both our Song and our Salvation.
together, that know his voice; and so I will gather them. The preaching of the gospel was, as it were, God's hissing for souls to come to Jesus Christ, his calling in his scattered sheep to the green pastures; I will gather them, for I have redeemed them. Note, Whom Christ has redeemed by his blood God will gather by his grace, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. This promise is enlarged upon, v. 10. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt. Such was this was literally fulfilled when Peter Jonas Philo, or Philo of Alexandria, brought 120,000 Jews out of his country into their own land, as was the promise of gathering them out of Assyria by Alexander the son of Antiochus Epiphanes. But it has its spiritual accomplishment in the gathering-in of precious souls out of a bondage worse than that of Egypt or Assyria, and bringing of them into the glorious liberties of the children of God and their enjoyments, which are as the beautiful, fruitful pastures in the land of Gilead and Lebanon. All the land of promise is theirs, even Gilead, the utmost border of it eastward, and Lebanon the utmost border northward. But how shall this be? How shall a people so dispersed be gathered together? How shall they that are set at such a distance from their own country, be brought to it again? It is true, the distance is insensible, yet they must be got over as easily, as effectually, as those that lay in the way of their deliverance out of Egypt, and their entrance into Canaan; He shall pass through the sea with affliction, as of old through the Red sea, to the sore affliction of Pharaoh and his hosts; or to the sore affliction of the sea, the waves wherein he shall smite, so that it shall be driven back, as when the sea saw and fled, Ps. cxiv. 3. And all the deeps of the river, all the rivers, though ever so deep, shall dry up, as Jordan did, to make way for Israel's passage into that good land which God had given them. Does the pride of Assyria stand in the way of their deliverance? He shall give check to it, who sets bounds to the proud waves of the sea, and it shall be brought down. Does the sceptre of Egypt oppose it? That shall depart away, so that it shall not be able to obstruct the gathering in of God's Israel, when his time is come for the doing of it; when the gospel-church was to be gathered out of all nations by the preaching of the gospel, great opposition was given to it by the enraged, combined powers of earth and hell. Insuperable difficulties seemed to be in the way of it; but by a divine power going along with the doctrine of Christ, it became mighty to do strongholds down of strongholds, and the conversion and salvation of thousands. Then the sea fled, and Jordan was driven back at the presence of the Lord. 4. They shall greatly multiply, and the church, that new world, shall be replenished; (v. 8.) They shall increase as they have increased formerly in Egypt, and great additions shall be made to their numbers, as in the days of David and Solomon. When the church was so much increased, that it was like to be hid from view, they shall help to gather in others with them, and their motion homeward shall be like that of a snow-ball. Crescit etundo—The further it goes the larger it grows by accretion. I will gather them, and they shall increase. Note, The church of Christ is a growing body, as long as it is in the present state of minority, till it come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and then it is to abound, and grow, to it daily such as shall be saved. (1.) It shall spread to distant places. It shall fill Canaan, even to the lands of Gilead and Lebanon, so that no more place, no more room, shall be found for it there, v. 10. In Judah only God had been known, and his name was great in Israel only; here only he revealed his statutes and judgments: but in gospel-times that place shall be quite too strait; the church's tent shall be enlarged, and its cords lengthened; the I will sow them among the people, v. 9. These lattering should not be like sowing seed in the ground, not to bury it, but to increase it, that it may bring forth much fruit. The Jews are said to be dispersed int. every nation under heaven; (Acts ii. 5.) and as it was their troubles that dispersed some of them, so perhaps others transplanted themselves into colonies, because the land of Israel was too strait for them; and many could not endure the stricter and more rigorous discipline of the Jewish religion; now these were soon among the people, Hos. ii. 23. And this contributed very much to the spreading of the gospel. The Jews that came from all parts to worship at Jerusalem, fetched thence the gospel light and fire to their own countries, as those, Acts ii. and the cunuch, Acts viii. And their own synagogues in the several cities of the Gentiles were the first receptacles of the apostles and their preaching, wherever they came. Thus when God sowed them among the people, that they might not get hurt by the Gentiles but do good to them, he took care that they should remember him, and make mention of his name in far countries; and by keeping up the knowledge of God among them, as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament, and by aiding them to gather in the knowledge of Christ, as he has revealed himself in the New Testament. (2.) It shall last to future ages. The church shall not be res unius状态—a temporary system, but a seed in it shall serve the Lord, v. 7. Yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; and they shall live with their children, and turn again, v. 9. Converts to Christ shall have their children about them, whom they shall teach the knowledge of the Lord, and bring with them when they turn again to the holy land, and the way of holiness. It was said to those to whom the gospel was first preached, The promise is to you and to your children, Acts ii. 39. They shall be so soon among the people, as never to be extirpated. Christ's family upon earth shall never be extinct, nor his purchased possession lost for want of heirs. 5. God himself will be both their Strength and their Song. (1.) In him they shall be comforted, and have abundant satisfaction; (v. 7.) Their heart shall rejoice as through wine; for Christ's love, which is their joy, is better than wine. They shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice. But we ruin our own joy, if our resistance be feeble, and we yield to the temptations of Satan. Their heart shall rejoice, and then they shall be as a mighty man; for the joy of the Lord will be our strength. And with their grace their joys shall be propagated; Their children shall see it, and be glad, and their hearts also shall rejoice in the Lord. It is good to acquaint children betimes with the love that is in the heart of this matter, to make it so pleasant to them as pleased as it may be to them; that, learning betimes to rejoice in the Lord, they may with purpose of heart cleave to him. (2.) By him they shall be carried on with vigour, and enlargement of heart, in his service; (v. 12.) I will strengthen them in the Lord, strengthen them for their walk and work, as well as for their warfare. It is the good of Israel to have his power, and it gives him ability to add to himself, and to strengthen all their powers and faculties for spiritual performances, above what they are by nature, and against what they are by the corruption of nature. Now observe, [1.] How they are thus enabled and invigorated for their duty; I the Lord will strengthen them in the Lord; in the Messiah, who is Jehovah our Strength, as well as Jehovah our Righteousness. Strength is treasured up, for us in
Christ, and from him it is derived to us. It is through Christ strengthening us, that we can do all things, and without him we can do nothing.

His strength is commanded him for this purpose, Ps. ii. 9. He must have all the strength of this strength given unto them. They shall walk up and down in his name. If God strengthens us, we must bestriveourselves;must walkup and down in all the duties of the Christian life, must beactive and busy in the work of God, must walk up and down as industrious men do, losing no time, and letting slip no opportunity. But still we must walk up and down in the name of Christ, must do all by warrant from him, and in dependence on him, with an eye to his word as our rule, and his glory as our end. To us to live must be Christ; and whatever we do in word or deed, we must do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, that we receive not the strengthening grace of God in vain. See Ps. lxxx. 17, 18.

CHAP. XI.

God's prophet, who in the chapters before was an ambassador sent to promise peace, is here a herald sent to declare war. He foretells the approaching desolation shall be in its greatness, and sympathy, and shall flourish for some time, and become considerable; it shall be very happy, at length, in the coming of the long expected Messiah, in the preaching of the coming up of the Lord great in strength. But when thereby the chosen remnant among them are effectually called in, and united to Christ, the body of the nation, persisting in unbelief, shall be utterly abondoned, for says he, in that is that it is foretold here in this chapter,—the Jews rejecting Christ, which was their measure-filling sin, and the wrath which for that sin came upon them to the uttermost. Here is, 1. A prediction of the destruction itself that should come upon the Jewish nation, v. 1. 2. The putting of it into the hands of the Messiah. 1. He is charged with the custody of that flock, v. 4. 6. 2. He is to rule it with judgment, to make it his rule, (v. 9.) breaks his shepherd's staff, (v. 10.) renews the indignities done him, and the contempt put upon him, (v. 12, 13.) and then breaks his other staff, v. 14. 4. He turns them over into the hands of foolish shepherds, who, instead of preventing, shall complete their ruin, and both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall together into the ditch, v. 15. 17. This is foretold to the poor of the flock before it comes to pass, that when it does come to pass, they may not be offended.

1. Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. 2. Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen; because all the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. 3. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

In dark and figurative expressions, as is usual in the scripture predictions of things at a distance, that destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation, is here foretold, which our Lord Jesus, when the time was at hand, prophesied of very plainly and expressly. We have here,

1. Preparation made for that destruction. (v. 1.) "Open thy doors, O Lebanon. Thou wouldst not open it to me, when I came to his own, and his own received him not; now thou must open them, to let thy ruin in. Let the gates of the forest, and all the avenues to it, be thrown open, and let the fire come in, and devour its glory." Some by Lebanon here understand the temple, which was built of cedars from Lebanon, and the stones of it while as the snow of Lebanon. It was burnt with fire by the Romans, and its gates were forced open by the fury of the soldiers. To confirm this, they tell a story, that forty years before the destruction of the second temple, the gates of it opened of their own accord; upon which prodigy, Rabbi Johanan made this remark, (as it is found in one of the Jewish authors,) "No man knoweth. But this destruction of the temple is at hand, according to the prophecy of Zechariah, Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars." Others understand it of Jerusalem, or, rather, of the whole land of Canaan, to which Lebanon was an inlet on the north. All shall lie open to the invader, and the cedars, the mighty and eminent men, shall be devoured; but shall be dug out from among them, in their rank; (v. 2.) If the cedars are fallen, it all the mighty are spoiled, and brought to ruin, let the fir-tree howl. How can the slender fir-trees stand, if stately cedars fall? If cedars are devoured by fire, it is time for the fir-trees to howl; for no wood is so combustible as that of the fir. And let the oaks of Bashan, that lie exposed to every injury, howl, for the forest of the vintage, or the flourishing vineyard, that used to be guarded with a particular care, is come down. Or, as some read it, when the defenced forests, such as Lebanon was, are come down. Note, The falls of the wise and good into sin, and the falls of the rich and great into trouble, are loud alarms to those that are every way their inferiors, not to be secure.

2. Language made for the destruction; (v. 3.) There is a voice of howling. Those who are fallen, howl for grief and shame, and those who see their own turn coming, howl for fear. But the great men especially; receive the alarm with the utmost confusion. Those who were roaring in the day of their revels and triumphs, are howling in the day of their terrours; for now they are tormented more than others. These great men were by office shepherds, and should have protected God's flock committed to their charge; it is the duty both of princes and priests; but they were as young lions, that made themselves a terror to the flock with their roaring, and the flock a prey to themselves with their tearing. Note, It is sad with a people, when those who should be as shepherds to them, are as young lions to them. But what is the issue? The shepherds howl, for their glory is spoiled. Their pastures, and the flocks which covered them, which were the glory of the swains, are laid waste. The young lions howl, for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. The pride of Jordan was the thickets on the banks, in which the lions reposed themselves; and therefore when the river overflowed, and spoiled them, the lions came up from them. (As saith he, Isa. xlviii. 19.) and they came up roaring. Note, When those who have power, proudly abuse their power, and, instead of being shepherds, are as young lions, they may expect that the righteous God will humble their pride, and break their power.

4. Thus saith the Lord my God, Feed the flock of the slaughter. 5. Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. 6. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord; but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king; and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. 7. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called
 Bands: and I fed the flock. 3. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. 9. Then said I, I will not feed you; that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. 10. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. 11. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord. 12. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. 14. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The prophet here is made a type of Christ, as the prophet Isaiah sometimes was; and the scope of these verses is to show that for judgment Christ came into this world; (John ix. 39.) for judgment to the Jewish church and nation, which were, about the time of his coming, wretchedly corrupt and degenerated by the worldliness and hypocrisy of their rulers. Christ would have healed them, but they would not be healed, they are therefore left desolate, and abandoned to ruin. Observe here,

1. The desperate case of the Jewish church, under the tyranny of their own governors. Their slavery in their own country made them as miserable as their captivity in strange countries had done; (Thuc. v. 6.) and Christ made their oppressors their masters. Thank them, and sell them, v. 5. In Zechariah's time we find the rulers and the nobles justly rebuked for exacting usury of their brethren; and the governors, even by their servants, oppressive to the people. Neh. v. 7. 15. In Christ's time, the chief priests and the elders, who were the possessors of the flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devastated their houses, engrossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Saducees, who were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees, who were bigots for superstition, corrupted their morals, by making void the commandments of God, Matt. xvi. 16. Thus they slew the sheep of the flock, thus they sold them. They corrupted what became of them, so they could but gain their own ends, and serve their own interests. And, 2. In this they justified themselves: they slay them, and hold themselves not guilty. They think that there is no harm in it, and that they shall never be called to an account for it by the chief Shepherd; as if their power were given them for destruction, which was designed only for edification; and as if, because they sat in Moses's seat, they were not under the obligations of Moses's law, but might dispense with it, and with themselves in the breach of it, at their pleasure. Note, Those have their minds wofully blinded indeed, who do ill, and justify themselves in it; but God will not hold them guiltless, who hold themselves so. 2. In this they affronted God, by giving him thanks for the gain of their oppression; They said, Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich. As if, because they prospered in their wickedness, got money by it, and raised estates, God had made himself Patron of their unlawful practices, and Providence was become Particular criminal to the wicked. What is it, then, to be guilty. What is got honestly we ought to give God thanks for, and to bless him whose blessing makes rich and adds no sorrow with it. But with what face can we go to God to bless him, for promoting the unlawful methods of getting wealth, or to return him thanks for success in them? They should rather have gone to God, to confess the sin, to take shame to themselves for it, and not to pretend to thus to mock him, by making the gains of sin the gift of God, who hates robbery for burnt-offerings, and reckons not himself praised by the thanksgiving, if he be dishonoured, either in the getting or the using of that which we give him thanks for. 3. In this they put contempt upon the people of God, as unworthy their regard or compassionate consideration; Their shepherds fitted them not; nor showed any concern for them. Note, It is ill for a church, when its pastors have no tenderness for the oppressed, no compassion for the poor, when they can look upon the ignorant, the foolish, the wicked, the weak, without pity. 11. The sentence of God's wrath passed upon them for their senseness and stupidity in this condition. There was a general decay, nay, a destruction of religion among them; and it was all one to them, they regarded it not; My people loved to have it so, Jer. v. 31. Though they were oppression and broken in judgment, yet they willingly walked after the commandment, Hos. v. 11. And as their shepherds pitied them not, so they did not bemoan themselves; therefore God says, (v. 6.) I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land. They have courted their own destruction, and so let their doom be. But those are truly miserable, whom the God of heaven makes himself no more a partner of their ruination. They who were willing to have their consciences oppressed by those who teach for doctrines the commandments of men, (as the Jews were, who called them Rabbi, Rabbi, that did so, Matt. xx. 8—xxxi. 7.) are often punished by oppression in their civil interests, and truly, for they forfeit their own rights, who tamely give up God's rights. The Jews did so, the Papists do so; and who can pity them if they be ruled with rigour? God here threatens them, 1. That he will deliver them into the hand of oppressors; every one into his neighbour's hand, so that they shall use one another barbarously. The several parties in Jerusalem did so; the zealots, the seditionists, as they were called, committed greater outrages than the common enemy did; as Josephus relates in his history of the wars of the Jews. They shall be delivered every one into the hand of his king, the Roman emperor, whom they chose to submit to rather than to Christ, saying, We have no king but Cesar. Thus they thought to ingratiate themselves with their lords and masters. But, for this, God brought the Romans upon them, who took away their place and nation. 2. That he will not deliver them out of their hands; they shall sit down, and shall be weary of them; I will not deliver them; and if the Lord do not help them, none else can, nor can they help themselves. III. A trial yet made, whether their ruin might be prevented by sending Christ among them as a Shepherd; God had sent his servants to them in
The three shepherds that were false to their trust; (v. 8.) Three shepherds I cut off in one month. Through the deficiency and uncertainty of the history of the Jewish church, in its latter ages, we know not what particular event this had its accomplishment in; in general, it seems to have been a set of plunder and justice for redress of the grievances of the abused flock. Some understand it of the three orders of princes, priests, and scribes, or prophets, who, when Christ had finished his work, were laid aside for their unfaithfulness. Others understand it of the three sects among the Jews, of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Hebrews, all whom Christ silenced in dispute, (Matth. xxii.) and soon after cut off, all in a little time.

IV. Their enmity to Christ, and making themselves odious to him. He came to his own, the sheep of his own pasture; it might have been expected that between them and him there should have been an entire affection, as between the shepherds and his sheep; but they conducted themselves so ill, that his soul loathed them, was strained toward them; (so it may be read,) he intended them kindness, but could not do them the kindness he intended them, because of their unbelief, Matth. xiii. 58. He was disappointed in them, discouraged concerning them, grieved for them; not only for the shepherds, whom he cut off, but for the people, Christians, whom God had intended for his people, and for whom he had shed his blood, as a mustard seed in the heart of tears in his eyes. Their provocations even wore out his patience; and he was weary of that faithless and perverse generation. Their soul also it abhorred me; and therefore it was that his soul loathed them; for, whatever estrangement there is between God and man, it begins on man's side. The Jewish shepherds rejected this chief Shepherd, as the Jewish builders rejected this chief Corner-Stone. They had indignation at Christ's doctrine and miracles, and his interest in the people; to whom they did all they could to make him odious, as they had made themselves odious to him. Note, There is a mutual enmity between God and wicked people; they are hateful to God, and haters of God; nothing makes men more odious in God's sight than this, an unregenerate state they do this. The cords, the friendship of the world, are enmity to God, and God hates all the workers of iniquity; and it is easy to foresee what this will end in, if the quarrel be not taken up in time, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

V. Christ's rejecting of them as incurable, and leaving them their house desolate, Matth. xxiii. 38. It seems all the things that were now hid from their eyes, because they knew not the day of their visitation. Here we have,

1. The sentence of their rejection past; (v. 9.) "Then said I, I will not feed you, I will take no further care of you, you shall not see me again; take your own course." As I will not feed you, so I will not cure you; that that dieth, let it die; (the Shepherd will do nothing to save its forfeited life;) that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; that will make itself a prey to the wolf, let it be a prey; and let the rest so far forget their own mild and gentle nature, as to eat the flesh of one another, let these sheep fight like dogs. These that reject Christ, will be certainly and justly rejected by him, and then are miserable of course.

A. A sentence of condemnation; (v. 10.) I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it in sunder, in token of this, that he would be no longer a Shepherd to them; as the lord high steward determines his commission by breaking his white staff, and as Moses breaking the tables of the law put a stop, for the present, to the treaty between God and Israel. The breaking of this staff signified the breaking of God's covenant with them. The remnant of peculiarity made with all the tribes of Israel, and all other people, who, by being proselyted to their religion, were incorporated into their nation. The Jewish church was now stripped of all its glory, its crown is profaned, and cast to the ground, and all its honour laid in the dust; for God is departed from it, and will no more own it for his. When Christ cut off these shepherds, he meant that the last remnant of God should be taken from them and given to another people then he broke the staff of Beauty, Matth. xxi. 43. And it was broken in that day, though Jerusalem and the Jewish nation held up forty years longer, yet from that day we may reckon the staff of Beauty broken, v. 11. And though the great men did not, or would not, understand it as a divine sentence, yet I thought it put by with a cold God forbid, (Luke xx. 16.) yet the poor of the flock, the disciples of...
Zechariah, XI.

Christ that waited on him, and understood with what authority he spake, and could distinguish the voice of the Lord from that of a stranger, thought that it was the word of the Lord, and trembled at it, and were confident that it should not fall to the ground. Note, Christ is waited on by the floor of the flock; he chose them to be with him, to be his pupils, to be his witnesses; the floor received him and his gospel, when those that had great possessions turned their backs upon him. And hence it was that when he spoke from his feet, to hear and receive his words, they shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, John vii. 17.

3. A further reason given for their rejection. It was said before, Their souls abhorred him; and here we have an instance of it, their buying and selling him for thirty pieces of silver; either thirty Roman pence, or rather thirty Jewish shekels; this is here for told in somewhat obscure expressions; as it is fit that such particular prophecies should be delivered, lest otherwise the plainness of the prophecy might prevent the accomplishment of it. Here, (1.) The shepherd comes to them for his wages; (v. 12.) “If ye think good, give me my price; you are weary of me, pay me off and discharge me; and if not, forbear; if you be willing to continue his service, pay him his hire; or if to turn me off without wages, I am content.” Christ was no hireling, and yet the labourer is worthy of his hire. Compare with this what Christ said to Judas, when he was going to sell him. “What thou doest, do quickly; be at a word with the chief priests, let them either take the bargain or leave it,” John xiii. 27. Those that betray Christ, are not eligible to him, in your service, if they will not be hirelings, (2.) They value him at thirty pieces of silver; many years’ service he had done them as a Shepherd, yet this is all they will now turn him off with—“A goodly price that I and all my care and pains was valued at by them.” If Judas fixed this sum in his demand, it is observable that his name is Judah, the same name with that of the body of the people, for it was a national act; or if (as it rather seems) the chief priests pitched upon this sum in their profiteers, they were the representatives of the people; it was part of the priest’s office to put a value upon the devoted things, (Lev. xxvii. 8.) and thus they valued the Lord Jesus. It was the ordinary price of a slave, Exod. xxxii. 32. Making light of Christ, and undervaluing the love of that great and good Shepherd, are the ruin of multitudes, as prophets, (v. 2.) They did not value so highly any provision to his worth, it is thrown to the potter with disdain; “Let him take it to buy with, or for any use that a little money will serve to, for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter’s stock, but not for the pay of such a Shepherd, much less for his purchase. So the prophet cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord; (Lev. xxvii. 8.) it is thrown to the potter with disdain.” Let him take it to buy with, or for any use that a little money will serve to, for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter’s stock, but not for the pay of such a Shepherd, much less for his purchase. So the prophet cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord; (Lev. xxvii. 8.) it is thrown to the potter with disdain; “Let him take it to buy with, or for any use that a little money will serve to, for it is not worth hoarding; it may be enough for a potter’s stock, but not for the pay of such a Shepherd, much less for his purchase. So the prophet cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter in the house of the Lord; (Lev. xxvii. 8.) it is thrown to the potter with disdain.”

4. The completing of their rejection, in the cutting assunder of the other staff, v. 14. The former spake the ruin of their church by breaking the covenant between God and them—that defaced their beauty; this speaks the ruin of their state, by breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, by reviving animosities and contention among them, such as were of old between Judah and Israel, the writing of whom, as one stick in the hand of the Lord, was one of the blessings promised after their return out of captivity, Ezek. xxxvii. 19. But that union shall now be dissolved, they shall be crumbled into parties and factions, exasperated one against another; and their kingdom, being thus divided, shall be brought to desolation. (1.) Nothing ruins a people so certainly, so inevitably, as the breaking of the staff of Beauty: if the weakest member of the brotherhood, among them; for hereby they become an easy prey to the common enemy. (2.) This follows upon the dissolving of the covenant between God and them, and the decay of religion among them; when iniquity abounds, love waxes cold. No wonder if those fall out among themselves, that have provoked God to fall out with them. When the staff of Beauty is broken, the staff of Beauty shall hold long. An unchristian people will soon be an undone people.

15. And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd: 16. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that is broken, nor feed that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. 17. Wo to the idle shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

God, having showed the misery of this people in their being justly abandoned by the good Shepherd, here shows their further misery in being shamefully abused by foolish shepherds. The prophet is himself to personate and represent this pretended shepherd, (v. 15.) Take unto thee the instruments or accoutrements of a foolish shepherd, that are no way fit for the business; such a shepherd’s coat, and bag, and staff, as a foolish shepherd would appear in; for such a shepherd shall be set over them, (v. 16.) who, instead of protecting them, shall oppress them, and do them mischief. (1.) They shall be under the inspection of unfaithful ministers; their scribes, priests, and prophets, shall be such as shall hang heavy burthens upon them, and grievous to be borne; and with their traditions imposed, shall make the ceremonial law much more a yoke than God had made it. The description here given of the foolish shepherd suits very well with the character Christ gives of the scribes and Pharisees, Matt. xxiii. (2.) They shall be under the tyranny of unlawful princes, and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Matt. xxiv. 15. They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Matt. xxiv. 15. They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Matt. xxiv. 15. (3.) They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Matt. xxiv. 15. (3.) They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Matt. xxiv. 15. (3.) They shall be imposed upon and deluded by false Christs and false prophets, as our Saviour foretold, Matt. xxiv. 15. Those infamous practices provoked the Romans, and hastened the ruin of the Jewish nation; but it is observable that they were never cheated by a counterfeit Messiah, till they had refused and rejected the true Messiah. Now observe, (1.) What a curse this foolish shepherd should be to the people, v. 16. God will, for their punishment, raise up a foolish shepherd, who will not do the duty of a shepherd, he will not visit those that are cut off, nor go after those that go astray,
1.1. to seek those that are missing, find them out; the Lord, the God of hosts, shall stretch forth the cloud of his glory over them. ZECHARIAH, XII.

*ZECHARIAH, XII.*

CHAP. XII.

1. The burden of the word of the Lord, which came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah.

2. Thus spake the Lord of hostes at the beginning of the days of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.

3. For the foundations of the things manifold and deep, are not made manifest by a man; neither are the secrets of God; but they are hid from the sons of man.

4. But thou, O son of man, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Thus shall it be done to the house of Israel; according to the measure of the caldron and the pot, according to the measure of the wine-bowl and the cup.

5. The caldron shall be broken to pieces; the pot shall be broken, the wine-bowl and the cup shall be broken with the wine.

6. That they may go forth, and fall one upon another; that none of them may escape for their iniquities: in the time of their visitation, saith the Lord God.

7. And it shall come to pass, when I break the house of Jacob and pollute the house of Israel, and make them to profane my holy name, that the remnant of Judah shall take upon them the name of the Lord, and shall be his people in Jerusalem; they shall be called the Lord's people, and of Jerusalem shall be called the Lord's holy people.

8. And it shall come to pass, that in that day there shall be no more the3 of the strong, neither shall the4 of the holy be reproved in that day: for I will be merciful unto him, and I will no more be angry with Israel.

9. In that day5 shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for sin and iniquity.

10. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jacob shall be saved, and he that was not redeemed shall be6: for I will change their spirit; in that day shall I make the7 holy for them that are8, and the9 shall be called by another name.

11. And it shall come to pass, that in the day that I shall visit7 them, I shall answer7 them, and I will make them know7 the things that I have done to them; for in that day I will make a10 for7 them a fountain of11 Jacob, and12 the13 shall be called by another name.

14. And it shall come to pass, that in that day,9 the house of Jacob shall be called the house of the Lord, and the house of Israel shall be called the house of the Lord Jacob; and the Gentiles shall come and shall8 worship before the Lord, and shall t9 of Jacob shall be called7 the house of the Lord Jacob; and the Gentiles shall come and shall worship before the Lord, and shall7 of Jacob shall be called the house of the Lord Jacob; and the Gentiles shall come and shall worship before the Lord, and shall9 of Jacob shall be called the house of the Lord Jacob; and the Gentiles shall come and shall worship before the Lord, and shall9 of Jacob shall be called the house of the Lord Jacob; and the Gentiles shall come and shall worship before the Lord, and shall
out as a curtain, keeps them from running in, and will do so till the end comes, when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll. No bounds can be set to his power who stretches out the heavens, nor can any thing be too hard for him. 2 He lays the foundation of the earth, and keeps it firm and fixed on its own basis, or, rather, on its own axis, though it is founded on the seas, (Ps. xxiv. 1, 2) nay, though it is laid in the waters, (Isa. xxvii. 15) yet the Foulader of this earth is, no doubt, the Ruler of it, and judges in it, and they deceive themselves, who say, The Lord has forsaken the earth, for if he had, it would have sunk, since it is he that not only did lay its foundations at first, but does still lay them, still uphold them. 3 He forms the spirit of man within him. He made us these souls, Jer. xxxvii. 16. He cut off the fountains under the earth; he still breathes into every man the breath of life; the body is derived from the parents of our flesh, but the soul is infused by the Father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9. He fashions men's hearts; they are in his hand, and he turns them as the rivers of water, and casts them into what would please him, as so as to serve his own purposes with them; and he can therefore save his people, and let his enemies wither and dispair his enemies, and will eternally save all his chosen by forming their spirits anew.

III. The promises themselves that are here made them, by which the church shall be secured, and in which all its friends may enjoy a holy security.

1. It is promised that whatever attacks the enemies of the church may make upon her purity or peace, they will certainly issue in their own confusion and ruin. The enemies of God and of his kingdom bear a great deal of malice and ill will to Jerusalem, and form designs for its destruction; but it will prove at last that they are but preparing ruin for themselves; Jerusalem is in safety, and they are in all the danger, who fight against it. This is here illustrated by three comparisons.

(1.) Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling to all that lay siege to it, v. 2. They promise themselves that it shall be to them a cup of wine, which they shall easily and with pleasure drink off, and they thirst for its spoils, nay, they thirst for its blood, as for such a cup; but it shall prove a cup of slaughter, may, a cup of poison, to them, which, when they take it into their hands, and think it is all their own, they shall not be able to drink off, the fumes of it shall overcome and destroy them. When the kings were assembled against her, and saw how God was known in her palaces for a Refuge, they trembled, and hastened away, fear took hold upon them, as we find, Ps. lxviii. 3-6. Thus Alexander the Great was struck with amazement when he met Jaddus the high priest, and was deterred thereby from offering any violence to Jerusalem. When Senanacherib laid siege against Jerusalem, he send them such a cup of strewing wine as laid all his mighty men asleep, Ps. lxvi. 5, 6. Some read it, I will make Jerusalem a post of contention or breaking. They that make any attempts upon Jerusalem, do but run their heads against a post, which they cannot move, but are sure to hurt themselves. The blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the tents of Chaldea, or the Chaldeans, he bind it. God's church is a cup of consolation to all her friends, (Isa. lxvi. 11.) but a cup of trembling to all that would either debauch her by errors and corruptions, or destroy her by wars and persecutions. See Isa. lii. 23, 25.

(2.) Jerusalem shall be a burdensome stone to all that attempt to remove it, or carry it away; (v. 5.) All they that shall lay siege to Jerusalem shall gather themselves together against it; some one time, and some another; there has been a succession of enemies, from age to age, making war upon the church; but though they were all at once in a confederacy against it, and had formed a resolution to cut off the name of Israel, that it should be no more in remembrance, (Ps. lxxiii. 4.) they will find it a task too hard for them. They that are for keeping up and advancing the kingdom of sin in the world, look upon Jerusalem, even the church of God, as the great obstacle to their designs, and they must have it if they be not to be baffled and defeated in their purpose; but when they think it is; so that, [1.] They cannot remove it. God will have a church in the world, in spite of them; it is built upon a rock, and is as mount Zion that abides for ever, Ps. cxix. 1. This stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, will not only keep its ground, but fill the earth, Dan. ii. 35. Nay, [2.] It will break in pieces all that burden themselves with it, as that stone smote the image, Dan. ii. 45. All that think themselves a match for it, shall be cut in pieces by it. Some think it is an allusion to a sport, which Jerome, upon this place, says, was in use among the Jews, as among us: young men tried their strength, and strive for mastery, by heaving up great stones, which if they proved too heavy for them, fell upon them, and so hurted them, and came out their own way, as the enemies of God, and banter sacred things, will find them a burdensome stone, that it is of the jecting with edged tools, and though they make light of it, (saying, Am not I in sport?) they bring upon themselves an insupportable sinking load of guilt. Our Saviour seems to allude to these words, when he speaks of himself as a burdensome stone to those that would not have him for their foundation, and which should fall upon them, and grind them to powder, Matth. xxi. 42.

(3.) The governors of Judah shall be among their enemies like a heaith of fire among the wood, and a torch of fire in a sheaf; v. 6. Not that their own passions shall make them inconsiderate and firebrands to all about them; no, Zin's King is meek and lowly, and all subordinate governors must be like him; but God will make them avengers of his cause, and theirs, upon their enemies. They that contend with them, will find it is like an opposition given by briars and thorns to a consummating fire, Isa. xxxvii. 4. It will go through them, and burn them together. It is God's wrath, and not theirs, that is the fire which devours the adversaries. God's fire is said to be in Zion, and his furnaces in Jerusalem; Is. x. 28. He then says, Their strength shall be brought to be as water to this fire, to extinguish it, and put it quite out; but God will make them as wood, nay, as a sheaf of corn, (which is more combustible,) to this fire, not only to be consumed by it, but to be made thereby to burn the more strongly. When God would make Abimelech and the men of Shechem one another's destroyers, fire is said to come out from the one to devour the other, Judg. ix. 41. So here, fire shall come out from the governors of Judah, to devour all the people round about, as from the mouth of God's witnesses, to consume those who offer to hurt them, Rev. xi. 5. The persecutors of the primitive church found this fulfilled in it, witness Lactantius's history of God's judgments upon the primitive persecutors, and the confession of Julian the Apostle at last. Thou shalt come upon me, or, come against me, as God's motto may be, Venio impune faciesit,—He that assails me, does it at his peril. If you are weary of your life, persecute the Christians, was once a proverb.

2. It is promised that God will infatuate the counsels, and enfeebles the courage, of the church's enemies; (v. 4.) In that day, when the people of the earth are gathered together against Jerusalem, and the church, with much vituperation, and his rider with madness; and again, I will smite every horse of the people with blindness, so that they shall be no way serviceable to them; blinding the horses
will be as bad as hounding them. The horses and their horsemen shall both forget the military exercise to which they were trained, and, instead of keeping ranks, and observing the rules of their discipline, they shall both grow mad, and run themselves. The church's infantry shall be too hard for the enemy's cavalry; and those who are upbraided with trusting in horses, shall be baffled by those who were hidden in the metaphor horsemen.

3. It is promised, that Jerusalem shall be reproached and replenished; (v. 6.) Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that Jerusalem, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in New England called their towns by the names of towns in Old England; no, they shall have a new Jerusalem upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground, with the old one. They had so far their return out of captivity, but this was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel-church, which is a Jerusalem inhabited in its own place; for, the gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place its own.

4. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be enabled to defend themselves, and yet shall be taken under the divine protection, v. 8. See here in what method God preserves his church, and those that are his, from the gates of hell, to, and through the gates of heaven. (1.) He does himself secure them; In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; not only Jerusalem itself, but every one of its inhabitants, as if by a wall of fire, or by a shield, and his name as a strong tower, against the enemy. (2.) He does it by giving them strength and courage to help themselves; what God works in his people by his grace, contributes more to their preservation and defence than what he works for them by his providence. The God of Israel gives strength and power to his people, that they may do their part, and then he will not be wanting to do his. It is the glory of God to strengthen the weak, that most need his help, that see and own their need of it, and will be the most thankful for it. [1.] In that day the feeblest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as strong as a giant, a city, as bold and brave, as skilful and strong, as David himself; shall enterprise and accomplish great things, as David did, and become as serviceable to Jerusalem in guarding it as David himself was in founding it, and as formidable as he was to the enemies of it. See what divine grace does; it makes children not only men, but champions; makes weak saints to be not only good soldiers, but great soldiers, like David. And see how God often does his own work as easily and effectually, and more to his own glory, by weak and obscure instruments than by the most illustrious. [2.] The house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord, before him. Zerubbabel was now the top branch of the house of David, he shall be endued with wisdom and grace for his service, not to be a gaudy soldier, but a great soldier, like David. And see before the people as an angel; as that angel (so some think) which went before the people of Israel through the wilderness, which was God himself, Exod. xxiii. 20. God will increase the gifts and abilities both of the people and princes, in proportion to the respective services for which they are designed. It was said of David, that he was as an angel of God, to discern good and bad. 2 Sam. xxi. 17.

17. Such shall now the house of David be. The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be as strong, and fit for action, as nature made David, and their magistrates as wise, and fit for counsel, as grace made him. But this was to have its full accomplishment in Christ; now the house of David looked little upon, and, it is glory was eclipsed, but in Christ the house of David shone more bright than ever, and its countenance was as that of an angel; in him it became more blessed, and more a blessing, than ever it had been.

3. It is promised, that there shall be a very good understanding between the city and the country, and that the two shall be kept on between them; there shall be no mutual envies or jealousies between them; they shall not keep up any separate interests, but shall heartily unite in their counsels, and act in concert for the common good; and this happy agreement between the city and the country, the head and the body, is very necessary to the health, welfare, and safety of all nations.

1. The government of Judah, the magistrates and genty of the country, shall think honourably of the citizens, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the merchants and tradesmen; they shall not run them down, and entice how to keep them under, but they shall say in their hearts, not in compliment, but in sincerity, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be the glory of Israel; not only the city, but the country, and every family, in the Lord of hosts their God, v. 5. They will therefore, upon all occasions, pay respect and deference to Jerusalem, as the mother-city, the ruling-city, and the city that is to be first served, because they look up to it as the bulwark of the nation, and its strongest fortification in times of public danger and distress; which therefore they would have come in to the assistance of, and come under the protection of; and so much because it is a rich city, and money is the sinews of war, or because it was a populous city, and could bring the greatest numbers into the field, or because its inhabitants were generally the most ingenious, active men, the best soldiers, and the best commanders; (Of Zion it shall be said, This and that brave man was born there;) but because it was a holy city; where God's house and household, the temple and the priests were, where his worship was kept up, and his feasts were observed; and because it should now be, more than ever, a praying city, for upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem God will pour a spirit of supplication; (v. 16.) therefore the governors of Judah shall say, These are my strength; they are so upon the account of their relation to, their interest in, and their communion with, the Lord of hosts their God. Because the Lord of hosts is in a particular manner their God, (for in Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion,) therefore they shall be my strength. Note, It is well with a kingdom when its great men know how to value its good men, when its governors look upon religion and religious people to be their strength, and that it is in their interest to support them, and learn to call godly, praying people, and skilful, faithful ministers, the chariots and horsemen of Israel, as Josiah called Elisha, and not the troublemakers of the land, as Ahab called Elijah.

2. The court and the city shall not despise, or look with contempt upon, the inhabitants of the country, no, not the meanest of them, much less their enemies, so that it shall be a national honour upon Judah, and so save them from the contempt of their brethren. As Jerusalem was dignified by special ordinances, so Judah shall be dignified with special providences. God says, (v. 4.) I will often mine eyes upon the house of Judah upon the poor country people. Proud men scornfully look down upon them, but the great God will graciously look upon them, and will say, (v. 7.) Behold the Lord shall save the tents of Judah first. They that dwell in tents, lie most exposed; but God will remarkably protect and deliver them before those
that dwell in Jerusalem. He will appear glorious in what he does for the inhabitants of his villages in Jerusalem, Judg. v. 11. Thus, in the mystical body, God gives more abundant honour to that part which lacks, that there may be no schism in the body; (see 1 Cor. xii. 22-25.) which is the reason here given, that the glory of the house of David, which has great power, and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who have great wealth, and both which live in great pomp and pleasure, may not magnify themselves against Judah, and the tents of Judah, the dwellers in which work hard, and fare hard, and have their days not so well ordered. By and by, and citizens ought not to despise country people, or look with disdain upon those whom God often his eyes upon, and who are first saved; while it is so hard for the rich and great to enter the kingdom of God. If God by his grace has magnified the dwellers in the tents of Judah, having chosen the weak and foolish things of the world, and chosen to employ them, we affront him if we value them, or magnify ourselves against them, Jan. ii. 5, 6. This promise has a further reference to the gospel-church, in which no difference shall be made between high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, circumcision and uncircumcision, but all shall be alike welcome to Christ, and partake of his benefits, Col. iii. 11. Jerusalem shall not then be thought, as it had been, more holy than other parts of the land of Israel.

9. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. 11. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon. 12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; 13. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; 14. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

The day here spoken of, is the day of Jerusalem's defence and deliverance, that glorious day when God will appear for the salvation of his people; which, if it do refer to the successes which the Jews had against their enemies, in the time of the Maccabees, yet certainly it looks further, to the gospel-day, so Christ's victories over the powers of darkness, and the great salvation he has wrought for his chosen. Now we have here an account of two remarkable times, the valley of the shadow of death, and the dawning of the day of salvation, in which the Glorious Pascal shall come.

1. A glorious work of God to be wrought for his people; I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem, v. 9. Nations came against Jerusalem, many and mighty nations; but they shall all be destroyed, their power shall be broken, and their attempts baffled; the mischief they intend, shall return upon their own head. God will seek to destroy them; not as if he were at a loss for ways and means to bring it about, (Infinite Wisdom was never nonplussed,) but his seeking to do it, intimates that he is very earnest and intent upon it, (he is jealous for the glory of his inheritance, and for it's daily vengeance in his heart,) and that he overrules means and instruments, and all the motions and operations of second causes, in order to it. He is framing evil against them; when he seems to be setting them up, he is seeking to destroy them. In Christ's first coming, he sought to destroy him that had the power of death, and did destroy him, bruised the serpent's head, and broke all the powers of darkness that fought against God's kingdom among men, and against the faithful friends and subjects of that kingdom; he spoiled them, and made a show of them openly. In his second coming, he will complete their destruction, when he shall put down: all opposing rule, principality, and power, and death itself shall be swallowed up in that victory. The last enemy shall be destroyed of all that fought against Jerusalem.

II. A gracious work of God to be wrought in his people, in order to the work that is to be wrought for them. When he seeks to destroy their enemies, he will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and supplication. Note, When God intends great mercy for his people, the first thing he does is to set them a praying; he has need to destroy their enemies by showing them up to seek to him that he would do it for them; because, though he has purposed it, and promises it, and it is for his own glory to do it, yet he will for this be inquiry of by the house of Israel, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Ask, and it shall be given; this honour will he have to himself, and this honour will he put upon prayer and upon praying people. And it is a happy presage to the distressed church, of the sovereign grace and mercy of God, and his good things, and is, as it were, a grace of grace, a grace of the dawning of its day, when his people are stirred up to cry mightily to him for it. But this promise has reference to, and is performed in, the graces of the Spirit given to all believers, Isa. lxi. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon you, which was fulfilled when Jesus was glorified, John vii. 39. It is the promise of the Spirit, and with him all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ. Now observe here,

1. On whom these blessings are poured out; (1.) On the house of David, on the great men; for they are no more, and no better, than the grace of God makes them. It was promised (v. 8.) that the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord. Now, in order to that, the Spirit of grace is poured upon them; for the more the saints have of the Spirit of grace, the more like they are to the holy angels. When God was about to appear for the land, he poured his Spirit of grace upon the house of David, the leading men of the land. It bodes well to a people when they go before the rest in that which is good, as 2 Chron. xxv. 5. The house of David is all summed up in Jesus Christ, The Son of David; and upon him, and upon his kingdom, and upon his Church, is poured out, from him to be diffused to all his members; from his fulness we receive, and grace for grace. (2.) On the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the common people; for the operations of the Spirit are the same upon the mean and weak Christians that they are upon the strong and more grown. The inhabitants of Jerusalem cannot influence public affluence by their presence and public dignity, as the great men of the house of David may, yet they may do good service by their prayers, and therefore upon them the Spirit shall be poured out. The church is Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem; all true believers, that have their conversation in heaven, are inhabitants of this Jerusalem, and to them this promise belongs, God will pour his Spirit upon them,
This is that earnest which all that believe in Christ shall receive: thus they are sanctified, thus they are sealed.

2. What these blessings are; I will pour upon them the Spirit. That includes all good things, as it qualifies us for the favour of God, and all his other gifts. He will pour out the Spirit, (1.) As a Spirit of grace, to sanctify us, to make us wise to salvation, (2.) As a Spirit of supplications, inclining us to, instructing and assisting us in, the duty of prayer. Note, Wherever the Spirit is given as a Spirit of grace, he is given as a Spirit of sanctification. Wherever he is a Spirit of adoption, he teaches to cry, Abba, Father. As soon as ever Paul was converted, Behold, he prays, Acts ix. 11. We may look for nothing but grace, as a living sin without prayer. There is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of prayer now under the gospel than was under the law; and the further the work of sanctification is carried in us, the better is the work of supplication carried on by us.

3. What the effect of them will be; I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace. One would think that it should follow, And they shall look on him whom they have believed, and shall rejoice; (and it is true, that that is one of the fruits of the pouring out of the Spirit, whence we read of the joy of the Holy Ghost;) but it follows, They shall mourn; for there is a holy mourning, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit; a mourning for sin, which is of use to quicken faith in Christ, and make the creature sensible of the joy that is to come. God makes the matter of a promise, that they shall mourn, for there is a mourning that will end in rejoicing, and has a blessing entailed upon it. This mourning is a fruit of the Spirit of grace, an evidence of a work of grace in the soul, and a companion of the Spirit of supplication, as it expresses living affections working in prayer; hence prayers and tears, and the putting together, 2 Kings i. 18. Jacob, that wrestled with God, wept and made supplication. But here is a mourning for sin, that is the effect of the pouring out of the Spirit.

(1.) It is a mourning grounded upon a sight of Christ; They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him. Here, [1.] It is foretold that Christ should be pierced, and he is punctured, John xix. 37. [2.] He is spoken of as one whom we have pierced; it is spoken primarily of the Jews, who persecuted him to the death; (and we find that they who pierced him are distinguished from the other kindreds of the earth, that shall wail because of him, Rev. i. 7,) yet it is true of us as well as of Christ. There is no other illustration of the mourning of the Spirit of grace, than as much as our sins were the cause of his death, for he was wounded for our transgressions, and they are the grief of his soul; he is broken with the whorish heart of sinners, who therefore are said to crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame. [3.] Those that truly repent of sin, look upon Christ as one whom they have pierced, who was pierced for their sins, and is pierced by them; and this engenders them to look unto him, as those that are deeply concerned for him. [4.] This is the effect of their looking to Christ, it makes them mourn. This was particularly fulfilled in those to whom Peter preached Christ crucified; when they heard it, they who had had a hand in piercing him, were prick'd to the heart, and cried out, Why, Lord, that thou shouldst have come from heaven? It is fulfilled in all those who sorrow for sin after a godly sort; they look to Christ, and mourn for him, not so much for his sufferings as for their own sins that procured them. Note, The genuine sorrows of a penitent soul flow from believing sight of a pierced Saviour. Looking by faith upon the cross of Christ will set us a mourning for sin after a godly sort.

(2.) It is a great mourning. [1.] It is like the mourning of a parent for the death of a beloved child. They shall mourn for sin as one mourns for an only son, in whose grave the hopes of his family are buried, and shall be inwardly in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born, as the Egyptians were, when there was a cry throughout all their land for the death of their first-born. The sorrow of children for the death of their parents is sometimes counterfeited, is often small, and soon wears off, and is forgotten; but the sorrow of parents for a child, for an only son, for a first-born, is never known but a death; if it be counterfeited, it is secret and lasting; such are the sorrows of a true penitent, flowing purely from love to Christ above any other. [2.] It is like the mourning of a people for the death of a wise and good prince. It shall be like the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon, where good king Josiah was slain, for whom there was a general lamentation, (2 Chron. xxxiii. 20,) and perhaps the greater because they were told that it was their sin that provoked God to deprive them of so great a blessing; therefore they cried out, The crown is fallen from our head; We unto us, for we have sinned! Lam. v. 16. Christ is our King; our sins were his death, and for that reason, ought to be our grief.

(3.) It is a general, universal mourning; (v. 12.) The land mourneth. The land itself put on mourning at the death of Christ, for there was then darkness over all the land, and the earth trembled; but this is a promise, that, in consideration of the death of Christ, multitudes shall be effectually brought to sorrow for sin, and turn to God; it shall be such a universal gracious mourning as was when all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord, 1 Chron. x. 47. Some think this is yet to have its complete accomplishment in the general conversion of the Jewish nation.

(4.) It is also a private, particular mourning. There shall be not only a mourning of the land, by its representatives in a general assembly, (as Judg. ii. 5. when the place was called Bochim,—A place of weeping,) but it shall spread itself into all corners and situations of the land. The mourning of all the families that remain, v. 14. All have contributed to the guilt, and therefore all shall share in the grief. Note, The exercises of devotion should be performed by private families among themselves, besides their joining in public assemblies for religious worship. National fasts must be observed, not only in our synagogues, but in our houses. In the mourning here foretold, the wives mourn for their husbands by themselves, in their own apartment, as Esther and her maids. And some think it intimates their denying themselves the use even of lawful delights in a time of general humiliation, 1 Cor. vii. 5.

Four several families are here specified as examples to others, in this mourning. [1.] Two of them are royal families; the house of David, in Solomon, and the house of Nathan, another son of David, brother to Solomon, from whom Zerubbabel descended, as appears by Christ's genealogy, Luke iii. 27, 31. The house of David, particularly that of Nathan, which is now the chief branch of that house, shall go before in this good work. The greatest princes must not think themselves exempted from the law of repentance, but rather obliged most solemnly to express it, for the attention of others; as Hezekiah humbled himself, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. The princes and the king, (2 Chron. xii. 6.) and the king of Nineveh, Jonah iii. 6. [2.] Two of them are sacred families; (v. 13.) the family of the house of Levi, which was God's tribe,
and in it particularly the family of Shimei, which was a branch of the tribe of Levi, (1 Chron. vi. 17.) and, probably, some of the descendants of that family were now of note for preachers to the people, or ministers to the altar. As the princes must mourn for the sins of the magistracy, so must the priest for the sin offerings. In times of general tribulation and humiliation, the Lord's ministers are to present themselves with the most particular care to give in the materials of the sanctuary and the altar, (Joel ii. 17.) and not only there, but in their houses apart; for in what families should godliness, both in the form and in the power of it, be found, if not in ministers families?

CHAP. XIII.

In this chapter, we have, I. Some further promises relating to gospel-times. Here is a promise of the remission of sins, (v. 1.) of the reformation of manners, (v. 2.) and particularly of the convicting and silencing of false prophets, v. 2. 6. II. A clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ, and the dispersion of his disciples thereupon, (v. 7.) of the destruction of the greater part of the Jewish nation not long after, (v. 8.) and of the purifying of a remnant of them, a peculiar people, to God, v. 9.

1. IN that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. 2. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. 3. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. 4. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied: neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5. But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. 6. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thy hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

Behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, the sin of the church; for therefore was the Son of man manifested, to take away our sin, 1 John iii. 5.

1. He takes away the guilt of sin by the blood of his cross; (v. 1.) In that day, in the gospel-day, there shall be a fountain opened, provision made, for the cleansing of all those from the pollutions of sin, who truly repent, and are sorry for them. In that day, when the Spirit of grace is poured out, to set them a mourning for their sins, they shall not mourn as those who have no hope, but they shall have their sins pardoned, and the comfort of it in their bosoms. Their consciences shall be purified by the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, 1 John i. 7. For Christ is exalted to give both repentance and remission of sins; and where he gives the one, no doubt, he gives the other. This fountain opened is the pierced side of Jesus Christ, spoken of just before, (ch. xii. 10.) for there came there out blood and water, and both for cleansing. And those who look upon Christ pierced, and mourn for their sins that pierced him, and are therefore in bitterness for him, may look again upon Christ pierced, and rejoicer in him, because it pleased the Lord thus to smite this Rock, that there might be to us a Fountain of living waters.

See here, 1. How we are polluted; we are all so; we have sinned, and sin is uncleanness, it defiles the mind and conscience, renders us odious to God, and uneasy in ourselves, unfit to be employed in the service of God, and admitted into communion with him, as those who were ceremonially unclean were shut out of the sanctuary. The house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem are under sin, and uncleanness. The truth is, we are all as an unclean thing, and desirable to have our portion with the unclean. 2. How we may be purged. Behold, there is a fountain opened for us to wash in, and there are streams flowing to us from that fountain, so that if we be not made clean, it is our own fault. The blood of Christ, and God's pardoning mercy in that blood, makes us fit to come in the new covenant, to the fountain; for there is in them an inexhaustible fulness. There is mercy enough in God, and merit enough in Christ, for the forgiving of the greatest sins and sinners, upon gospel-terms. Such were some of you, but you are washed, 1 Cor. vii. 11. Under the law, there was a brazen laver, and a brazen sea, to wash in; those were but vessels, but here we have a fountain to apply ourselves to, overflowing. (2.) It is a fountain opened; for, whoever will, may come, and take the benefit of it; it is opened, not only to the house of David, but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; to the poor and mean as well as to the rich and great; or, it is opened for all believers, who, as the spiritual seed of Christ, are of the house of David, and, as living members of the church, are inhabitants of Jerusalem. Through Christ all that believe are justified, are washed from their sins in his blood, that they may be made to our God kings and priests, Rev. i. 5, 6.

11. He takes away the dominion of sin by the power of his grace, even of beloved sins; this evermore accompanies the former; those that are washed in the fountain opened, as they are justified, so they are sanctified; the water came with the blood out of the pierced side of Christ. It is here promised that in that day,

1. Idolatry shall be quite abolished, and the people of the Jews shall be effectually cured of their inclination to it; (v. 2.) I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land. The worship of the idols of their fathers shall be so perfectly rooted out, that in one generation or two it shall be forgotten that ever there were such idols among them; they shall either not be named at all, or not with any respect; they shall no more be remembered, as was promised, Hos. ii. 17. This was fulfilled in the rootless aban don which the Jews had, after the captivity, to idols and idolatry, and still retain to this day; it was fulfilled also in the ready conversion of many to the faith of Christ, by which they were taken away from making an idol of the ceremonial law, as the unbelieving Jews did; and it is still in the fulfilling, when souls are brought off from the world and the flesh, those two great idols, that they may cleave to God only.

2. False prophecy shall also be brought to an end; I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit, the persons that are under the influence of the unclean spirit, to pass out of the land; the devil is an unclean spirit, sin and uncleanness are from him; he has his prophets, that serve his interests, and re
ceive their instructions from him. Take away the unclean spirit, and the prophets would not deceive as they do, take away the false prophets that produce sham commissions, and the unclean spirit could not do the mischief he does. When God designs the silencing of the false prophets, he banishes the unclean spirit out of the land, that wrought in them, and was a rival with him for the throne in the heart.

The church of the Jews, when they were addicted to idols, did also dote much upon false prophets, who made use of the spirit of their fathers, to produce impurity and peace; but here it is promised, as a blessed effect of the promised reformation, that they should be very much set against false prophets, and zealous to clear the land of them; they were so after the captivity, till, through the blindness of their zeal against false prophets, they had put Christ to death under that character; and, after that, there arose many false christs and false prophets, and deceived many, Matth. xxiv. 11. It is here foretold,

(1.) That false prophets, instead of being indulged and favoured, should be brought to confound punishment even by their nearest relations, which would be as great an instance as any other of flagrant zeal against those deceitful, 1 Cor. xiii. 6. If his son entice the secret from God, thou shalt surely kill him. Show thy indignation against him, and prevent any appointment from him. His father and his mother shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. Note, We ought to conceive, and always to retain, a very great detestation and dread of every thing that would draw us out of the way of our duty into by-paths, as those who cannot bear that which is evil, Rev. ii. 2. And holy zeal for God and godliness will make us hate sin, and dread temptation, most in those whom naturally we love best, and who are nearest to us; there our danger is greatest, as Adam's from Eve, Job's from his wife; and there it will be the most praiseworthy to show our zeal, as Levi, who, in the cause of God, did not acknowledge his brethren, or know his own children, Deut. xxxii. 9. Thus we must hate and forsake our nearest relations, when we have a determination to the duty of God, Luke xiv. 26. Natural affections, even the strongest, must be overruled by gracious affections.

(2.) That false prophets should be themselves convinced of their sin and folly, and let fall their pretensions (v. 4.) The prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision: they shall not repeat it, or insist upon it, but desire that it may be forgotten and no more said of it, being ready themselves to own it was a sham; either because God has by his grace awakened their consciences, and showed them their error, or because the event disproves their predictions, and gives them the lie, or, because their prophecies do not meet with such a favourable reception as they used to meet with, but are generally despised and rejected; they perceive the people to be not interested in the events, which makes them begin to be ashamed of themselves. And therefore they shall no longer wear a rough garment, or garment of hair, as the true prophets used to do, in imitation of Elijah, and in token of their being morose to the pleasures and delights of sense. The pretenders had appeared in the habit of true prophesy; they pretended to be prophets, and used the external marks of their profession; they shall lay it aside, no more to deceive and impose upon unskillful, unwary people by it. A modest dress is a very good thing, if it be the genuine indication of a humble heart, and is to instruct: but it is a bad thing, if it be the hypocritical disguise of a proud, ambitious heart, and is to deceive. Let the pretenders to the grace of prophecy be shamed, and let their prophesies be foretold as they are, but not seem to be better than really they are. This pretender, as a true penitent, [1.] Shall not deceive those whom he had imposed upon; He shall say, I am no prophet, as I have pretended to be, was never designed or set apart for the office, never educated or brought up for it, never conversant among the sons of the prophets; I am a husbandman, and not a prophet; and the Lord had never taught of God to prophecy, but taught of man to keep cattle. Amos was originally such a one too, and yet was afterward called to be a prophet. Amos vii. 14, 15. But this deceiver never had any such call. Note, Those who sorrow after a godly sort for their having deceived others, will be forward to confess their sin, and will be ready to rectify the mistakes which they have been the cause of. Thus they who had used curious arts, when they were converted showed their deeds, and by what fallacies they had cheated the people, Acts xix. 18. [2.] He shall return to his own proper employment, which is the fittest for him; I will be a husbandman; (so it may be read;) I will apply myself to my business again, or I will give myself to things that belong not to me; for men taught me to keep cattle from my youth, and cattle I will again keep, and never set up for a preacher any more. Note, When we are convinced that we are gone out of the way of our duty, we must evidence the truth of our repentance by returning to it again, though it be the severest mortification to us. [3.] They shall acknowledge themselves to be deceivers; their visions shall be exposed; and though by a severe discipline were instrumental to bring him to a sight of his error, v. 6. When he who with the greatest assurance had asserted himself so lately to be a prophet, suddenly drops his claims, and says, I am no prophet, every body will be surprised at it, and some will ask, What are these wounds, or marks of stripes, in thine hands? How came thou by them? Hast thou not been examined by scourging? And is not that it that has brought thee to thyself? (Vexatio dat intellectum—Vexation shortens the intellect.) "Hast thou not been beaten into this acknowledgment? Was it not the rod and reproach that gave thee this wisdom? And he shall own, "Yes, it was these, these are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends, and received hard and severely, as a distracted man, and so brought me to my senses." By this it appears that those parents of the false prophet, that thrust him through, (v. 3.) did not do it till they had first tried to reclaim him by correction, and he would not be reclaimed; for so was the law concerning a disobedient son—his parents must first have chastened him in vain, before they were allowed to bring him forth to be stoned, Deut. xxi. 18, 19. But here is another, who was reduced by stripes, and so prevented the capital punishment; and he had the sense and honesty to own that they were his friends, his real friends, who thus wounded him, that they might reclaim him; for faithful are the wounds of a friend, Prov. xxvii. 6. Some first interpreted, having how soon this comes after the mention of Christ's being pierced, think that these are the words of that great prophet, not of the false prophet spoken of before. Christ was wounded in his hands, when they were nailed to the cross, and, after his resurrection, he had the marks of these wounds; and here he tells how he came by them; he received them from a false prophet, for the chief priests called him a deceiver, and upon that account would have him crucified; but he received them in the house of his friends—the Jews, who should have been his friends; for he came to his own: and though they
were his bitter enemies, yet he was pleased to call them his friends, as he did Judas; (Friend, wherewith art thou come?) because they forwarded his sufferings, being called to be an adversary, because he dissuaded him from them.

7. Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off, and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.

Here is a prophecy.

1. Of the sufferings of Christ, of him who was to be anointed as to be the Fountain opened. Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, v. 7. These are the words of God the Father, giving order and commission to the sword of his justice to awake against his Son, when he had voluntarily made his soul an offering for sin: for it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief; and he was striken of God, and afflicted, Isa. lxi. 4, 10. Observe, (1.) How he calls him. As God, he is my Fellow; for he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, he and the Father are one. He was from eternity by him, as one brought up with him, and, in the work of man's redemption, he was his Eject, in whom his soul delighted, and the counsel of peace was between them both. As Mediator, he is my Shepherd, that great and good Shepherd that undertook to feed the flock, ch. xi. 7. He is the Shepherd that was to lay down his life for the sheep. (2.) How he uses him: Awake, O sword, against him. If he will be a Sacrifice, he must be slain, for without the shedding of blood, the life-blood, there was no remission. Men thrust him through as a foolish shepherd; God thrust him through as the Good Shepherd, (compare v. 3.) that he might purchase the flock of God with his own blood. He is the Shepherd that is ready to a rod to correct him, but to a sword to slay him; for Messiah the Prince must be cut off, but not for himself, Dan. ix. 26. It is not the sword of war, that receives this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour, but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal, upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; he having no sin of his own, to answer for; the sword of justice had nothing to say to him of itself, till by particular order from the Judge of all, it was warranted to brandish itself against him. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the decree and counsel of God; but the sword designed against him had long staunched, till now at length it is called upon to awake, not, "Awake, and Frighten him," but, "Awake, and try him." Strike home, with a drowsy blow, but an awakening one; for God spared not his own Son.

2. Of the dispersion of the disciples thereupon: Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. This our Lord Jesus himself declares to have been fulfilled, when all his disciples were offended because of him in the night wherein he was betrayed, Matth. xxvi. 31. Mark xiv. 27. They all forsook him, and fled. The smiting of the Shepherd is the scatter-ing of the sheep. They were scattered every one to his own, and left him alone, John xvii. 32. Herein they were like timorous sheep; yet the Shepherd this provision for them, that he said, If ye see me, let these go their way. Some make another application of this; Christ was the Shepherd of the Jewish nation; he was smitten, they themselves smote him, and therefore they were justly scattered abroad, and dispersed among the nations, and remain so at this day. These words, I will turn my hands upon the little ones, may be understood either of this, or of that: if so be as Christ's disciples, they shall drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with,) or as a promise that God would gather Christ's scattered disciples together again, and he should give them the meeting in Galilee. Though the little ones among Christ's soldiers may be dispersed, they shall rally again, the lambs of his flock, though scattered, yet shall recover themselves, shall be gathered in his arms, and laid in his bosom. Sometimes, when the sheep are scattered and lost in the wilderness, yet the little ones, which, it was feared, would be a prey, (Num. xiv. 31) are brought in, are brought home, and God turns his hand upon them.

3. Of the rejection and ruin of the unbelieving Jews: (2.) This will has and shall have, its accomplishment, in the destruction of the corrupt and hypocritical part of the church. It shall come to pass that in all the land of Israel two parts shall be cut off, and die; the Roman army laid the country waste, and slew at least two-thirds of the Jews. Some understand by the cutting off, and dying, of two parts in all the earth, the abolishing of heathenism and Judaism; that Christianity, the third part, might be left to reign alone. The Jewish worship was quite taken away by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. And, some time after, pagan idolatry was in a manner extirpated, when the empire became Christian.

4. Of the reformation and preservation of the chosen remnant, those of them that believed, and the Christian church in general; (v. 9.) The third part shall be left; when Jerusalem and Judea were destroyed, all the Christians in that country, having among them the warning Christ gave them to flee to the mountains, shifted for their own safety, and were sheltered in a city called Pella, on the other side Jordan. We have here, first, the trials, and then, the triumphs, of the Christian church, and of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and their grace, who, through the fulness of time, doth bring all things together in the middle ground of Christ, and of the church, and of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I will bring that third part through the fire of affliction, and will refine and try them as silver and gold are refined and tried. This was fulfilled in the persecutions of the primitive church, the fiery trial which tried the people of God then, 1 Pet. iv. 12. Those whom God sets apart for himself must pass through a probation and purification in this world, they must be refined and tried, and, as the lesson by which we are to understand and honour, (1 Pet. i. 6, 7,) as Abraham's faith was when it was tried by the command given him to offer up Isaac, (v. 19,) I now know that thou fearest me. They must be tried, that both they that are perfect, and they that are not, may be made manifest. They must be refined from their dross, their corruption must be purged out, they must be brightened, and they must be made perfect in love. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them. They write to God by prayer, and receive from him answers of peace, and thus keep up a comfortable communion with him; this honour have all his saints. (2.) Their covenant with God is their triumph; I will say, It is my people, whom I have chosen and loved, and will own; and they shall say, The Lord is my God, and a God all-sufficient to
me; and in him they shall boast every day, and all the day long. This God is our God for ever and ever."

CHAP. XIV.

Livers things were foretold in the two foregoing chapters, which should come to pass in that day: this chapter speaks what came to pass in that judgment: and ten times in the foregoing chapters, and seven times in this, it is repeated, in that day: but what that day is, that is here meant, is uncertain, and perhaps will be known, when the judgment will be fulfilled. 

1. The Gates of hell are here threatening the church, (v. 1, 2.) and yet not prevailing. II. The power of heaven appears here for the church, and against the enemies of it, v. 3. - 5. III. The events concerning the church are here represented as mixed, (v. 6, 7.) but issuing well at last. IV. The spreading of the means of knowledge is here foretold, and the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world, (v. 8, 9.) which shall be the enlargement and establishment of another Israel, v. 10, 11. V. Those shall be reckoned with, that fought against Jerusalem, (v. 12, 15.) and those that neglected his worship there, v. 17, 19. VI. It is promised that there shall be great resort to the church, and great purity and piety in it, v. 16, 20, 21.

1. BEHOLD, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. 2. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses r tiled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations; as when he fought in the day of battle. 4. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east: and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley: and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uziah king of Judah; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. 6. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: 7. But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass that at evening-time it shall be light. God's providences concerning his church are here represented as strangely changing, and strangely mixed.

8. Strangely changing. Sometimes the tide runs high and strong against them, but presently it turns, and comes to be in favour of them; and God has, for wise and holy ends, set the one over against the other.

1. God here appears against Jerusalem; judgment begins at the house of God, when the day of the Lord comes, (v. 1.) Jerusalem must pass through the fire to be refined. God himself gathers all nations against Jerusalem, to battle; (v. 2.) he gives them a charge as he did Sennacherib, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, (Isa. x. 6.) for the people of Jerusalem are now become the people of his wrath. And who can stand before him, or before his judgments? V. 2. His instruction he will give success; the city shall be taken by the Romans, who have nations at command; the houses shall be rifled, and all the riches of them taken away by the enemy, and, to gratify an insatiable lust of uncleanness as well as avarice, the women shall be ravished; as it victory were a license to the worst of villains, Juste datum sceler—at And crimes were sanctioned by law. One half of the city shall then be carried into captivity, to be sold or enslaved, and shall not be able to help itself, such is the destruction that shall be made in the great and terrible day of the Lord.

2. He presently changes his way, and appears for Jerusalem; for though judgment begins at the house of God, yet, as it shall not end there, so it shall not make a full end of it, and Jerusalem will be left. It shall be a tenth, Isa. vi. 13. See Ezek. v. 3.

2. Their cause shall be pleaded against their enemies; (v. 3.) Then when God has made use of these nations as a scourge to his people, he shall go forth, and fight against them, by his judgments, as when he fought against the enemies of his church formerly, in the day of battle, with the Egyptians, Canaanites, and others. Note, The instruments of God's wrath will themselves be made the objects of it; for it will come to their turn to drink of the cup of trembling; and whom God fights against he will be sure to overcome, and he too hard for. And every former day of battle, which God has made to his people a day of triumph, as it is an engagement to God to appear for his people, because he is the same, so it is to encourage his people to continue in him. It is observable that the Roman empire never flourished after the destruction of Jerusalem as it had done before, but in many instances God fought against it.

3. Though Jerusalem and the temple be destroyed, yet God will have a church in the world, into which Gentiles shall be admitted, and with whom the believing Jews shall be incorporated; 7, 4, 5. These verses are dark, and hard to be understood; but divers good expositors take this to be the meaning of them. [1.] God will carefully inspect Jerusalem, even then when the enemies of it are laying it waste; His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, whence he may take a view of the city and temple, Mark xiii. 31. When the refiner puts his gold into the furnace, the gold stands by it, and his eye upon it, to see that it receive no damage; so when Jerusalem, God's gold, is to be refined, he will have the oversight of it. He will stand by upon the mount of Olives; this was literally fulfilled, when our Lord Jesus was often upon this mountain, especially when from thence he ascended to heaven; Acts i. 12. It was the last place on which his feet stood on this earth, the place from which he took rise. [2.] The partition-
wall between Jews and Gentiles shall be taken away. The mountains about Jerusalem, and particularly this, signified it to be an enclosure, and that it stood in the way of those who would approach to it. Between the Gentiles and Jerusalem this mountain shall be made to cleave in the midst, and so the Jewish pale shall be taken down, and the church be made wholly with the Gentiles. This verse is one with the Jews by the breaking down of this middle wall of partition, Eph. ii. 14. Who art thou, O great mountain? And a great mountain the ceremonial law was in the way of the Jews’ conversion, which, one would think, could never have been got over; yet before Christ and his gospel it was made plain: this mountain departs, this hill removes, but the covenant of peace cannot be broken; for peace is still preached to him that is afar off, and to them that are nigh. [3.] A new and living way shall be opened to the New Jerusalem both to see it, and to come into it. The mountain being divided, one half toward the north, and the other half toward the south, there shall be a very great valley, a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentiles, and the Jews and the Gentiles have free admission into the gospel-Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord, that goes forth from Jerusalem, shall have a free course into the Gentile world. Thus the way of the Lord is prepared, for every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and plain and pleasant valleys shall come in the room of them, Isa. xl. 4. [4.] Those of the Jews that believe shall come in, and join themselves to the Gentiles, and incorporate with them in the gospel-church: Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains, that valley that is opened between the divided halves of the mount of Olives; they shall hasten into the church with the Gentiles, as formerly the Gentiles with them, ch. viii. 23. The valley of the mountains is the gospel-church, to which there were added of the Jews daily such as should be saved, who fled to that valley as to their refuge. This valley of the mountains is said to reach unto Azal, or to the separate place, to all those whom God has set apart for himself. When God makes his mountains a way, (Isa. lxix. 11.) by making them a valley, the way shall be opened to all the way-faring men, (Isa. xxxv. 6.) and, though fools, they shall not err therein. Or, to those that are now seeking after God, who call to God, and would be joined with the Gentiles, who are afar off, shall be made nigh with the Jews, who are a people near unto him, and both have an access, a mutual access, to each other, and a joint access to God as a Father by one Spirit, Eph. ii. 18. [5.] They shall flee to the valley of the mountains, to the gospel-church, under dreadful apprehensions of their danger from the curse of the law. They shall flee from the wrath to come, from the avenger of blood, who is in pursuit of them, to the church as a city of refuge, or as doves to their windows, as they fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, Amos i. 1. Therefore the gospel reveals the wrath of God from heaven, (Rom. i. 18.) that we might be awakened to escape for our lives, to flee as from an earthquake, for we feel the earth is moved. They shall flee from the wrath to come, from the avenger of blood, who is pursuing them, to the church, in whom alone we can stand fast, and be easy. [4.] God shall appear in his glory, for the accomplishment of all this; The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee; which may refer to his coming to destroy Jerusalem, or to destroy the enemies of Jerusalem, or his coming to set up his kingdom in the world, which is called the glory of the Son of man, (Matt. xxvii. 37,) or to his last coming, at the end of time; however, it teaches us, (1.) That the Lord will come; it has been the faith of all the saints, Behold, the Lord cometh to fulfil every word that he has spoken in his season. (2.) When he comes, all his saints come with him; they attend his motions, and are ready to serve his interests; Christ will come at the end of time with ten thousand of his saints, as when he came to give the law upon mount Sinai. [5.] Every particular believer, being related to God as his God, may try that he will come in the expectation of his coming, and be partaker of it with pleasure, The Lord my God shall come, shall come, to the comfort of all that are his; for, “Blessed Lord, all the saints shall be with thee, and it shall be their everlasting happiness to dwell in thy presence; and therefore come Lord Jesus.” And some think that this may be read as a prayer, Yet, O Lord my God, come, and bring all the saints therewith. II. God’s providences appear here strangely mixed; (v. 6, 7.) In that day of the Lord the light shall not be clear nor dark, not day nor night; but at evening-time it shall be light. Some refer this to all the time from hence to the coming of the Messiah; the Jewish church had neither perfect peace nor constant trouble, but a cloudy day, neither night nor day, but a day that cannot be well known, or is properly understood. It is generally, as designed to represent the method God usually takes in the administration of the kingdom both of providence and grace. Here is, 1. An idea of the usual course and tenour of God’s dispensations; the day of his grace and the day of his providence are neither clear nor dark, not day nor night. It is so with the church of God in this world; where the Sun of righteousness is risen, it cannot be dark night, and yet, short of heaven, it will not be clear day. It is so with particular saints, they are not darkness, but light in the Lord, and yet, while there are so much error and corruption remaining in them, it is not perfect day. So it is as to the providences of God that relate to his church; in general the affairs of the church are neither good nor bad in any extremity, but there is a mixture of both, we are singing both of mercy and judgment, and are uncertain which will prevail; whether it be an evening or a morning twilight. We are between hope and fear, not knowing what to make of things. 2. An intimation of comfort with reference hereunto. It shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord. This intimates, (1.) The beauty and harmony of such a day is that which is one and the same design and tendency in all; all the wheels make but one wheel, all the revolutions but one day. (2.) The brevity of them; it is as it were but for one day, for a little moment; the cloud that darkens the light will soon blow over. (3.) The eye God has upon all these events, and the hand he has in them all; they are known to the Lord; he takes notice of them, and orders and disposes of all for the best, according to the counsel of his will. 3. An issue very joyful secured at last; At evening-time it shall be light; it shall be clear light, and no longer dark; we are sure of it in the other world, and we hope for it in this world—at evening-time, when our hopes are quite spent with waiting all day to no purpose, may, when we fear it will be quite dark, when things are at the worst, and the case of the church is most deplorable. As to the church’s enemies, the sun goes down at noon, so to the church it rises at night; unto the upright springs light out of darkness, (Ps. cxliv. 4.) deliverance comes when the tale of bricks is doubled, and when God’s people had done looking for it, and so it comes with a pleasing surprise. 4. It shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of
them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. 9. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. 10. All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses. 11. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. 12. And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. 13. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. 14. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem: and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. 15. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

Here are,

1. Blessings promised to Jerusalem, the gospel-Jerusalem, in the day of the Messiah, and to all the earth, by virtue of the blessings poured out on Jerusalem, especially to the land of Israel.

1. Jerusalem shall be a spring of living waters to the world; it was made so when there the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and thence the word of the Lord diffused itself to the nations about; (v. 8.) Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; for there they began, and thence they set out, who were to preach repentance and remission of sins unto all nations, Luke xxii. 47. Note, Where the gospel goes, and the graces of God's Spirit go along with it, there living waters go; those streams that make glad the city of our God, make glad the country; the streams that flow from the hill of the Lord, which was well watered. It was the honour of Jerusalem, that from thence the word of the Lord went forth (Isa. ii. 3.) and thus far, even in its worst and most degenerate age, for old acquaintance-sake, it was made a blessing; and to be so is to be blessed. Half of these waters shall go toward the former sea, and half toward the hinder sea, as all rivers bend their course toward some sea or other, some eastward, others westward; the gospel shall spread into all parts of the world, some that lie remote from Jerusalem one way, and others that lie as far off another way; for the dominion of the Redeemer, which was thereby to be set up, must be from sea to sea, (Ps. lxvii. 8.) and the earth must be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and as the waters that in various channels run to the sea. The knowledge of God shall diffuse itself, (1.) Every way. These living waters shall produce both eastern churches and western churches, that shall each of them in their turn be illustrious. (2.) Every day; in summer and in winter shall it be. Note, Those who are employed in spreading the gospel, may find themselves work both winter and summer, and are to serve the Lord therein at all seasons, Acts xx. 18. And such a divine power goes along with these living waters, that they shall not be dried up, or the course of them be obstructed, either by the droughts of summer, or by the cold of winter. 2. The kingdom of God among men shall be a universal and united kingdom, v. 9. (1.) It shall be a universal kingdom; The Lord shall be king over all the earth. He is, and ever was so, of right; and in the sovereign dispositions of his providence, his kingdom rules over all, and none are exempt from his jurisdiction; but it is here promised that he shall be so, by actual presence of the hearts of his subjects; he shall be acknowledged King by all in all places; his authority shall be owned and submitted to, and allegiance sworn to him. This will have its accomplishment with that word, (Rev. xi. 15.) The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. (2.) It shall be a united kingdom; There shall be one Lord, and his name one, and his kingdom shall be one, and his dominion a perpetual kingdom, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abounded, and all false ways of worship abolished; and as God shall be the Centre of their unity, in whom they shall all meet, so the scripture shall be the rule of their unity, by which they shall all walk. 3. The land of Judea, and Jerusalem, is motherly, shall be enlarged and replenished, and taken under the special protection of Heaven, v. 10, 11. Some think this speaks particular favour to the people of the Jews, and points at their conversion, and restoration in the latter days; but it is rather to be understood figuratively of the gospel-church, typified by Judah and Jerusalem, and it signifies the abundant graces with which the church shall be crowned, and the fruitfulness of its members, and the vast numbers of them. (1.) The church shall be like a fruitful country, abounding in all the rich products of the soil. The whole land of Judea, which is naturally uneven and hilly, shall be turned as a plain; it shall become a smooth, level valley, from Geba, or Gibeah, its utmost border north, to Rimmon which lay south of Jerusalem, and was the utmost southern limit of Judah. The gospel of Christ, where it comes in its power, levels the ground, mountains and hills are brought low by it, that the Lord alone may be exalted. (2.) It shall be like a populous city. As the holy land shall be levelled, so the holy city shall be profiled, shall be rebuilt and replenished. Jerusalem shall be lifted up out of its low estate, the mount of Olivet shall be raised out of its vale, and the tops of its hills shall be turned as a plain, and not only the mount of Olives removed, but all other mountains too, then Jerusalem shall be lifted up, shall appear the more conspicuous; she shall be inhabited in her place, even in Jerusalem, ch. xii. 6. The whole city shall be inhabited in the utmost extent of it, and no part of it left to lie waste. The utmost limits of it are here mentioned, betwixt which there shall be no man, nor wilderness of uncultivated land, from Benjamin's gate north-east, to the corner-gate north-west, and from the tower of Hana-need in the south, to the King's wine-presses in the north; when the churches of Christ in all places are replenished with great numbers of holy, humble, serious Christians, and many such are daily added to it, then this promise is fulfilled. (3.) This coun
try and this city shall both be safe, both the meat in the country, and the months in the city; they that dwell in it shall dwell securely, and there shall be none to make them afraid; there shall be no more of that utter destruction that has laid both town and country waste, no more anathema, (as some read it,) no more cutting off, no more curse, or separation from God to evil, no more such desolating judgments as you have been growing under, but Jerusalem shall be greatly in safety, and she shall not lack for anything, neither shall its friends be fearful to disquiet themselves, nor its enemies formidable to disquiet them. That promise of Christ explains this—that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church; and so do the holy security and serenity of mind which believers enjoy in relying on the divine protection.

11. Here are the judgments threatened against the enemies of the church, that have fought, or do fight, against Jerusalem; and the threatening of these judgments is in order to the preservation of the church in safety. Men that read and hear of these plagues, will be afraid of fighting against Jerusalem, much more, when these threatening are fulfilled in some, will others hear and fear. Those that fight against the city of God, and his people, will be cut off, and fighting against God, against none ever hardened his heart, and prospered; (v. 12.) This shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; whoever they are, God will punish them for the affront done to him, and avenge Jerusalem upon them.

20. They shall waste away under grievous and languishing diseases; Their flesh shall consume away, and they shall be miserably emaciated, even while they stand on their feet, so that they shall be walking skeletons, nothing shall remain but skin and bones. The flesh which they pampered and indulged, and made provision for, when they were fed to the full with the spoils of God's people, shall now consume away, that it cannot be seen, and the bones that were not seen shall stick out, (Job xxxiii. 21.) They keep their feet, and hope to keep their ground, crawling about as long as they can; but they must yield at last. The organs of sight, the outlets of sin, their eyes, shall consume away, in their holes, shall sink into their heads, or perhaps start out of them; their ensnaring, malicious, adulterous eyes, the eyes they had so often fed with spectacles, for that very reason, may become a great terror, that shall make not only their countenances ghostly, but their lives wretched. The organs of speech, the outlets of sin, their tongue, shall consume away in their mouths; whereby God will reckon with them for all their blasphemies against himself, and inveighs against his people. Thus their own tongues shall fall upon them, and their punishment shall be legible in them, as his was, whose tongue was tormented in hell flames. Thus Antichrist and Herod consumed away.

2. They shall be dashed in pieces one against another; (v. 13.) A great tumult from the Lord shall be among them. But are tumults from the Lord, who is the God of order, and not of confusion? As they are the sin of those that raise them, they shall fall from the Lord, but from the wicked only, and from men's own lusts; but as they are the punishment of those that suffer them, they are from the Lord, who serves his own purposes, and carries on his intentions, by the sins and follies, and restless spirits, of men. It is of themselves that they bite and devour one another; (Gal. v. 13.) as Ahab was devoured by a lying spirit from the Lord, so Abimelech and the men of Shechem were divided, and so destroyed, by an evil spirit from the Lord, Judg. ix. 23. Note, Those that are confederate and combined against the church, will justly be separated, and set against one another; and their tumults raised against God will be avenged in tumults among themselves. And they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, to hold him from striking, or to bind him as his prisoner; nay, his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour, to destroy the church, are often made to destroy one another; and every man's sword is sometimes set against his fellow, by him whose sword they all are.

Some think this was fulfilled in the factions and dissensions that were among the Jews, when the Romans were destroying them all; for they had fought against the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel-church, and to that well enough agrees. v. 18. Thou also, O Judah, shalt fight against Jerusalem; the Jewish nation shall be ruined by itself, shall die by its own hands; the city and country shall be at war with each other, and so both shall be destroyed. Stilts et ipsa Roma viribus ruin—Rome was urged into ruin by its very strength.

3. The plunder of their camp shall greatly enrich the people of God, (v. 13.) And the spoils of their country; (v. 14.) And the towns shall be full of spoil at Jerusalem, (so our learned interpreter reads it,) people shall come from all parts to share in the prey; as when Semachib's army was routed before Jerusalem, there was the prey of a great spoil divided, (Isa. xxxviii. 23.) so it shall be now; the wealth of all the heathen round about, that had spoiled Jerusalem, shall be gathered together; gold, and silver, and apparel, to great abundance, that an equal dividend may be made among all the parties entitled to a share of the prize. Note, The wealth of the sinner is often laid up for the just, and the Israel of God enriched with the spoil of the Egyptians.

4. The very cattle shall share in the plague with which the enemies of God's church shall be cut off, as they did in divers of the plagues of Egypt; (v. 15.) All the beasts that shall be in the tents of these wicked men, when God comes to contend with them, shall perish with them; not only beasts used in war as the horse, but those used for travel, or in the plough, as the mule, the camel, and the ass. Note, The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man, and in his plagues. Thus God will show his indignation against sin, and will make the creature also, that is thus subject to vanity, green to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 21, 22.

16. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. 17. And it shall be, that whose will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. 18. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, there shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 20. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses.
HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem, and in Judah, shall be Holiness unto the Lord of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

Three things are here foretold.
1. That a gospel-way of worship being set up in the church, there shall be a great resort to it, and a general attendance upon it. Those that were left of the enemies of religion, shall be so sensible of the mercy of God to them in their narrow escape, that they shall apply themselves to the worship of the God of Israel, and pay their homage to him, v. 16. Those that were not consumed, shall be converted, and this makes their deliverance a mercy indeed, a double mercy; it is a great change that the grace of God makes upon them; they that had come against Jerusalem, finding their attempts vain and to no purpose, shall not only leave the enemies of their adversaries, and as ever they had been her adversaries, and shall come to Jerusalem, to worship there, and go in concurrence with those whom they had gone contrary to. Note, As some of Christ's foes shall be made his footstool, so others of them shall be made his friends; and when the principle of animosity is slain in them, their former acts of hostility are hardened to them, and their service admitted and accepted, as though they had never fought against Jerusalem. They shall go up to worship at Jerusalem, because that was the place which God had chosen, and there the temple was, which was a type of Christ and his mediation. Converting grace sets us right, 1. In the object of our worship. They shall no longer worship the Molochs and Baals, the kings and lords, that the Gentiles worship, the creatures of their own imagination, but the King, the Lord of hosts, the everlasting King, the King of kings, the sovereign Lord of all. 2. In the ordinances of worship, those which God himself has appointed. Gospel-worship is here represented by the keeping of the feast of tabernacles, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner observed and signified in that feast, the reconciling of the world, and joy in God. Neh. viii. 17. The life of a good Christian is a constant feast of tabernacles, and, in all acts of devotion, we must retire from the world, and rejoice in the Lord; worship as in that feast. 3. In the Mediator of our worship; we must go to Christ our Temple with all our offices, for in him only our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God, 1 Pet. ii. 5. If we rest in ourselves, we come short of pleasing God; we must go up to him, and mention his righteousness only. 4. In the time of it; we must be constant. They shall go up from year to year, at the times appointed for this solemn feast. Every day of a Christian's life is a day of the feast of tabernacles, and every Lord's day especially, that is the great day of the feast; and as the every day is the first day of worship in Lord of hosts, and every Lord's day with a peculiar solemnity.

11. That those who neglect the duties of gospel-worship, shall be reckoned with for their neglect. God will compel them to come and worship before him, by suspending his favours from those that keep not his ordinances; Upon them there shall be no rain, v. 7. And if we reflect on this, it will appear that the duty of heavenly doctrine shall be withheld, and of the heavenly grace which should accompany that doctrine. God will command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon them. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to withhold the blessings of grace from those that do not attend the means of grace, as by the green pastures to those that attend not the shepherd's tents. Or, we may take it literally; On them there shall be no rain, to make their ground fruitful. Note, The gifts of common providence are justly denied to those that neglect and despise instituted ordinances. Those that neglected to build the temple, and the punishment of that temple, (Hag. ii. 17.) and so were they that neglected to attend there when it was built. If we be barren and unfruitful toward God, justly is the earth made so to us. Many are crossed, and go backward, in their affairs, and this is at the bottom of it—they do not keep close to the worship of God, as they should; they go off from God, and then he walks contrary to them. If we will not perform the duties he expects from us, it is just with him to deny the favours we expect from him. But what shall be done to the defaulters of the land of Egypt, to whom the threatening of the want of rain is no threatening, for they have no rain at any time, they need none, they desire none; the river Nilus is to them instead of the clouds of heaven; and whatsoever he sends is as water and as ice, to make their ground unfruitful, so that what is a punishment to others, is none to them, v. 18, 19. It is threatened that if the family of Egypt go not up, that have no rain, yet God will find out a way to meet with them, for there shall be, in effect, the same plague wherewith other nations are smitten for their neglect. God can, and often did, restrain the overflowing of the river, which was for him a source of wealth and safety; he often closed the river did its part, androse as high as it used to do, God had other ways of bringing famine upon them, and destroying the fruits of their ground, as he did by divers of the ten plagues of Egypt, so that this, that is, the same, shall be the punishment of Egypt that is the punishment of other nations, who come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. Note, Those who think themselves least indebted to, and depending on, the mercy of Heaven, cannot therefore think themselves guarded against the justice of Heaven. It does not follow that those who can live without rain, can therefore live without God; for not the heavens only, but all other creatures that are to us, (and no more,) that God makes them to be; nor can any man's way of living enable them to be exempt from the righteous anger of God, and the punishment (margin,) This shall be the sin of Egypt, and the sin of all nations, that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. The same word signifies both sin and the punishment of sin, so close and inseparable is the connexion between them; (as Gen. iv. 7.) and sin is often its own punishment. Note, Omissions are sins, and we must come into judgment for them; those contract guilt, that go not up to worship at the times appointed, as they have opportunity; and it is a sin that is its own punishment, for those who forsake the duty, forfeit the privilege, of communion with God.

12. That those who perform the duties of gospel-worship, shall have grace to adorn their profession by the duties of a gospel-conversation too. This is promised for them; those contract guilt, that go not up to worship, shall have grace to adorn their profession in the church. In general, all shall be holiness to the Lord. 1. The name and character of holiness shall not be so confused as it had been; Holiness to the Lord had been written only upon the High Priest's forehead, but now it shall not be so appropriated. All Christians shall be living temples, and spiritual temples, in the Lord; they shall be holy places consecrated to God, and employed in his service. 2. Real holiness shall be more diffused than it had been; because there shall be more powerful means of sanctification, more ex
 excelent rules, more cogent arguments, and brighter patterns, of holiness; and because there shall be a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit of holiness and sanctification, after Christ's ascension, than ever before.

(1.) There shall be holiness introduced into common things; and those things shall be devoted to God, that seemed very foreign.

[1.] The furniture of their horses shall be consecrated to God; Upon the bells of the horses shall be engraven, Holiness to the Lord, or upon the bridles of the horses, (so the margin,) or the trappings. The horses used in war shall no longer be used against God and his people, as they have been, but for him and them. Even their vases shall be holy vases; their troopers serving under God's banner. Their great men, who ride in state with a pompous retinue, shall reckon it their greatest ornament to honour God with their honours. Holiness to the Lord shall be written on the harness of their chariot-horses, as great men have sometimes their coat of arms with their motto painted on their coaches; every gentleman shall take the High Priest's motto for his, and glory in it, and make it a memento to himself not to do any thing unworthy of it. Travellers shall have it upon their bridles with which they guide their horses, as those who desire always to be put in mind of it, by having it continually before them, and to guide themselves in all their motions by this rule. The bells of the horses, which are designed to quicken them in their journey, and to give notice of their approach, shall have Holiness to the Lord upon them, to signify that this is that which we ought to be influenced by ourselves, and make profession of to others, wherever we go.

[2.] The furniture of their houses too shall be consecrated to God, to be employed in his service. First, The furniture of the priests' houses, or apartments adjoining to the house of the Lord. The common drinking-cups they used shall be like the bowls before the altar, that were used either to receive the blood of the sacrifices, or to present the wine and oil in, which were for the drink-offerings. The vessels which they used at their own tables, shall be used in such a religious manner, with such sobriety and temperance, such devotedness to the glory of God, and such a mixture of pious thoughts and expressions, that their meats shall look like sacrifices, they shall eat and drink, not to themselves, but to him that spreads their tables, and fills their cups. And thus, in ministers' families especially, should common actions be done after a godly sort, however they are done in other families. Secondly, The furniture of other houses, those of the common people; Every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness to the Lord. The pots in which they boiled their meat, the cups out of which they drank their wine, Jer. xxxvi. 5. In these, God's good creatures shall never be abused to excess, nor that made the food and fuel of lust, which should have been oil to the wheels of obedience, as had formerly been, when all tables were full of vomit and filthiness, Isa. xxviii. 8. What they eat and drink out of these shall nourish their bodies for the service of God; and out of these they shall give liberally for the relief of the poor: then are they Holiness to the Lord, as the merchandise and the hire of the converted Tyrians are said to be; (Isa. xxxiii. 18.) for both in our gettings and our spendings we must have an eye to the will of God as our rule, and the glory of God as our end. Thirdly, When there shall be such an abundance of real holiness, people shall not be nice and curious about ceremonial holiness; They that sacrifice, shall come, and take of these common vessels, and see their sacrifices therein, making no distinction between them and the boats before the altar. In gospel-times the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth, and not at Jerusalem, John iv. 21. One place shall be as acceptable to God as another. I will that men pray everywhere; and one vessel shall be as acceptable as another. Little regard shall be had to the circumstance, provided there be nothing indecent or disorderly, while the substance is religiously preserved and adhered to. Some think it intimates that there should be greater numbers of sacrifices offered than the vessels of the sanctuary would serve for; but rather than any should be turned back or deferred, they shall make no difficulty at all of using common vessels, as the Levites in a case of necessity helped the priests to kill the sacrifices, 2 Chron. xxxix. 34.

(2.) There shall be no unholiness introduced into their sacred things, to corrupt them. In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts. Some read it, There shall be no more the merchant; for so a Canaanite sometimes signifies; and they think it was fulfilled when Christ once and again drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. Or, though those that were Canaanites, strangers and foreigners, shall be brought into the house of the Lord, yet they shall cease to be Canaanites; they shall have nothing of the spirit or disposition of Canaanites in them. Or, it intimates that though in gospel-times people should grow indifferent as to holy vessels, yet they should be very strict in church-discipline, and careful not to admit the profane to special ordinances, but to separate between the precious and the vile, between Israelites and Canaanites. Yet this will not have its full accomplishment, short of the heavenly Jerusalem, that house of the Lord of hosts, into which no unclean thing shall enter; for at the end of time, and not before, Christ shall gather out of his kingdom every thing that offends; and the tares and wheat shall be perfectly and eternally separated.
AN

EXPOSITION,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

OF THE PROPHECY OF

MALACHI.

God's prophets were his witnesses to his church, each in his day, for several ages; witnesses for him and his authority, witnesses against sin and sinners, attesting the true intents of God's providences in his dealings with his people then, and the kind intentions of his grace concerning his church in the days of the Messiah, to whom all the prophets bare witness; for they all agreed in their testimony; and now we have only one witness more to call, and we have done with our evidence; and though he be the last, and in him prophecy ceased, yet the Spirit of prophecy shines as clear, as strong, as bright, in him, as in any that went before; and his testimony challenges an equal regard. The Jews say, Prophecy continued forty years under the second temple, and this prophet they call the seat of prophecy, because in him the series or succession of prophets broke off, and came to a period. God wisely ordered it so, that divine inspiration should cease for some ages before the coming of the Messiah, that that great Prophet might appear the more conspicuous and distinguishable, and be the more welcome. Let us consider,

I. The person of the prophet; we have only his name, Malachi, and no account of his country or parentage. Malachi signifies, my angel; which has given occasion for a conjecture that this prophet was indeed an angel from heaven, and not a man; as that, Judges ii. 1. But there is no just ground for the conjecture. Prophets were messengers, God's messengers; this prophet was so; his name is the very same with that which we find in the original, ch. iii. 1. for my messenger; and perhaps from that word he might (though, probably, he had another name) be called Malachi. The Chaldee Paraphrase, and some of the Jews, suggest that Malachi was the same with Ezra; but that also is groundless. Ezra was a scribe, but we never read that he was a prophet. Others, yet further from probability, make him to be Mordecai. But we have reason to conclude he was a person whose proper name was that by which he is here called; the tradition of some of the ancients is, that he was of the tribe of Zebulon, and that he died young.

II. The scope of the prophecy. Haggai and Zechariah were sent to reprove the people for delaying to build the temple; Malachi was sent to reprove them for the neglect of it, when it was built, and for their profanation of the temple-service; for from idolatry and superstition they ran into the other extreme of impiety and irreligion; and the sins he witnesses against are the same that we find complained of in Nehemiah's time, with whom, it is probable, he was contemporary. And now that prophecy was to cease, he speaks more clearly of the Messiah as nigh at hand, than any other of the prophet had done; and concludes with a direction to the people of God to keep in remembrance the law of Moses, while they were in expectation of the gospel of Christ.
1. THE burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. 2. I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord; yet I loved Jacob, 3. And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. 4. Wheresoe'er Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever. 5. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel.

The prophecy of this book is entitled, The burden of the word of the Lord, (v. 1.) which intimates, 1. That it was of great weight and importance; what the false prophets said, was light as the chaff, what the true prophets said, was ponderous as the wheat, Jer. xxiii. 23. 2. That it ought to be often repeated to the people, and by them, as the law, Deut. xxii. 8. 3. That there were those to whom it was a burden, and a reproach; they were weary of it, and found themselves so aggrieved by it, that they were not able to bear it. 4. That to them it would prove a burden indeed, to sink them to the lowest hell, unless they repented. 5. That to those who loved it and embraced it, and bid it welcome, though it was a light burden, as our Saviour calls it, (Matt. xi. 30.) yet it was a burden. This burden of the word of the Lord was sent, (1.) To Israel, for to them pertained the lively oracles of prophecy, as well as those of the written word. Many prophets God had sent to Israel, and now he will try them with one more. (2.) By Malachi; by the hand of Malachi; as if it were not a message by word of mouth, but a letter put into his hand, for the greater certainty. In these verses, they are charged with ingratitude, in that they were not duly sensible of God's distinguishing goodness to them; and such a charge as this may well be called a burden, for it is a heavy one.

1. God asserts the great kindness he had, and had often expressed, for them; (v. 2.) I have loved you, says the Lord. They bluntly do the sermon begin, as if God intended, whatever reproaches should be given them, to reconcile them to his love, and to take care that they should still have good thoughts of him; As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Thus kindly does the sermon begin. God will have his people satisfied that he loves them, and is ever mindful of his love. This is the same with what he said of old to the virgin of Israel, that he might engage her affections to himself, (Jer. xxxi. 3, 4.) Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love. In this one word God sums up all his gracious dealings with them; he loves them, and indeed, because he would love them, (Deut. vii. 7, 8.) loved them in their childhood, Hos. xi. 1. His delight was in them, Isa. lxxii. 4. I have loved you, but you have not loved me, nor made any suitable returns for my love. Note, God's people need to be often reminded of his love to them.

II. They question his love, and diminish the instances of it, not to deaden the force of his argument, but to prove that they were unjustly aggrieved, by his love to them. He asks, Wherein hast thou loved us? As God runs up all his favours to them to the fountain, which was his love, so he runs up all their sins against him to the fountain, which was their contempt of his love. Instead of acknowledging his kindness, and studying what they shall render, they seem to own that they had been beheld to him; challenge him to produce proofs of his love, that were material, and think and speak very slight of the instances they had had of his kindness, as if they were so few, so small, as not to be worth taking notice of, and no more than what they had sufficiently made returns for, or, at least, than he had sufficiently balanced with instances of his wrath. Have we not been wasted, impoverished, and carried captive? saith Esau; wherein hast thou loved us? Note, God justly takes it very ill to have his favours slighted, as not worth speaking of; and it is very absurd for us to ask wherein he has loved us, when, which way soever we look, we meet with the proofs and instances of his love to us.

III. He makes it out, beyond contradiction, that he had loved them, loved them in a distinguishing way, which was in a special manner obliging. For proof of this, he shows the difference he had made, and would still make, between Jacob and Esau, between Israelites and Edomites. Some read their question, Wherein hast thou loved us? as if they did indeed own that he had loved them, but withal insinuate that there was a reason for it—that he loved them because their father Abraham had loved him, so that it was not a free love, but a love of compulsion and adoption; wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau as much as a kinakin to Abraham as you are? Was he not Jacob's own brother, his elder brother? And therefore if there were any right to a recompense for Abraham's love, Esau had it, and yet I hated Esau and loved Jacob.

1. Let them see what a difference God had made between Jacob and Esau. Esau was Jacob's brother, his twin-brother; Yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau, took Jacob into covenant, and entailed the blessing on him and his, and I refused and rejected Esau. Note, Those that are taken into covenant with God, that have the lively oracles, and the means of grace, committed to them, have reason to look upon these as tokens of his love. Jacob is loved, for he has these, Esau hated, for he has not. The apostle quotes this, (Rom. ix. 13.) and compares it with what the oracle said to Rebecca, concerning her twins, (Gen. xxv. 23.) The elder shall serve the younger, to illustrate the doctrine of God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours; for may he not do what he will with his own? Esau was justly hated, but Jacob freely loved; even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes, and it is not for us to ask why or whence. 2. Let them see what he was now doing, and would do with them, pursuant to its original difference. (1.) The Edomites shall be made the monuments of God's justice, and he will be glorified in their ut-
er destruction; For Esau have I hated; I laid his mountains waste, the mountains of Seir, which were his heritage. When all that part of the world was ravaged by the Chaldean army, the country of Edom was, among the rest, laid in ruins, and came a habitation for the dragons of the wilderness, so perfectly desolate was it; as was foretold, Isa. xxxiv. 6, 11. The Edomites had triumphed in Jerusalem’s overthrow, (Ps. cxxxvii. 7,) and therefore it was just with God to put the same cup of trembling into their hands. And though Edom’s ruins were last, yet they were lasting, and the desolation perpetual; and if between Jacob and Esau, and is made between the righteous and the wicked, to whom otherwise all things come alike, and there seems to be one event. Jacob’s cities are hid waste, but they are rebuilt; Edom’s are laid waste, and never rebuilt: the sufferings of the righteous will have an end and will end well, all their grievances shall be redressed, and their sorrow turned into joy; but the sufferings of the wicked will be endless and remediless, as Edom’s desolations, v. 4. Observe here, [1.] The vain hopes of the Edomites, that they shall have their ruins repaired as well as Israel, though they had no promise to build their hope upon. They say, “It is true, we are impoverished, it is the common chance, and there is no remedy; but we will repair and make our desolate place; it is our interest for those whose hearts are unhumbled under humbling providences, to think to make their part good against God himself, and to build and plant, and flourish again as much as ever, though God has said that they shall be impoverished. But see, [2.] The dashing of these hopes, and the disappointment of them. They say, We will build; but what says the Lord of hosts? For we are sure his word shall stand, and not theirs; and he says, First, Their attempts shall be baffled; They shall build, but I will throw down. Note, Those that walk contrary to God, he will walk contrary to them; for who ever hardened his heart against God and prospered? When the Jews had rejected Christ and his gospel, they became Edomites, and this word was fulfilled in them; for, when, in the time of Edward the second, by the Emperor Adrian, they attempted to rebuild Jerusalem, God by earthquakes and eruptions of fire threw down what they built, so that they were forced to quit the enterprise. Secondly, They shall be looked upon by all as abandoned to utter ruin; all that see them shall call them the border of wickedness, a sinful nation, incurably so, and therefore the people of God, as much as they are a people, have no hope of ever breaking their way through; since their wickedness is such as will never be reformed, their desolations shall be such as are never to be repaired. Against Israel God was a little displeased, (Zech. i. 15,) but against Edom he has indignation, and will have for ever, for they are the people of his curse, Isa. xxxiv. 5.

(2.) The Israelites shall be made the monuments of his mercy and he will be glorified in their salvation. And this border of Edom shall be stigmatized as a people hated of God, but your eyes shall see your doubts concerning his love to you for ever silenced; for you shall say, and have cause to say, The Lord is and will be magnified from the border of Israel, from every part and border of the land of Israel.” The border of Edom is a border of wickedness, and therefore the Lord will have indignation against it for ever; but the border of Israel is a border of holiness, the border of the sanctuary, (Ps. lxxviii. 54,) and therefore God will make it to appear (though it may for a time be desolate) that he has mercy in store for it, and from thence he will be magnified; he will give his people Israel both cause, and hearts, to praise him. When the border of Edom remains still desolate, and the border of Israel is repaired and replenished, then it will appear that God has loved Jacob. Note, [1.] These who doubt of God’s love to his people, shall, sooner or later, have convincing and undeniable proofs that the Lord is with them, and that you will not believe.” [2.] Deliverances out of trouble are to be reckoned proofs of God’s good will to his people, though they may be suffered to fall into trouble, Ps. xxxiv. 19. [3.] Distinguishing favours are very obliging. If God rear up again the border of Israel, but leave the border of Edom in ruins, let no Israelite ask, for shame, Wherein hast thou loved us? [4.] The dignifying of Israel is the magnifying of the God of Israel, and, one way or other, God will have honour from his professing people. [5.] God’s goodness being his glory, when he does us good, we must proclaim him great; for that is magnifying him. It is an instance of his goodness, that he has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and for this they that love his salvation, say, The Lord be magnified, Ps. xxxv. 27.

6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? 7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherewith have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. 8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. 9. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us; this hath been by your means: will he regard your person? saith the Lord of hosts. 10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. 11. For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. 12. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. 13. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts: and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus
ye brought an offering; should I accept
this of your hand? saith the Lord. 14. But
cursed be the deceiver, which hath in
his flock a male, and yoweth, and sacrificeth
unto the Lord a corrupt thing; for
I am a great King, saith the Lord of
hosts, and my name is dreadful among
the heathen.

The prophet is here, by a special commission,
calling the priests to account, though they were
themselves appointed judges, to call the people to
an account. Let the rulers in the house of God
know that there is one above them, who will reckon
with them for their mal-administrations. Thus
saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, v. 6. God
will have a saying to unfaithful ministers; and it
concerns them who speak from God to his people
to hear and heed what he says to them, that they
can save themselves in the first place; otherwise
how should they help to save them that hear them.
It is a severe and, no doubt, a just reproof, that is
here given to the priests, for the profanation of the
holy things of God, with which they were intrusted;
and if this was the crime of the priests, we have reason
to fear the people also will do like of it, so
that what is said to the priests, is said to all, nay,
it is said to us, who, as Christians, profess ourselves,
not only the people of God, but priests to him. Ob-
serve here,

I. What it was, that God expected from them,
and with what good reason he expected it; (v. 6.)
A son honours his father, because he is his father;
nature has written this law in the hearts of children,
before God wrote it at Mount Sinai, nay, a servant,
though his obligation to his master is not natural,
but by voluntary compact, yet thinks it his duty to
honour him; to be observant of his orders, and true
to his interests. Children and servants pay respect
to their parents and masters; every one cries out
shame on them if they do not, and their own hearts
cannot but reproach them too; the order of families
is thus kept up, and it is their beauty and advan-
tage.

But the priests, who are God's children and his
servants, do not fear and honour him. They were
fathers and masters to the people, and expected to
be called so, (Judges xviii. 19. Matth. xxiii. 7, 10.)
and to be reverenced and obeyed as such; but they
forgot their Father and Master in heaven, and the
duty they owe to him. We may each of us charge
upon ourselves what is here charged upon the
priests. Note, 1. We are every one of us to look
upon God as our Father and Master, and upon our-
selves as his children and servants. 2. Our rela-
tion to God as our Father and Master strongly
obliges us to fear and honour him. W. honour and
fear the fathers of our flesh, much: nay the
Father and Master of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9. 3. It
is the most natural thing in the world: God has an-
notated, that God is so little feared and honoured
even by those that own him for their Father and
Master. Where is his honour? Where is his fear?

II. What the contempt was, which these priests
put upon God. This is that, in general, which is
charged upon them. 1. They despised God's name;
their familiarity with it, as priests, bred contempt
of it, and seemed only to gain a reputation by
it for themselves, and their own names only, while God's
name was of small account with them. God's name
is all that whereby he has made himself known—his
word and ordinances; these had low thoughts of,
and vitiated that which it was his business to
maintain; and no wonder that when they despised
it themselves, they did that which made it despica-
ble to others; even the sacrifices of the Lord to be
abhorred, as Elisha's sons did. 2. They profaned
God's name more. They polluted it, v. 12. They
did not only make no account of sacred things, but
they made an ill use of them, and perverted them to
the service of the worst and vilest purposes—their
own pride, covetousness, and luxury; there cannot
be a greater provocation to God than the profanation
of his name; for it is holy and reverend. His
purity cannot be polluted by us, for he is unpolluted,
and his name may be profaned; and nothing profes-
sed it more than the most wicked priests of those
business to it do honour to it

This is the general charge exhibited against
them; to this they plead, Not guilty, and challenge
God to prove it upon them, and to make good the
charge; which added during impudence to their
daring impertinency; Ye say, Wherein have we despised
thy name? v. 6. And wherein have we polluted
thy name? v. 7. It is common with proud sinners, when
they are reproved, to stand thus upon their own
justification; these priests had most horribly profaned
sacred things, and yet, like the adulterous woman,
say that they have done no wickedness; either they
were so insensible of themselves, that they re-
membered not, or reflected not upon, their own
acts; or, they were so ignorant of the divine law,
that they thought there was no harm in them, and
that what they did could not be construed into despi-
sing God's name; or, they were so officious as
not to imagine that though they knew their own guilt,
yet God did not; or, they were so scornful in their
conduct toward God and his prophets, that they
took a pride in bantering a serious and just reproof,
and turning it off with a jest. They either laugh
at the reproof, as those that despise it, and harden
their hearts; they either doubt, as those that resolve
they will not be touched by it, or will not seem to be so.
Which way soever we take it, their defence was their
offence, and in justifying themselves, their own tongues condemned them,
and their saying, Wherein have we despised thy
name? proved them proud and perverse. Had they
asked this question with a humble desire to be told
the particulars wherein they had offended, it
would have been an evidence of their repentance,
and a token of their magnitude; but to ask it thus
in disdain and defiance of the word of God, argues
their hearts fully set in them to do evil. Note, Sin-
ers ruin themselves by studying to baffle their own
convictions; but they will find it hard to kick against
the pricks. Justly might they have been convicted and
denounced upon the general charge, and their plea
thrown out as frivolous; but God will not only over-
come, but will be clear, will be justified, when he
judges, and therefore he shows them very particu-
larly wherein they had despised his name, and what
the contempt was, that they cast upon him. As
formerly, when he charged them with idolatry, so
now, when he charges them with profanation, he
shows them their way in the valley, and know
what they have done, Jer. ii. 23. 1. They despised God's name in what they said,
in the low opinion they had of his institutions; "Ye
say in your hearts, and perhaps speak it out when
your priests get together over your cups, out of the
hearing of the people, The table of the Lord is con-
temptible; (v. 7. and again, v. 12.) ye say, The
table of the Lord is profane, when they had regard-
ded it than any other table." Either the table in
the temple, on which the show-bread was placed, is
that which they reflected upon; not understanding
the mystery of it, they despised it as an insignifi-
cent thing; or, rather, the altar of burnt-offer-
ings is here called the table, for there God, and his
priests, and his people, did, as it were, feast to
gather upon the sacrifices, in token of friendship; this, they thought, was contemtible. Formerly, in the days of superstition, it was thought contemtible, in comparison with the idolatrous altars that the heathen had, and was set aside to make room for a new-fashioned one; (2 Kings xvi. 14, 15.) now it is thought contemtible, in comparison with the altars of God: the blind, the lame, and the sick; the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemtible. They that served at the altar, were to live upon the altar; but they complained that they lived poorly and meanly, and that it was not worth while to attend the service of the altar, for the fruit and meat of it, for it was very ordinary, and always the same again; they had no dainties, no varieties, no nice dishes. The Israelites, when they were given to God, the blood and the fat, they looked upon with contempt, as not worthy the multitude of laws God had made about them; they asked, "What need is there of so much ado about burning the fat, and pouring out the blood?" Note, Those greatly profane and pollute God’s name who despise his business of religion, though it is very honourable, as not worth taking pains in, and the advantages of religion, though highly valuable, as not worth taking pains for. Those who live in a careless neglect of holy ordinances, who come to them, and attend on them, irreverently, and go away from them, never the better, and under no concern, do, in effect, say, "The table of the Lord is contemtible, there is neither virtue nor value in it, neither credit nor comfort from it."

2. They despised God’s name, in what they did, which was of a piece with what they said, and flowed from it; corrupt principles and notions are roots of bitterness, which bear the gall and wormwood of corrupt practices. They looked upon the table and altar of the Lord as contemtible, and their altars under heaven. They thought any thing would serve for a sacrifice, though ever so coarse and mean; and were so far from bringing the best, as they ought to have done, that they picked out the worst they had, which was fit neither for the market, nor for their own tables, and offered that at God’s altar. With every sacrifice they were to bring a meat-offering of fine flour mingled with oil; but they brought fitches, and with the offering they brought rotten bread, perhaps it was dry and mouldy, or made of the refuse of the wheat, which they thought good enough to be burnt upon the altar; for it had been better, they would have said, To what purpose is this waste? And as to the beasts they offered, though the law was express, that what was offered in sacrifice, should not have blemish, yet they brought the blind, and the lame, and the sick. (v. 12.)

3. This case the Lord requires an answer from, and a return of the service which belongs unto him; the Lord would have them to consider, that while they perverted and profaned the sacrifices, and took any thing but what was fit for the altar, the priests had offered what was offered, without blemish; they offered all that was in the best state. If God speaks of it, in comparison of his law, that he had not made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense, Isa. xliii. 23. Wherein have I wearied thee? Nic. vi. 3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were, as Doeg, detained before the Lord, they would rather have been any where else. Note, Those are highly injurious, both to God and themselves, who are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it.

III. Observe here God expostulates, and reasons the case, with them, for their conviction and humiliation.

1. Would they, burst they, affront an earthly prince thus? "Ye offer to God the lame and the sick, offer it now unto thy governor, (v. 8.) either as tribute, or as a present, when thou art entertaining his favour, or in gratitude for some favour received; will he be pleased with thee? Or, rather, will he not take himself to be affronted by it?" Note, Those who are careless and irreverent in the duties of religious worship, should consider what a shame it is to offer that to their God, which they would scorn to offer to their governor; and to be more observant of the laws of breaching and good manners than of the laws of religion; and more afraid of being rude than of being profane.

2. Could they imagine that such sacrifices as these would be pleasing to God, or answer the end of sacrifices? "Should I accept this of your hands, saith the Lord, do I take delight in burnt offerings? Mal. i. 8. If you offer holocausts, God will have none of it; they are a profanation of his name, and a moral pollution of his sacrifices; they will not be accepted by him; nor will he be pleased with such sacrifices. They are a contemptible offering, and fit only to be burnt in the fire."

3. Their work was a perfect drudgery to them; (v. 13.) Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! Both priests and people were of this mind, that they thought God imposed too hard a task upon them; the people grudged the charge of providing the sacrifice, and the priests grudged the pains of offering it; they thought the attendants of the Lord were too thick, and they were forced to attend too often, and too long, in the courts of the Lord; the priests thought it a severe penance imposed upon them, to purify themselves as was required when they attended the altar, and ate of the holy things; they thought the duty of their office toilsome and troublesome, and snuffed at it as unreasonable, and bearing hard upon them; they did it, but it was grudgingly; and they had cause to complain of the charge, and the pains of it, and the necessity of it, and the impotency of their resolution, and the singleness of their heart, and the want of a proper zeal and spirit in the execution of his law, that he had not made them to serve with an offering, nor wearied them with incense, Isa. xliii. 23. Wherein have I wearied thee? Nic. vi. 3. But their own wicked hearts made it a weariness; and they were, as Doeg, detained before the Lord, they would rather have been any where else. Note, Those are highly injurious, both to God and themselves, who are weary of his service and worship, and snuff at it."

Vol. iv. - 7 H
the Lord? v. 13. Have you any reason to think I should either not discern, or not resent, the absent; that I should connive at the violation of my own laws? No, (v. 10.) I have no pleasure in you, and therefore I will not accept an offering, such an offering, at your hand." If God has no pleasure in the person, if the person is not in a justified state, if he is not sanctified, God will not accept the offering; God had respect to Abel first, and then to his sacrifice. Note, In order to our acceptance with God, our sacrifices must be so made and presented to him as God is disposed to accept. 2. All acceptation of an offering is found, that it is, good, but we must do it from a right principle, in a right manner, and for a right end. It was the ancient rule laid down, (Gen. iv. 7.) If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted? Now if we be not accepted of God, in vain do we worship him; it is all lost labour; no, we are all undone, for ever undone, if we come short of God's acceptation; these therefore make a bad bargain for themselves, who, to save charges in their religion, miss all the ends of it, and, by thinking to go the next way to work, bring nothing to pass. Those who make it the top of their ambition, as we all ought to do, whether present or absent, to be accepted of the Lord, will not dare to bring the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice.

1. There is a great subject to prevail with God in their intercessions for the people, when they thus affronted God in their sacrifices? So some understand v. 9. as spoken ironically, "And now if you will do the duty of priests, and stand in the gap, to turn away the judgments of God, that you see ready to pour in upon us, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us, and to our land which is almost eaten up with locusts and caterpillars;" (as appears ch. vii. 11.) "Try now what interest you have at the throne of grace, improve it for the removing of this plague, for it has been by your means, you have provoked God to send it; but as you go on thus to profane his sacred things, will he regard your persons or your prayers? No, you cannot prevail with him to command it away." For if we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us, either for ourselves or for others.

4. Had God deserved this at their hands? No, he had provided comfortably for them, and had given them such encouragement in their work as might have engaged them to do it cheerfully and well; so some understand it, v. 10. "Who is there among you, that shall shut a door, or kindle a fire, for naught?" No, God does not expect you should serve him for naught, you are well paid for it, and shall be not a cup of cold water, given for the honour of God, shall lose its reward. Note, The consideration of our constant receipts from God, and the present rewards of obedience from God, very much aggravates our slothfulness and niggardliness in our returns of duty to God.

IV. He calls them to repentance for their profanations of his holy name. So we may understand v. 11. "I am, Jehovah, which God that he will be gracious to us. Humble yourselves for your sin, cry mightily to God for pardon, and make up, in the faith and fervency of your prayers, what has been wanting in the worth and value of your sacrifices; for all the rebukes of Providence we are under, are by your means." Note, Those who have by their sins helped to kindle a fire, are highly concerned by the falling of them into a time of God's severe displeasure, to provide for, and to bring to a due condition, to help to quench it. We must see how much God's judgments are by our means, and be awakened thereby to be earnest with him to return in mercy; and if we take not this course, how can we think he should regard our persons?

V. He declares his resolution, both to secure the glory of his own name, and to reckon with those who profane it. Those who put contempt upon God and religion, and think to run down sacred things, let them know, 1. That they shall not gain their point; God will magnify his law, and make it honourable, though they vilify it, and make it contemptible; (for v. 11.) from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles. It might be said, "If these are not the worshippers whom God will accept, then he has no worshippers." As if he must make the best of their sacrifice, or else it would be better to be without it altogether; and what will he do for his great name? But let him alone for that; though Israel be not faithful, be not gathered, yet God will be glorious; though these priests provoke him to take down the ceremonial economy, and to abolish that law of commandments, which could not make the comers thereunto perfect, yet he will be no lesyer by that, at the long run; for, (1.) Instead of those carnal ordinances, which they profaned, a spiritual way of worship shall be introduced and established; Incense shall be offered to God's name, (which signifies prayer and praise, Ps. cxli. 2. Rev. viii. 3.) instead of the blood and fat of bulls and goats. And it shall be a pure offering, refined, not only from the corruptions that were in the priests' practice, but from the more lowly external service, which was done by them, or rather by themselves, which were called carnal ordinances, imposed till the time of reformation, Heb. ix. 10. When the hour came, in which the true worshippers worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth, then this incense was offered, even this pure offering. (2.) Instead of his being worshipped and served among the Jews only, a small people in a corner of the world, he will be served and worshipped in all places. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same; in every place, in every part of the world, incense shall be offered to his name; nations shall be discipled, and shall speak of the wonderful works of God, and have them spoken to them in their own language. This is a plain prediction of that great revolution in the kingdom of grace, by which the Gentiles, who had been strangers and foreigners, came to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and as welcome to the throne of grace as ever the Jews had been. It is twice said, (for the thing was certain,) My name shall be great among the Gentiles, whereas hitherto in Judah only he was known, and his name great, Ps. lxvi. 1. God's name shall be declared to them, the declaration of it shall be received and believed, and there shall be the Gentiles who shall magnify and glorify the name of God, better than ever the Jews had done, even the priests themselves.

2. That they shall not go unpunished, v. 14. Here is the doom of those who do like these priests here, for the sentence on them is a sentence on all such. Observe, (2.) The description of profane and careless worshippers. They are such as vow one sacrifice, and sacrifice another, and a constant meal-offering of a constant burnt-offering for a year; for, (v. 10.) They have in their flock a male; they have of the best, wherewith to serve and honour him, so beautiful has he been in his gifts to them, but they put him off with the worst, and think that good enough for him, so ungrateful are they in their return to him. This was the fault of the people, but the priests connived at it, and indulged them in it. We find a divine interposition, which put a stop to it, and called for a free-will offering, which should not be accepted for a vow, Lev. xxii. 23. But the priests would accept it, though God would not, pretending to be more indulgent than he was, for which he will give them no thanks another day. (2.) The character given of such worshippers; they are deceivers, they deal falsely and fraudulently with God, they play the hypocrite with him; they pretend to
honour him, in making the vow, but when it comes to be performed, they put an affront upon him, to that degree, that it had been better not to have vowed than to vow and thus to pay; but let not such be themselves deceived, for God is not mocked; these who think to put a cheat upon God, will prove, in the end, to have put a damning cheat upon their own souls. Hypocrites are deceivers, and they will prove self-deceivers, and so, self-destroyers. (3.) The doom passed upon them; They are cursed; they expect a blessing, but will meet with a curse, the tokens of God's wrath, according to the judgment written. (4.) The reason of this doom; “For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and ruleth over all; my name is dreadful among the heathen, and therefore I will not bear that it should be contempable among mine own people.” The heathen paid more respect to their gods, though idols, than the Jews did to theirs, though the only true living God. Note, The consideration of God's universal dominion, and the universal acknowledgment of it, should restrain us from all irreverence in his service.

CHAP. II.

There are two great ordinances which divine wisdom has instituted, the wretched profanation of both which is complained of, and sharply reproved, in this chapter. 1. The marriage was made a part of the Mosaic law, to restrain the marrying of the priests to the children of the uncircumcised, and was designed for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned by those who were themselves dignified with the honour of it, and intrusted with the business of it. The priests profaned the holy things of God; this they are here charged with, their sin is aggravated, and they are severely threatened for it, v. 1, 9. 2. The ordinance of marriage, which is common to the whole world, is common to the church, and is designed for the maintaining and keeping up of that; this was profaned both by the priests and by the people, in marrying strangers, (v. 11, 12,) treating their wives unkindly, (v. 13,) putting them away, (v. 16,) and herein dealing treacherously, v. 10, 14, 15. And that which was at the bottom of this and other instances of profaneness, was, downright atheism, thinking God altogether such a one as themselves, which was, in effect, to say, There is no God, v. 17. And these reproves to them are warnings to us.

1. AND now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts, and one shall take you away with it. 4. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. 5. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. 8. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. 9. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

What was said in the foregoing chapter, was directed to the priests; (ch. i. 6.) Thus saith the Lord of hosts to you, O priests that despise my name; and I will even cast them out of my sight; they shall go, and seek their gods, of whom they will curse, of sacrifices, and for these they might think it some excuse, that they offered what the people brought, and therefore that, if they were not so good as they should be, it was not their fault, but the people's; and therefore here the corruptions, there complained of, are traced to the source and spring of them—the faults the priests were guilty of as teachers of the people, as expostors of the law and the lively oracles; and this is a part of their office, which still remains in the hands of gospelminders, who are appointed to be pastors and teachers, like the priests under the law, though not sacrifices, like them; and therefore by them the admonition here is to be particularly regarded. If the people were the people better instructed, the people would have brought better offerings; and therefore the blame returns upon the priests; “And now, O ye priests, this commandment is purely for you, (v. 1.) who should have taught the people the good knowledge of the Lord, and how to worship him aright.” Note, The governors of the churches are under God's government, and to him they are answerable; and therefore they should have had, God has commandments. Nay, (v. 4.) you shall know that I have sent these commandments for you. They should know it, either, 1. By the power of the Spirit working with the word for their conviction and reformation; “You shall know its original by its efficacy, whence it comes by what it does.” When the word of God to us brings about, and carries on, the work of God in us, the two commandment but know that he sent it to us, that it is not the word of Malachi—God's messenger, but it is indeed the word of God, and is sent, not only in general to all, but in particular to us. Or, 2. By the accomplishment of the threatenings denounced against them; “You shall know, to your cost, that I have sent this commandment to you, and it shall not return void.” Let us now see what this commandment is, which is for the priests, which, they must know, was sent to them; and let us put into method the particulars of the charge.

1. Here is a recital of the covenant God made with that sacred tribe; which was their commission for their work, and the patent of their honour. The Lord of hosts sent a commandment to them, for the re-establishing of the covenant. The covenant is said to be the word which he commanded; (Ps. cv. 8.) and he sent this commandment by the prophet at this time, for the re-establishing of it, that it might not be cut off for their persisting in the violation of it. Let the sons of Levi know then (and particularly the sons of Aaron) what honour God put upon their family, and what a trust he reposed in them: (v. 5.) My covenant was with him of life and peace. Beside the covenant of peculiarity made with all the house of Israel, there was a covenant of priesthood made with one family, that they should do the services, and, upon condition of that, should enjoy all the privileges, of the priest's office; that, as Israel was a peculiar nation, a kingdom of priests, so the house of Aaron should be a family of priests,
set apart for the service and honour of God, to bear
up his name in that nation, as they were to bear his
name among the nations: both the one and the other,
in different degrees, were to give glory unto
God's name, v. 2. God covenanted with them as
his menial servants, obliged them to do his work,
and promised to own and accept them in it. This
is called his covenant of life and peace, because it
was intended for the support of religion, which
brings life and peace to the soul; but not for many
life to the dead; peace to the distressed; or, because life
and peace were by this covenant promised to those
priests that faithfully and conscientiously discharged
their duty; they shall have peace, which speaks se-
curity from all evil, and life, which speaks the sum-
mary of all good. What is here said of the
covenant of priesthood, is true of the covenant of grace
made between God and the church, and by which the
essence of life and peace, everlasting peace, everlasting life,
alhappiness both in this world and in that to come.
This covenant was made with the whole tribe of
Levi, when they were distinguished from the rest of the
tribes, were not numbered with them, but were
taken from among them, and appointed over the
people in Israel, Ps. cxi. 3, 4. The virtue of which appointment God says, (Numb. iii.
12.) The Levites shall be mine. It was made with
Aaron, when he and his sons were taken to minister
unto the Lord in the priest's office, Exod. xxxviii. 1.
Aaron is therefore called the saint of the Lord, Ps.
cvi. 16. It was made with Phinehas and his family,
a branch of Aaron's, upon a particular occasion.
Numb. xxv. 12, 15. And there the covenant of
friendship is called, as here, the covenant of peace,
because by it peace was made, and kept, between
God and Israel. These great blessings of life and
peace, contained in that covenant, God gave to him,
to Levi, to Aaron, to Phinehas; he promised life
and peace to them and their posterity, intrenched
them with these benefits, for the use and behoof of
God's Israel; they received, that they might give,
as Christ himself did, Ps. lxviii. 18.

Now, for the further opening of this covenant, observe,
1. The considerations upon which it was ground-
ed; it was for the fear wherewith he feared me, and
was afraid before my name. The tribe of Levi
gave a signal proof of their holy fear of God, and
their reverence for his name, when they appeared so
much the wedges, and the poles, and the calfi; (Exod. xxxi. 26.) for their zeal in that mat-
ter, God bestowed this blessing upon them, and invit-
ed them to consecrate themselves unto him. Phine-
has also showed himself zealous in the fear of God
and his judgments, when, to stay the plague, he
stabbed Zimri and Cozbi, Ps. cx. 30, 31. Note,
Those, and those only, who fear God's name, can
expect the benefit of the covenant of life and peace;
and to those who give proofs of their zeal for God,
it shall, without fail, be recompensed to them, in the
glorious privileges of the Christian priesthood.
Some read this, not as the consideration of the grant,
but as the condition of it: I gave them to him, pro-
vided that he should fear before me. If God grant
us life and peace, he expects we should fear be-
fore him.
2. The trust, that was lodged in the priests by this
covenant, v. 7. They were hereby made the mes-
sengers of the Lord of hosts, messengers of that co-
venant of life and peace; not mediators of it, but
only messengers, or ambassadors, employed to treat
of the terms of peace between God and Israel. He
is God's mouth to his people, from whom they
made receive instructions according to the Lively
oracles.

This was the office to which Levi was ad-
vanced; because, in his zeal for God, he did not ac-
knowledge his brethren, nor know his own children; therefore they shall teach Jacob God's judgments, Deut. xxxiii. 9, 10. Note, It is an honour to God's
servants, to be employed as his messengers, and to
be sent on his errands. Angels have their name from
thence; Haggai was called the Lord's messenger.
This being their office, observe, (1.) What is the
duty of ministers; The priest's lips should keep
knowledge, not keep it from his people, but keep it
in his own heart, and bring it out to his people, and
for how are they able to teach others the things of
God, who are themselves unacquainted with these
things, or unready in them? They must keep know-
ledge, must furnish themselves with it, and retain
what they have got, that they may be like the good
householder, who brings out of his treasury things
new and old. Not only their heads, but their lips,
must be full of knowledge and wisdom; if they be not,
it, but they must have it ready, must have it at hand,
and must have it (as we say) at their tongue's end, to be
communicated to others as there is occasion. Thus
we read of wisdom in the lips of him that has under-
standing, with which they feed many, Prov. x. 13, 21.
(2.) What is the duty of the people; They should seek
the law at his mouth; they should consult the priests
and elders, and not only hear the message, but ask questions to it, and make the best of it, that they
might better understand it, and that mistakes concerning it may be prevented and rectified.
We are all concerned fully to know what the word of the Lord is, to know it distinctly and certainly; we should be desirous to know it, and therefore inquisitive con-
cerning it; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?
We must not only consult the written word, (to the
law and to the testimony,) but must have recourse
to God's messengers, and desire instruction and ad-
vice from them in the affairs of our souls, as we do
from physicians and lawyers concerning our bodies
and estates. Not but that ministers ought to lay
down the law of God to those who do not inquire
concerning it, or desire the knowledge of it, they
must instruct them that oppose themselves, (2 Tim.
ii. 25.) as well as them that offer themselves; but it
is people's duty to apply themselves to them for in-
struction, not only to hear, but to ask questions;
Watchmen, what of the night? Thus if we will in-
quire, inquire ye; see Isa. xxi. 8, 11, 12. People
should not only seek comfort at the mouth of their
ministers, but should seek the law there; for if we
be found in the way of duty, we shall find it the
way of life.

11. Here is a memorial of the fidelity and zeal of
many of their predecessors in the priest's office; this
is mentioned as an aggravation of their sin, in de-
genrating from such honourable ancestors, and de-
serting such illustrious examples, and as a justifica-
tion of God in withdrawing from them these tokens
of his presence, which he had granted to them that
kept close to him. See here, (v. 6.) how good the
godly priest was, whose steps they should have tread
in, and what good he did, God's grace working with
him. 1. See how good he was. He was ready and
mighty in the scriptures; the law of truth was in his
mouth, for the use of those that asked the law at his
mouth; and in all his discourses there appeared more or less of the law of truth; every thing he said
was under the law of God; and governing himself
and governors, as God gave him opportunity, in his
manhood, there was nothing found in his life; he did not handle the word of
God deceitfully, to please men, to serve a turn, or
to make an interest for himself, but told all that consulted him, what the law was, whether it were pleasing or displeasing. He did not pronounce that unclean, which was clean, or that clean, which was unclean, as one of the rabbins expounded it. And his conversion was of a piece with his doctrine. God himself gives him this honourable testimony. He does not answer by it some counsel to think it enough to talk of God, but he walked with him; the temper of his mind, and the tenour of his life, were of a piece with his doctrine and profession; he lived a life of communion with God, and made it his constant care and business to please him; he lived like a priest that was chosen to walk before God, 1 Sam. ii. 30. His conversation was quiet, his life upright. He adorned the turn and promoter of love, he walked with God in peace, was himself peaceable, and a great peace-maker. His conversation was also honest; he did no wrong to any, but made conscience of rendering to all their due; he walked with me in equity, or rectitude. We must not, for peace-sake, transgress the rules of equity, but must keep the peace as far as is consistent with justice; the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable. Ministers, of all men, are concerned to walk with God in peace and equity, that they may be exam plies to the flock. 2. See what good he did; he answered the ends of his advancement to that office, he did turn many away from iniquity, he made it his business to do good, and God crowned his endeavours with a reward of their labour, if they may but be instrumental herein. It is God only that by his grace can turn men from iniquity, and yet it is here said of a pious, laborious minister, that he turned men from iniquity, as a worker together with God, and an instrument in his hand; and they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars, Dan. xii. 3. Note, Those ministers, and those only, are like to turn many men from iniquity, who are zealous of good works, diligent in the work of God, and live good lives, and both according to the scripture; for as one of the rabbins observes here, When the priest is upright many will be upright.

III. Here is a high charge drawn up against the priests of the present age, who violated the covenant of the priesthood, and went directly contrary both to the rules and to the examples that were set before them. Many particulars of their scandal have come in the chapter before, and we find (Neh. xiii.) that many corruptions had crept into the church of the Jews at this time, mixed marriages, admitting strangers into the house of God, proclamation of the sabbath-day, which were all owing to the carelessness and unfaithfulness of the priests; here it is charged upon them in general. 1. That they transgressed the rule; 1 Cor. 7. 18. They are departed out of the way, (ver. 8.) but of the good way which God has prescribed to you, and which your godly ancestors walked before you in. It is ill with a people, when those whose office it is to guide them in the way, do themselves depart out of it; "Ye have not kept my ways, nor kept in them yourselves, nor done your part to keep others in them," v. 9. 2. That they betrayed their trust; "Ye have corrupted the equity. Even you have violated it, have contradicted the great intentions of it, and have done what in you lay to frustrate and defeat them; you have managed your office as if it were designed only to feed your fat, and make you great, and not for the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men." This was a corrupting of the covenant of Levi, it was perverting the ends of the office, and making it tru ckle to those sensual, secular things, over which it ought always to have dominion. And thus they forfeited the benefit of that covenant, and corrupted it to themselves, they made it void, and lost the life and peace which their position and office did confer upon them. It was not to expect God should perform his part of the covenant, if we do not make conscience of performing ours. Another instance of their betraying their trust was, that they were partial in the law, ver. 9. In the law given to them, they would pick and choose their duty, this they would do, and that they would not do, just as they pleased; this is the falsity of a hypocritical profession; for, instead of walking upright with God, have a respect to all his commandments. Or, rather, in the law they were to lay down to the people; in this they knew faces; (so the word is;) they accepted persons, they wilfully misinterpreted and missupplied the law, either to cross those they had a sheen to, or countenance those they had a kindness for; they would wink at those sins in some, which in others they would not look for, according as their interest or inclination led them. God is no Respector of persons in making his law, nor will he in reckoning for the breach of it; he regards not the rich more than the poor, and therefore his priests, his ministers, misrepresent him, and do him a great deal of dishonour, if, in discipline or discipline, they be respeetors of persons. See 1 Tim. v. 3. Thus Hophin and Shimhi, by their wickedness, made the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred, 1 Sam. ii. 17. There are many to whom the law of God is a stumbling-block, the gospel of Christ a savour of death unto death, and Christ himself a Rock of offence; and nothing contributes more to this than the vicious lives of those that make that a profession of religion, by which men are tempted to sin. It is all a stone of stumbling, a rock of offence. This is the stone of stumbling; there is no good reason why it should be so to any, but those to whom this offence comes.

4. That, when they were under the rebukes both of the word and of the providence of God for it, they would not hear, that is, they would not heed, they would not lay it to heart; they were not at all grieved or shamed for their sin, nor did they with the tokens of God's displeasure, which they were under. What we hear does us no good, unless we lay it to heart, and admit the impressions of it; Ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, by repentance and reformation. Therefore we should lay to heart the things of God, that we may give glory to the name of God, may praise him in and for all that whereby he hath blessed us. We have no reason to think it is bad in any to rob God of his honour, but worst in ministers, whose office and business it is to bear up his name, and to give him the glory due to it.

IV. Here is a record of the judgments God had brought upon those beasts for their profaneness, and their proclamation of holy things. 1. They had lost their comfort; (v. 2.) I have blotted out the Comfort of their counsels. They had lost the comfort of their work, which is the satisfaction of doing good; for, the blessings with which they, as priests, blessed the people, God was so far from saying, Amen to, that he turned them into curses, as he did Balaam's curses into blessings. That profane people should not have
the favour of receiving God's blessings, nor those profane priests the honour of conferring and conveying them, but both should lie under the tokens of his wrath; nor had they the comfort of their augurs, for the blessings with which God blessed them, were turned into a curse to them by their abuse of them; they could not receive them as the gifts of his favour, when they had made themselves so obnoxious to his displeasure, by not having to heart the revelation (v. 6.) and promise (v. 9.) Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people. While they glorified God, he dignified them, and supported their reputation, and a great interest they had in the love and esteem of the people, while they did their duty, and walked with God in peace and equity, every one had a value and veneration for them, they were truly styled, the reverend, the priests, but when they forsook the ways of God, and corrupted the covenant of Levi, they thereby made themselves not only mean, but vile, in the eyes even of the common people, who, the more they honoured the order, the more they hated the men that were a dis-honour to it. Their conduct, their misconduct, had a direct tendency to this, and God owns his hand in it; they were turned upon their own heads, without the knowledge of him upon them, and not only produced by their sin, but answering to it; they put dishonour upon God, and made his table and the fruit thereof contemptible, (eh. i. 12.) and therefore God justly put dishonour upon them, and made them contemptible; they exposed themselves, and therefore God exposed them. Note, As sin is a reproach to any people, so especially to priests; there is not a more despicable animal upon the face of the earth than a profane, wicked, wicked, scandalous minister.

V. Here is a sentence of wrath passed upon them; and this the prophet begins with, v. 2, 3. But it is conditional: If you will not lay it to heart; implying, If you will, God's anger shall be turned away, and all shall be well; but if you persist in these wicked courses, hear your doom—Your sin will be your ruin. 1. They shall fall and lie under the curse of God; I will send a curse upon you. The wrath of God shall be revealed against them, according to the threatenings of the written word. Note, They who violate the commands of the law, lay themselves under the curses of the law. 2. Neither their employments, nor their enjoyments, as priests, shall be clean to them; I will curse your plaster, and shall it shall be as but a plaster on the whole, nor blessings to the people; but even your plentiful shall be a plague to you, and you shall be plagues to your generation. 3. The fruits of the earth, which they had the title of, should be no comfort to them; Behold, I will corrupt your seed; the corn you sow shall not get under ground, and never come up again; the consequence of which must needs be famine and scarcity of provisions, and the people shall be brought to the altar, which the priests will soon have a loss of. Or, it may be understood of the seed of the word, which they preached; God threatens to deny his blessing to the instructions they gave to the people, so that their labour shall be lost, as that of the husbandman is, when the seed is corrupt; and so it agrees with that threatening, (Lev. xxviii. 32.) They shall not be father of God, and their services shall be rejected of God; he will be so far from taking any pleasure in them, that he will loathe and detest them; I will spread dung in your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts. He refers to the sacrifices that were offered at those feasts. Instead of being himself pleased with the fat of their sacrifices, he will show himself displeased by throwing the dung of them in their faces, which he does, in effect, when he says, Bring no more vain oblations, your incense is an abomination to me. Note, Those who rest in their external performances of religion, which they should count but dung, that they may win Christ, shall not only come short of acceptance with God in them, but shall be filled with shame and confusion for their folly. 5. All will end, at last, in their utter ruin: One shall take you away with it. They shall be so overspread with the dung of their sacrifices, that they shall be carried away like dung; and it shall be as part of it. And one shall serve to take you away, the common scavenger; repentence shall nien call them, and treat them accordingly, because the Lord has rejected them.

10. Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? 11. Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. 12. The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts. 13. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good-will at your hand. 14. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. 15. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. 16. For the Lord, the God of Israel saith, that he hateth putting away: for one coveteth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts; therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. 17. Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye say, Wherem have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?

Corrupt practices are the genuine fruit and product of corrupt principles; and the badness of men's hearts and lives is owing to some loose atheistical notions which they have got, and which they govern themselves by. Now, in these verses, we have an instance of this; we here find men dealing falsely with one another, and it is because they think falsely of their God. Observe,

I. How corrupt their practices were; in general, they dealt treacherously every man against his brother, v. 10. It cannot be expected that he who is false to his God, should be true to his friend. They
had dealt treacherously with God and his tithes and offerings, and had defrauded him, and thus con-
science was debauched, its bonds and cords were
broken, a door was opened to all manner of injus-
tice and dishonesty, and the bonds of relation and natural affection were broken through like wis-
ins and no difficulty made of it. Some think that the tre-
acherous dealings here reproved are the same with
those instances of oppression and extortion which we
had complained of to Nehemiah, about this time,
Neh. v. 3.—7. Therein they forgot the God of
their fathers, and the covenant of their fathers, and
rendered themselves to a living beast, breaking the
bonds of religion, and became as a strange people, rather to refer to what was amiss in
their marriages, which was likewise complained of,
Neh. xiii. 23.
Two things they are here charged with, as very
provoKing to God in this matter—taking strange
wives of heathen nations, and abusing and putting
away the wives they had of their own nation; in
both these they dealt treacherously, and violated a
sacred covenant; the former was in contempt of the
covenant of peculiarity, the latter of the mar-
riage-covenant.
1. In contempt of the covenant God made with
Israel, as a peculiar people to himself, they mar-
rried strange wives, which was expressly prohibited,
and provided against, in that covenant, Deut. vii. 3.
Obedience thereunto was an act of honor to the
name of God, his household, his kingdom, and
his glory. 
(1.) What good reason they had to do deal faith-
fully with God and one another in this covenant, and not
to make marriages with the heathen. [1.] They
were expressly bound out from such marriages by
covenant. God engaged to do them good upon this
condition, that they should not mingle themselves with
the heathen; this is the covenant they were made with their fathers, denot-
ing the antitypy and the authority of it; and, its
being the great charter by which that nation was
incorporated, they lay under all possible obligations
to observe it strictly; yet they profaned it as if they
were not bound by it. They profane the covenant
of their fathers, who live in disobedience to the com-
mand of the God of their fathers. [2.] They were a
peculiar people, united in one body, and there-
fore ought to have united for the preserving of the
honour of their peculiarity; Have we not all one
Father? Yes, we have, for has not one God created
us? Are we not all his offspring? And are we not
made of one blood? Yes, certainly we are. God is
a common Father to all mankind, and, upon that
account, the peculiar relations of one another, and
therefore ought to put away lying, (Eph.
vy. 23.) and not to deal treacherously, no, not any
man against his brother. But here it seems to refer
to the Jewish nation; Have we not all one father;
Abraham, or Jacob? This they prided themselves
in, We have Abraham to our father; but here it is
turned upon them, as an aggravation of their sin in
breaching the honour of their nation by marrying
with heathens; Has not one God created us, for-
med us into a people, made us a nation by ourselves,
and put a life into us, distinct from that of other
nations? And should not this oblige us to main-
tain the dignity of our character? Note, The con-
ideration of the unity of the church in Christ, its
Founder and Father, should engage us carefully
to preserve the honour of their nation by marrying
against all corruptions. [3.] They were dedicated
to God, as well as distinguished from the neigh-
bouring nations. Israel was holiness to the Lord,
(Jer. ii. 3.) taken into covenant with him, set apart
by him, for himself, to be to him for a name and a
praise, and upon this account he loved them, and
delighted in them; the same was set upon them, was the holiness of the Lord, which he loved;
of which he said, It is my rest for ever, here will I


dwell, for I have desired it; but by their marrying
strange wives they profaned this holiness, and laid
the honour of it in the dust. Note, Those who are
devoted to God, and beloved of him, are concerned
to preserve their integrity, that they may not throw
themselves out of his love, nor lose the honour, or
defeat the end, of their dedication to him.
(2.) How treacherously they dealt, notwithstanding.
They profaned themselves in that very thing
which was prescribed to them for the preserving
of the honour of their singularity; Judah has married
the daughter of a strange god. The harm was not
so much, the latter child, as the former child, the
nation, (God has made all nations of men, and is
himself King of nations,) but that she is the daugh-
ter of a strange god, trained up in the service and
worship of false gods, at their disposal, as a daugh-
ter at her father's disposal, and having a depend-
ance upon them; hence some of the Rabbins (quoted
by Dr. Pocock) say, He that marries a heathen wo-
man, is as if he made himself son-in-law to an idol.
The corruption of the old world began with the in-
termarriages of the sons of God with the daughters
of men, Gen. vi. 2. It is the same thing that is
here complained of, but as it is expressed, it sounds
worse; The sons of God married the daughters of a
strange god. Herein Judah is said to have dealt
treacherously, for they basely betrayed the covenant
and worship of the Lord, and the covenant with the
people, which they should have loved; (so some read it)
and it is said to be an abomination committed in Israel
and in Jerusalem; it was hateful to God, and very
unbecoming those that were called by his name.
Note, It is an abominable thing for those who pro-
fer the holiness of the Lord to profane it, particu-
larly byomiting themselves uncleanly with unbelievers.
(3.) How God could reckon with them for it; (v. 12.) The Lord will cut off the man that
doth this, that marries the daughter of a strange
god; he has, in effect, cut himself off from the holy
nation, and joined in with foreigners, and alien 
to the commonwealth of Israel, and so shall his dowm
be, God will cut him off, and all that belong to
him; so the original intimates. He shall be cut
off from Israel and from Jerusalem, and not be written
among the living there. The Lord will cut off both
the master and the scholar, that are guilty of this
sin; both the teachers and the taught, the blind
leaders and the blind followers, shall fall together
into the ditch; both him that maketh and him that
answereth; (so it is in the margin,) for the master
cuts off his servant as he would cut off his hand;
it shall be cut off; it shall be cut off together out of the
tabernacles of Jacob. God will no more own them as
belonging to his nation; and, may, and the priest that offers
an offering to the Lord, if he marry a strange wife,
(as we find many of the priests did, Ezra x. 18.) he shall
not escape; the offering he offers, shall not
be done for him, but he shall be cut off from the tem-
ple of the Lord, and the names of the tabernacles of
Jacob. Nehemiah chased away from him, and from
the priesthood, one of the sons of the High Priest,
whom he found guilty of this sin, Neh. xiii. 28.
2. In contempt of the marriage-covenant, which
God instituted for the common benefit of mankind,
they abused and put away the wives they had of
their own nation, probably to make room for those
of the strange nations; it is an abomination to God
such: (v. 13.) This also have we done; this is the
second article of the charge, for the way of sin is
down-hill, and one violation of the covenant is an
inlet to another.
(1.) Let us see what it is, that is here complained
of; they did not behave as they ought to do toward
their wives. [1.] They were cruel, treating them,
boward and provish, and made their lives bitter to
them, so that when they came with their wives and
families to worship God at the solemn feasts, which they should have done with rejoicing, they were all out of humour; the poor wives were ready to break their hearts, and, not daring to make their case known to any other, they complained to God, and covered the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying. This is illustrated by the instance of Hannah, who, upon the account of her husband's contention against her, went to the house of the Lord to worship, fretted and weeping, and was in bitterness of soul, and would not eat, 1 Sam. i. 6, 7, 10. So it was with these wives here; this was so contrary to the cheerfulness which God requires in his worshippers, that it spoilt the acceptableness of their devotion; and it was not as a child of the covenant, but as an uncovenanted soul, that they offered up these tokens of deep sorrow. See here what a good Master we serve, who will not have his altar covered with tears, but is pleased with songs; this condemns those who left his worship for that of idols, among the rites of which we find women weeping for Tammuz, (Ezek. viii. 14.) and the blood of the worshippers gushing out upon the altar, 1 Kings xviii. 28. See also what a wrong thing it was, to act out of fashion that first chaste worship of God; though it is their fault by their fretfulness to indispose themselves for their duty, yet it is much more their fault who provoked them to make them to fret. It is a reason given why yoke-fellows should live in holy love and joy—that their prayers may not be hindered, 1 Pet. i. 7. [2.] They dealt treacherously with them, v. 11,—16. The term here is given to them, as a description of their own devices and inventions which they contrived and defrauded them of their maintenance or dower, or took in combines, in share to the affliction that was due to their wives only. [3.] They put them away, gave them a bill of divorce, and turned them off, may, perhaps they did it without the ceremony that the law of Moses prescribed, v. 16. [4.] In all this, they covered violence with their garment; they abused their wives, and were vicious to them, and yet, in the sight of others, they pretended to be loving to them, and tender of them, and to cast a skirt over them. It is common for those who do violence, to advance some specious pretence or other, wherewith to cover it as with a garment. (2.) Let us see the proof and aggravations of the charge. [1.] It is sufficiently forced by the testimony of God himself. When he was present between thee and the wife of thy youth, (v. 14.) he has been Witness to the marriage-covenant between thee and her, for to him you appealed concerning your sincerity in it, and fidelity to it; he has been a Witness to all the violations of it, and all thy treacherous dealings in contempt of it, and is ready to judge between thee and her. Note, This should engage us to be faithful both to God and to all with whom we have to do; God himself is a Witness both to all our covenants and to all our covenant-breaches; and he is a Witness against whom there lies no exception. [2.] It is highly aggravated by the consideration of the person wronged and abused. First, She is thy wife; thy own, bone of thy bone, and flesh of thy flesh; the nearest to thee of all the relations thou hast in the world, and to cleave to whom the Lord hath joined, that it may be a good cause to put her away, and so to act contrary to the marriage-covenant; see Eph. v. 25, 32. [2.] Because he is such a dis- pleased with those who go about to put asunder what he has joined together; (v. 16.) The God of Israel saith that he hateth putting away. He had indeed permitted it to the Jews, for the hardness of their hearts, or, rather, limited and clogged it; (Matt. xix. 6.) but he hated it especially as they practised it by the practice of the ungodly, who are called adulterers; see Matt. xix. 3. Let those wives that clofe from their husbands, and put themselves away, those husbands that are cruel to their wives, and turn them away, or take their affections off their wives, and place them upon others, yes, and those husbands and wives that live asunder by consent, for want of love to each other, let such as these be called adulterers; for how saith the God of Israel his holy people, shall his servants, however vain men may make a jest of them. (4.) Let us see the caution inferred from all this. We have it twice; (v. 15.) Therefore take heed to
your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth; and again, v. 16. Note, They that would be kept from sin, must take heed to their spirits, for there all sin begins; they must keep their hearts with all diligence, must keep a jealous eye upon them, and a strict hand, and a careful watch against the first risings of sin there. We shall act as we are spirited; and therefore that we may regulate our actions, we must consider what manner of spirit we are of; we must take heed to our spirits, with reference to our particular relations, and see that we stand rightly affected to them, and be of a good temper; otherwise we shall be in danger of dealing treacherously. If our own hearts deal treacherously with us, whom will they not deal treacherously with?

II. Observe how corrupt their principles were, to which were owing all these corrupt practices. Let us run up the streams to the fountain; (v. 16.) Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. They thought to evade the convictions of the word, and to justify themselves, by cavilling with God's proceedings; but their defence was their offence, and their vindication of themselves was the aggravation of their crime; they afforded the Lord with their words, and repeated them so often, and persisted so long in their contradictions, that they even wearied him; see Isa. vii. 13. They made him weary of doing them good as he had done, and stopped the current of his favours; or, they represented him as a wearied world, a world, willing to quit it, and lay aside the care of it. Note, It is a wearisome thing, even to God himself, to hear people insist upon their own justification in their corrupt and wicked practices, and to plead their atheistical principles in vindication of them. But as if God by his prophet had done them wrong, see how impatiently they think, Wherein have we wearied him? and hast thou found any words whereby we have wearied him? Note, Sinful words are more offensive to the God of heaven than they are commonly thought to be. But God has his proofs ready; two things they said, at least in their hearts, (and thoughts are words to God,) with which they had wearied him. 1. They had denied him to be a holy God, and had asserted that concerning him, which is not only reprobating his holiness, but as if he is a holy God, he hates sin, is of purer eyes than to behold it, and cannot endure to look upon it, Hab. i. 13. He is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness, Ps. v. 4. And yet they had the impudence to say in direct contradiction to this, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them. This wicked inference they drew, without any reason, from the prosperity of sinners in their sinful courses; (see ch. iii. 15.) as if God's love or hatred were to be known by that which is before us, and those must be concluded good in the sight of the Lord, who are rich in the world. Or, this they said because they wished it might be so; they were resolved to do evil and yet to think themselves good in the sight of the Lord, and to believe that he delights in them notwithstanding; and therefore, under pretence of making God not so severe as he was commonly represented, they said they would have it, and thought he was altogether such a one as themselves. Note, Those who think God a Friend to sin, affront him, and deceive themselves. 2. They had denied him to be the right and true Governor of the world. If he did not direct in all things, yet it would serve their turn to believe that he would never punish it, or them. They said, Where is the God of judgment? That God who, we have been so oft told, would call us to an account, and reckon with us for what we have said and done—where is he? He has forsaken the earth, and takes no notice of what is said and done there; he has said that he will come to judgment; but where is the promise of his coming? We may do what we please, he sees us not, nor will regard us. It is such a challenge to the Judge of the whole earth, as bids defiance to his justice, and, in effect, dares him to do his worst. Such scoffers as these there were in the latter days of the Jewish church, and such there shall be in the latter days of the Christian church; but their unbelief shall not make the promise of God of no effect; for the day of the Lord will come; behold, the Judge stands before the door; the God of judgment is at hand.

CHAP. III.

In this chapter, we have, I. A promise of the coming of the Messiah, and of his forerunner; and the errand he comes upon is here particularly described; both the comfort which his coming brings to his church and people, and the terror which it will bring to the wicked, v. 1. 6. II. A reproof of the Jews for their corrupting of God's ordinances, and sacrilegious robbing him of his dues; with a charge to them to amend this matter, and a promise that if they did, God would return in mercy to them, v. 7. 12. III. A description of the wickedness of the wicked that speak against God, (v. 13. 15.) and of the righteousness that speak for him, with the precious promises made to them, v. 16. 18.

1. Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. 2. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: 3. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. 4. Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. 5. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hirings in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. 6. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

The first words of this chapter seem a direct answer to the profane, atheistical demand of the scoffers of those days, which closed the foregoing chapter; Where is the God of judgment? To which it is readily answered, Here he is; he is just at the door; the long expected Messiah is ready to appear; and he says, For judgment am I come into this world; for that judgment which you so impudently bid defiance to; one of the rabbins says, that the meaning of this is, That God will raise up a righteous King, to set things in order, even the King Messiah. And the beginning of the gospel of Christ is expressly said to be the accomplishment of this promise, with which the Old Testament concludes, Mark i. 1, 2. So that by this the two Testaments vol. iv.—7 1
are, as it were, tacked together, and made to answer one another. Now here we have,

I. A prophecy of the appearing of his forerunner John the Baptist, which the prophet Isaiah had foretold, (ch. xl. 3.) as the preparing of the way of the Lord, to which this here seems to have a reference, for the words of the latter prophets confirmed and expounded his. John is his angel, or messenger, or, I do send him, or, I am sending him. "I am determined to send him, he will now shortly come, and will not come unprepared, though to a careless generation he comes unprepared." Observe, 1. He is God's messenger; that is his office; he is Malachi, (so the word is,) the same with the name of this prophet; he is my angel, my ambassador. John Baptist, had no name from the angels of men. All held John Baptist for a prophet, for he was God's messenger, as the prophets were, and came on the same errand to the world that they were sent upon—to call men to repentance and reformation. 2. He is Christ's harbinger. He shall prepare the way before me, by calling men to those duties which qualify them to receive the comforts of the Messiah and his coming, and by taking them off those things which are above the Messiah and his coming. He is as their father, (which they thought would serve their turn without a Saviour,) and by giving notice that the Messiah was now at hand, and so raising men's expectations of him, and making them ready to go into the measures he would take for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. Note, God observes a method in his work, and, before he comes, he sends his herald; that which is like the giving of a sign. The church was told, long before, that the Messiah would come; and here it is added, that by the same token, a little before he appears, there shall be a signal given; a great prophet shall arise, that shall give notice of his approach, and call to the everlasting gates and doors to lift up their heads, and give him admission. The accomplishment of this is a proof that Jesus is the Christ, he is that should come, and we are to look for no other; for there was such a messenger sent before him, who made ready a people prepared for the Lord, Luke i. 17. The Jewish writers run themselves into gross absurdities, to evade the conviction of this evidence; some of them say that this messenger is the angel of death, who shall take the wicked out of this life, to be sent into hell tormentors; others, who have went a little further, say, it is the Paraclete, who shall appear before Messiah the son of David; others, this prophet himself; others, an angel from heaven; such mistakes do they run into, that will not receive the truth.

II. A prophecy of the appearing of the Messiah himself; "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the God of judgment, which is quick to salvation." This is his kingdom coming, and that he comes in judgment, and with the light of the sun of righteousness. 1. He is the Lord—Adonai, the Basis and Foundation on which the world is founded and fastened; the Ruler and Governor of all; that one Lord over all, (Acts x. 36;) that has all power committed to him, (Matt. ii. 28;) he will send and say of Jacob for ever, Luke i. 33. 2. He is the Messenger of the covenant; or the Angel of the covenant, that blessed One that was sent from heaven to negotiate a peace, and settle a correspondence, between God and man. He is the Angel, the Arch-angel, the Lord of the angels, who received commission from the Father to bring man home to God by a covenant of grace, who had revolted from him by the violation of the covenant of innocency. Christ is the Angel of this covenant, by whose mediation it is brought about and established, as God's covenant with Israel was made by the disposition of angels, Acts vii. 53. Gal. iii. 19. Christ, as a Prophet, is the Messenger and Mediator of the covenant; may, he is given for a Covenant, Isa. lxxix. 8. That covenant which is all our salvation, began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. ii. 3. Though he is the Prince of the covenant, (as some read this verse,) you shall see him, as I have seen him, that was sent from heaven, he comes not in his own name, but that we might have full assurance of God's good will toward man, upon his word. 3. He it is whom ye seek, whom ye delight in; whom the pious Jews expect and desire, and whose coming they think of with a great deal of pleasure. In looking and waiting for him, they looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and waited for the consolation of Israel, Luke xxix. 50, 38, 39. Ps. cx. 4, 5. To this people, to this nation, desirable to all; (Hag. ii. 7,) but he was the Desire of the Jewish nation actually, because they had the promise of his coming made to them. Note, Those that seek Jesus, shall find pleasure in him. If he be our heart's Desire, he will be our heart's delight; and we have reason to delight in him who is the Messenger of the covenant, and to bid him welcome, when he comes, who came to us, in so kind an errand. 4. He shall do no manner of bidding which is no true bill, and we see it not at so great a distance as the patriarchs saw it at. Or, He shall come immediately after the appearing of John Baptist; shall even tread on the heels of his forerunner; when that morning-star appears, believe that the sun of righteousness is not far off. Or, He shall come suddenly, he shall come when by many he is not looked for; as his forerunner, which was late built, that latter house which he was to be the Glory of. It is his temple, for it is his Father's house, John ii. 16. Christ at forty days old was presented in the temple, and thither Simeon went by the Spirit, according to the directions of this prophecy, to see him, Luke ii. 27. At twelve years old, he was in the temple about his Father's business, Luke ii. 49. When he rode in triumph into Jerusalem, he was at the temple. (Matt. xx. 12.) and (v. 14;) thither the blind and the lame came to him, to be healed; there he often preached, and often disputed, and often wrought miracles. By this it appears that the Messiah was to come while that temple was standing; that, therefore, being long since destroyed, we must conclude that he is come, and we are to look for no other. Now, Those that would be acquainted with Christ, and obtain his favour, must meet him in his temple, for there he records his name, and there he will bless his people. There we must receive his oracles, and there we must pay our homage. 6. The promise of his coming is repeated and ratified; Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts; you may depend upon his word, who cannot lie, he shall come, he will come, he will come, without fail, without contrary, without delay.

III. An account given of the great ends and intentions of his coming, v. 2. He is one whom they seek, and one whom they delight in; and yet who may abide the day of his coming? It is a thing to be thought of with great seriousness, and with a holy awe and reverence; for he who shall stand when he appears, though he comes not to condemn the world, but that the world may be saved through him, what will he do? This may refer, 1. To the terrors of his appearance. Even in the days of his flesh there were some emanations of his glory and power, such as
none could stand before, witness his transfiguration, and see the wonders that attended his death; and we read of divers that trembled before him, as Mark v. 33. 2. To the troublesome times that should follow soon after. The Jewish doctors speak of the plagues, or griefs of the Messiah, meaning (they say) the great afflictions that should be to Israel at the time of his coming: he himself speaks of great tribulation then approaching, such as was not since the beginning of the world to that time: (Revel. xvi. 21.) 3. To the trial which his coming would make of the children of men. He shall be like a refiner's fire, which separates between the gold and the dross by melting the one, or like fuller's soap, which with much rubbing fetches the spots out of the cloth. Christ came to discover to men, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, (Luke xii. 2.) to distinguish men, to separate between the precious and the vile, for his fan is in his hand, (Matth. xiii. 29.) to send fire on the earth, not peace, but rather division, (Luke xii. 49, 51.) to shake heaven and earth, that the wicked might be shaken out, (Job xxxviii. 13.) and that the things which cannot be shaken, might remain, Heb. xii. 27. See what the effect of the trial will be, that shall come in the day of the Lord. 1. The gospel shall work good upon those that are disposed to be good; to them it shall be a savour of life unto life; (v. 3.) He shall sit as a refiner. Christ by his gospel shall purify and reform his church, and by his Spirit working with it shall regenerate and cleanse particular souls; for to this end he gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, (Eph. v. 26.) and purify to himself a peculiar people, Tit. ii. 14. Christ is the great Refiner. Observe, [1.] Who they are, that he will purify: the sons of Levi, all those that are devoted to his praise, and employed in his service, as the tribe of Levi was, and whom he designs to make unto our God spiritual priests, (Rev. i. 6.) a holy priesthood, 1 Pet. ii. 5. Note, All true Christians are sons of Levi; set apart for God, to do the service of his sanctuary, and to war the good warfare. [2.] How he will purify them; he will purge them as gold and silver, he will sanctify them inwardly; he will not only wash away the spots they have contracted from without, but will take away the dross that is found in them; he will separate from them their iniquity and cleanness, and cleanse them, which rendered them untouchable, worthless and useless, and so make them like gold refined, both valuable and serviceable. He will purge them with fire, as gold and silver are purged, for he bathtes with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, (Matth. iii. 11.) with the Holy Ghost, working like fire. He will purge them by afflictions and manifold temptations, that the trial of their faith might be tried with fire, which shall make it precious, 2 Pet. i. 6, 7. He will purge them so as to make them a precious people to himself. [3.] What will be the effect of it; that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, that is, that they may be in sincerity converted to God, and consecrated to his praise; (hence we read of the offering up, or sacrificing, of the Gentiles to God, when they were wounded and cut off, which rendered them unsuitable for the worship of God according to his will, may offer the sacrifices of righteousness, (Ps. iv. 5.) the offering of prayer, and praise, and holy love; that they may be the true worshippers, who worship the Father in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24. Note, We cannot offer unto the Lord any right performances in religious worship, but according to his Spirit. Till we ourselves be refined and purified by the grace of God, we cannot do any thing that will redound to the glory of God. God had respect to Abel first, and then to his offering; and therefore God purges his people, that they may offer their offerings to him in righteousness, Zeph. iii. 9. He therefore makes the tree good, that the fruit may be good. And then it follows, (v. 4.) The offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasant unto the Lord. It shall no longer be offensive, as it has been, when, in the former days, they worshipped other gods with the God of Israel, they offered divers kinds and sorts of sacrifices, they offered them to them, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice; but it shall be acceptable, he will be pleased with the offerers, and their offerings, as in the days of old, and as in former years; as in the primitive times of the church, as when God had respect to Abel's sacrifice, and smelled a savour of rest from Noah's, and when he kindled Aaron's sacrifice with fire from heaven, and said, this is a sweet savour to the Lord. First, He will, by his grace in them, make them acceptable; when he has purified and refined them, then they shall offer such sacrifices as God requires, and will accept. Secondly, He will, by his intercession for them, make them accepted; he will recommend them and their performances to God, so that their prayers, being perfumed with the incense of his intercession, shall be accepted in the sight of God, and be acceptable in the beloved, and in him is well pleased with those that are in him, (Matth. iii. 17.) and bring forth fruit in him. (2.) It shall turn for a testimony against those that are resolved to go on in their wickedness, v. 5. This is the direct answer to their challenge, Where is the God of judgment? "You shall know where he is, and shall know it to your terror and confusion. "I will come near to you in judgment, to execute the strictness of the kind of justice that set divine justice at defiance." To them the gospel of Christ will be a savour of death unto death; it will bind them over to condemnation, and will judge them in the great day, John xii. 48. Let us see here, [1.] Who the sinners are, that must appear to be judged by the gospel of Christ. They are the sorcerers, who deal in spiritual wickedness, that forsake the oracles of the God of truth to consult the father of lies; and the adulterers, who wallow in the lusts of the flesh, those adulterers who were charged with dealing treacherously; (ch. ii. 15.) and the false swearers, who profane God's name, and affront his justice, by calling him to witness to a lie; and the oppressors, who barbarously injure, and trample upon, those who lie at their feet, and to whom they were to be a stay and support; and they deprave the hireling in his wages, and will not give him what he agreed for; they crush the widow and fatherless, and will not pay them their just debts, because they cannot prove them, or have not wherewithal to sue for them; the poor stranger too, who has no friend to stand by him, and is ignorant of the laws of the country, they turn aside from his right, and do that which he cannot, or cannot recover his own.That which is at the bottom of all this, is, They fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. The transgression of the wicked plainly declares it, that there is no fear of God before his eyes; where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. [2.] Who will appear against them; I will come near, says God, and will be a swift Witness against them. They that are not able to help themselves, that are fully concealed, hope to escape punishment, for want of proof; but God, who sees and knows all things, will himself be Witness against them, and his omniscience is instead of a thousand witnesses, for to it the sinner's own conscience shall be made to subscribe, and so every mouth shall be stopped; he will be a swift Witness; though they reflect upon him, as slow in his proceedings, and unwilling to proceed against his enemies: God of judgment, and where the promise of his coming? they will find that he is not slack concerning his threatenings, any more than he is concerning
his promises. Judgment against those sinners shall not be put off, for want of evidence, for he will be a swift Witness. His judgment shall overtake them, and it shall be impossible for them to outrun it. Evil pursues sinners.

IV. The ratification of all this; (v. 6.) For I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Here we have, 1. God's immutability asserted by himself, and gloried in; "I am the Lord, I change not, and therefore no word that I have spoken shall fall to the ground." Is God a just Judge of those that rebel against him he be the bountiful Rewarder of those that diligently seek him? In both these he is unchangeable. Though the sentence passed against evil works (v. 5.) be not executed speedily, yet it will be executed, for he is the Lord, he changes not, he is as much an Enemy to sin as ever he was, and impenitent sinners will find him so. There needs no sicre factus—a sort calling one to show cause, to revise God's judgment, for it is never antiquated, or out of date, but against those that go on still in their trespasses the curse of his law still remains in full force, power, and virtue.

2. A particular proof of it, from the comfortable experience which the people of Israel had of it; they had reason to say that he was an unchangeable God, for he had been faithful to his covenant with them and their fathers, and kept the same without fail, and as long as it had been consumed long ago, and cut off from being a people; they had been false and fickle in their conduct to him, and he might justly have abandoned them, and then they had soon been consumed and ruined; but because he remembered his covenant, and would not violate that, nor alter the thing that was gone forth out of his lips, they were preserved from ruin, and recovered from the brink of it. It was not because he would be as good as his word, Deut. vii. 8. Lev. xxxvi. 42. Now as God had kept them from ruin, while the covenant of peculiarity remained in force, purely because he would be faithful to that covenant, and would show that he is not a man, that he should lie, (Num. xxiii. 19.) so when that covenant should be superseded and set aside by the New Testament, and the people do not repent of the duties they owe to the kingdom of God, when they open to the curses, he will show that in the determinations of his wrath, as well as in those of his mercy, he is not a man that he should repent; but will then be as true to his threatenings as hitherto he had been to his promises; see 1 Sam. xvi. 29. We may all apply this very sensibly to ourselves; because we have to do with a God that changes not, therefore it is that we are not consumed, even because his compassions fail not, they are new every morning, great is his faithfulness, Lam. iii. 22, 33.

7. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8. Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? in tithes and offerings. 9. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. 10. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. 11. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. 12. And all nations shall call you blessed; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts.

We have here God's controversy with the men of that generation, for deserting his service, and in their case it is justified as of other times; wicked servants indeed, that not only run away from their Master, but run away with their Master's goods.

1. They had run away from their Master, and quit the work he gave them to do; (v. 7.) Ye have gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. The ordinances of God's worship were the business which as servants they must mind, the talents which they must trade with, and the trust which was committed to them to keep; but they went away from them, grew weary of them, and withdrew their neck from that yoke; they deviated from the rule that God had prescribed to them, and betrayed the trust lodged with them; they had revolted from God, not only in worship, but in conversation; they had not kept his ordinances. This disobedience they were chargeable to, that though those days of their fathers; either, as in the days of their fathers of old, who were sent into captivity for their disobedience, or, "Now, for some generations past, you are fallen off from what you were, when first you came back out of captivity," Ezra owns it in one particular instance; Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day, Ezra ix. 7. Now observe, 1. What a gracious invitation God gives them to return and repent; "Return unto me, and to your duty, return to your service, return to your allegiance, return as a traveller that has missed his way, as a soldier that has run from his colours, as a treacherous wife that has gone away from her husband; return, thou backsliding Israel, return to me; and then I will return unto you, and be reconciled; will receive the judgment of your fathers under your knees for you." This had been of old the burden of the song, (Zech. i. 3.) and is still. 2. What a peevish answer they return to this gracious invitation; "But ye said with disdain, said it to the prophets that called you, said it to one another, said it to your own hearts, to stiff the convictions you were under; you said, Wherein shall we return?" Note, God takes notice what returns our hearts make to the calls of his word, what we say, and what we think, when we have heard a sermon; what answer we give to the message sent us. When God calls us to return, we should answer as they did, (Jer. iii. 22.) Behold, we come. But not as these here, Wherein shall we return? (1.) They take it as an affront to be told of their faults, and called upon to amend them; they are ready to think that these prophets make about returning and repenting; why are we disgrace and disturbed thus, our own consciences and our neighbours stirred up against us? It is ill with those who thus count reproofs reproofs, and kick against the pricks. (2.) They are so ignorant of themselves, and of the strictness, extent, and spiritual nature of the divine law, that they see nothing in themselves to repent of, or to be turned from, and think they need no repentance. (3.) They are so firmly resolved to go on in sin, that they will find a thousand foolish, frivolous excuses to shift off their repentance, and turn away the calls that are given them to repent. They seem to speak only as those that wanted something to say; it is a mere evasion,
a banter upon the prophet, and a challenge to him to descend to particulars. Note, Many ruin their own souls by baffling the calls that are given them to repent of their sins. 

II. They had robbed their Master, and embez-

zled his goods. They had asked, “Wherein shall

we return? What have we done amiss?” And he
soon tells them. Observe, 

1. The prophet’s high charge exhibited, in God’s name, to all the people; they stand indicted for robbery, or sacrilege, the worst of robberies; Ye have robbed me. He exposites with them upon it; “Will a man be so daringly impudent as to rob God? Man, who is a weak creature, and cannot contend with God’s power; will he think to rob him

or at arms—for fealty? Man, who lies open to God’s knowledge, as the people himself from that, will be think to rob him clain et secreto—privacy? Man, who depends upon God, and derives his all from him, will he rob him, that is his Benefactor? This is ungrateful, unjust, and unkind indeed; it is very unwise thus to provoke him from whom our judgment proceeds. Will a man do violence to God? (so some read it.) Will a man stint or straiten him? Say, Does he rob God in a heinous crime? 

2. The people’s high challenge in answer to that charge. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? They plead, Not guilty, and put God upon the proof of it. Note, Robbing God is such a heinous crime, that they who are guilty of it are not willing to own themselves guilty. They rob God, and know not what they do. They rob him of his honour, rob his peace, and rob God of his people. Did not God serve in his service; rob him of themselves, rob him of his sabbath-time; rob him of that which is given for the support of religion, and give him not his dues out of their estates; and yet they ask, Wherein have we robbed thee?

3. The plain proof of the charge, in answer to this challenge; it is in tithes and offerings. Out of these the priests and Levites had maintenance for themselves and their families; but they detained them, defrauded the priests of them, would not pay their tithes, or not in full, or not of the best; they brought not the offerings which God required, or brought the torm and lame and sick, which were not fit for use. They were all guilty of this sin, even the whole nation, as they were in conference among themselves, to rob and combine to rob him of his dues, and to stand by one another in it when they had done. For this they were cursed with a curse, v. 9. God punished them with famine and scarcity, through unseasonable weather, or insects that ate up the fruits of the earth. God had thus punished them for neglecting to build the temple, (Hag. i. 10, 11.) and now for not maintaining the temple-
service. Note, Those that deny God his part of their estates, may justly expect a curse upon their own part of them; “Ye are cursed with a curse, for robbing me, and yet ye go on to do it.” Note, It is a great aggravation of sin, when men persist in it, notwithstanding the rebukes of Providence which they are under for it. Nay, it should seem, because God had punished them with scarcity of bread, they made not this a posture to deny God his part of his now, being impoverished, they could not afford to bring their tithes and offerings, but must save them, that they might have bread for their families. Note, It argues great perverseness in sin, when men make those afflictions excuses for sin, which are sent to part between them and their sins. When they had but little, they should have done the more good with that little, and that would have been the way to have made it more; but it is ill with the patient, when that which should cure the disease, serves only to palliate it, and prevent its being searched into.

4. An earnest exhortation to reform in this mat-

ter; with a promise that if they did, the judgments they were under should be quickly removed. (1.) Let them take care to do their duty; (v. 10.) Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse. They had brought some; but, like Ananias and Sapphira, had kept back part of the price, pretending they could not spare so much as was required, and necessity has no law: but even necessity must have God’s law, and he would receive with the more readiness; “Bring in the full tithes to the utmost that the law requires, that there may be meat in God’s house for them that serve at the altar, whether there be meat in your houses or no.” Note, God must be served in the first place, and our quota must be contributed for the support of religion in the place wherein we live, that God’s name may be sanctified, and his kingdom and will be done. This will be done, even before we provide our daily bread; for the interest of our souls ought to be preferred before that of our bodies.

(2.) Let them then trust God to provide for them and their comfort; “Let God be first served, and then prove me herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, whether I will not open the windows of heaven.” They said, “Let God give me an income as formerly, and try us whether we will not then bring him his tithes and offerings as we did formerly.” “No,” says God, “do you first bring in all your tithes as they become due, and all the arrears of what is past, and try me, whether I will not then restore you your plenty.” Note, Those that will deal with God on his terms, and do as he requires, may all venture to do so, for, though many have been losers for him, never any were losers by him, in the end. It is fit that we should venture first, for his reward is with him, but his work is before him; we must first do the work which is our part, and then try him, and trust him for the reward. Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method, when he said, (1 Kings, xvi. 13.) “Make me a little cup of cold water, and then prove me, whether there shall not be enough afterwards for thee and thy son.” That which discourages people from the expenses of charity, is, the weakness of their faith concerning the gains and advantages of charity, they cannot think that they shall get by it; but it is a reasonable demand that God here makes; “Prove me now; is anything too hard for me?” for he is God; No thing venture, nothing win. "Trust upon him;" "And you shall find," (v. 1.) “That, whereas the heavens have been shut up, and there has been no rain, now God will often to you the windows of heaven, for in his hand the key of the clouds is, and you shall have reasonable rain.” Or, the expression is figurative; every good gift coming from above, then God will plentifully bring forth upon them the bounties of his providence; very sudden plenty is expressed by opening the windows of heaven, 2 Kings vii. 2. We find the windows of heaven opened, to pour down a deluge of wrath, in Noah’s flood, Gen. vii. 11. But here they are opened, to pour down blessings, to that degree that, there should not be room enough to receive them. So, hence shall we plentifully bring forth upon you, that they shall be tempted to fill up their barns, and build greater, for want of room, Luke xii. 18. Or, as Dr. Popock explains it, “I will pour out on you such a blessing as shall be not enough only, and such as shall be sufficient, but more and more enough;” that is, a great addition. The oil that is multiplied shall not stay, as long as there are vessels to receive it, 2 Kings iv. 6. Note, God will not only be reconciled to sinners that repent and reform but he will be a Benefactor, a bountiful Benefactor, to them. We are never straitened in him, but oftener straitened in our own bosoms. God has blessings
ready to bestow upon us, but, through the weakness of our faith, and narrowness of our designs, we have not room to receive them. [2.] That, whereas the fruits of their ground had been eaten up by locusts and caterpillars, God would now remove that judgment; (v. 11.) "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and will check the progress of those destroying animals, that they shall no more destroy the products of the earth, and the fruits of the trees." God has all creatures at his beck, can come and go as he wills, at his pleasure; Neither shall the vine cast her fruit before the time; it shall not be blasted or blown off. Or, some read it, Neither shall the devourer make your vine barren, as the locusts did, Joel i. 7. [3.] That, whereas their neighbours had upbraided them with their scarcity, and they had lain under the reproach of famine, which was the more grievous, because their country used to be boast of for its plenty, now all nations shall call them blessed, shall speak honourably of them, and own them to be a happy people. [4.] That, whereas their sin had made their land unpleasing to God, (even their temple, and altars, and offerings were so, cf. ii. 13.) and whereas his judgments had made their land unpleasant to them, and very melancholy; "Now, ye shall be a delightful land, your country shall be acceptable to God, and adorable to you also, and if you keep the benefit of religion in a land will make it indeed a delightful land both to God and to all good people; he will say, It is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; and they will say the same, Isa. lxi. 4. Deut. xi. 12. It should seem that this charge to bring in the tithes had its good effect, for we find, (Neh. xiii. 12.) that all Judah did bring in their tithe into the treasuries; and, no doubt, they had the benefit of these promises, in the return of their plenty, immediately upon the return to their duty, that they might plainly discern for what cause the evil had been upon them, far when the cause was removed, the evil was removed; and that they might see how perfectly reconciled God was to them, upon their repentance, and how their transgression was remembered no more, for the curse was not only taken away, but turned into an abundant blessing.

13. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord; yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? 14. Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? 15. And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. 16. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. 17. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spare his own son that serveth him. 18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

Among the people of the Jews at this time, though they all enjoyed the same privileges and advantages, there were men of very different characters, (as there were, and ever will be, in the world and in the church,) like Jeremiah's figs; some very good, and others very bad; some that plainly appeared to be the children of God, and others that as plainly discovered themselves to be the children of the wicked one; there are tares and wheat in the same field, chaff and corn in the same floor; and here we have an account of both.

1. Here is the angry note God takes of the impi- sant, but a pregnant talk of the sinners in Zion, and his just resentments of it. Probably, there was a club of them that were in league against religion, that set up for wits, and set their wits on work to run it down, and ridicule it, and herein strengthened one another's hands.

Here is, 1. An indictment found against them, for treasurably words spoken against the King of Kings: Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. They speak against God, in reflection upon him, in contradiction to him, as their fathers in the wilderness; (Ps. lxxviii. 19.) Yea, they speak against God. What he said, and what he designed, they opposed, as if they had been retained of counsel against him and his cause. Their words against God were stout; they came from their pride, and haughtiness, and contempt of God. Yea, they speak against God, and against his cause; whereas they said, They speak against God, and against his cause, if they feared not who heard them; they were not themselves ashamed to say it, and they desired to propagate their atheistical notions, and to infect the minds of others with them. They speak it boldly, as those that were resolved to stand to it, and were in no fear of being called to an account. They speak it proudly, and with insolence and disdain, scorning to be under the divine check and govenment. They strengthen themselves, they would be valiant against the Almighty, Job xv. 25.

2. Their plea to this indictment. They said, What have we spoken so much against thee? They deny the words, and put the prophet to prove them; or, if they spoke the words, they did not design them against God, and therefore will not own there was any harm in them; at least, they extenuate the matter; What have we spoken so much against thee, so much, that there needs all this ado about it? They cannot deny that they have spoken against God, but they make a light matter of it, and wonder it should be taken notice of; "Words," (say they,) "are but wind; others have said more, and done worse; if we are not so good as we should be, yet the worse we have done, so he has, he ought to be represented to." Be, Note. It is common for sinners, that are once convinced and unhumbled, to deny or extenuate the faults they are justly charged with, and to insist upon their own justification, against the reproofs of the word and of their own consciences. But it will be to no purpose.

3. The words themselves which they are charged with. God keeps an account of what men say, as well as what they do, and he will, at the last, account him, as he does so. We quickly forget what we have said, and are ready to deny what we have said amiss; but God can say, Ye have said so and so. They had said it as their deliberate judgment,

(1.) That there is nothing to be got in the service of God, though it is a service that subjects men to labour and sorrow. They said, It is vain to serve God, because he is vain. We do this, that he may find us out in vain, and to no purpose; he has his labour for his pains, and therefore is a fool for his labour; what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, or his observation, that we have observed what he has appointed us to observe? What mammon, or wealth, have we gained, says the Chaldee; intimating (says Dr. Pocock) that it was for mammon's sake only that they served God, and so indeed not God at all.
but mammon. "We have walked mournfully, or in black, with great gravity and great grief, before the Lord, set up, we will that God deliver us from them times appointed for that purpose; and yet we are never the better." Perhaps this comes in as a reason why they would not trust God to prosper them, upon their bringing in the tithes; (v. 10). "For," say they, "we have tried him in other things, and have lost by him. This is a very unjust and unreasonable reflection upon the service of God, and we have endeavoured enough to confer on his favourers. 1. They would have it thought that they had served God, and had kept his ordinances, whereas it was only the external observance of them that they had kept up, while they were perfect strangers to the inward part of the duty, and therefore might say, It is in vain. God says so; (Matt. xvi. 9). In vain do they worship me, whose hearts are far from me, while they draw near with their mouth; but whose fault is that? Not God's, who is the Rewarder of them that seek him diligently, but theirs, who seek him carelessly. 2. They insisted much upon it, that they had walked mournfully before God, whereas God had required them to serve him with gladness, and to walk cheerfully in the land which he had given them, and they made the service of God a task and drudgery to themselves, and then complained of it as a hard service. The yoke of Christ is easy; it is the yoke of antichrist that is heavy. 3. They complained that they had got nothing by their religion; they were still in poverty and affliction, and behindhand in the world. This is an old piece of impiety; (Job xxiii. 2). But what profit should I have of all I have done unto him? Eliphaz charges Job with saying something like this, (Job xxxiv. 9). It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with God. The enemies of religion do but set up against it the old cavils that have been long since answered and exploded. Perhaps this refers to the errors of the sect of Saducees, which was the scandal of the Jewish church, in its latter days; they denied a future state, and then said, It is vain to serve God; which has indeed some colour in it, for if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we were of all men most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. Note, Those do a great deal of wrong to God's honour, who say that religion is either an unprofitable or an unpleasant thing; for the matter is not so, wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and wisdom's goings are pleasant; Prov. viii. 22. 2. They maintained that wickedness was the way to prosperity, for they had observed that the workers of wickedness were set up in the world, and they that tempted God were delivered, v. 15. The outward prosperity of sinners in their sins, as it has weakened the hands of the godly in their godliness, (Ps. lxxiii. 13.) so it has strengthened the hands of the wicked in their wickedness. Note, They that work wickedness, tempt God by presumptuous sins, they do, as it were, try God, whether he can and will punish them as he has said in his word, and, in effect, challenge him to do his worst, by provoking him in the highest degree. 2. Those that tempt God by their wicked works, are many times both delivered out of the adversity into which they have got in their wickedness. Note, They that provoked God resist them, and that their pride is a preface to their fall; and if so, they are truly miserable, and it is folly to call them happy, and to bless them whom the Lord abhors. Wait awhile, and you shall see them that were wickedness set up as a heap of stones laid by the way, while those that tempt God delivered to the tormenters. Judge of things as they will appear shortly, when the doom of these proud sinners (which follows here, ch. iv. 1.) comes to be executed to the utmost. 11. Here is the gracious notice God takes of the pious talk of the saints in Zion, and the gracious recompense of it. Even in this corrupt and degenerate age, God preservered some of his people from so great a contempt, of serious goodness, there were some that retained their integrity, and zeal for God; and let us see, 1. How they distinguished themselves, and what their character was; it was the reverse of theirs that spake so much against God; for, (1.) They feared the Lord—that is the beginning of wisdom, and the root of all religion; they revered the majesty of God, submitted to his authority, and had a dread of his wrath in all they thought and said; they humbly complied with God, and never spake any stout words against him. In every age there has been a remnant that feared the Lord, though sometimes but a little remnant. (2.) They thought with inward humility, upon his word, and inwardly and frequently meditated upon the discoveries which were made of himself in his word and by his providences; and their meditation of him is sweet to them, and influences them. They thought on his name; they consulted the honour of God, and aimed at that as their ultimate end in all they did. Note, Those that know the name of God, should often think of, and call upon it in their thoughts; it is a copious, curious subject, and frequent thoughts of it will contribute very much to our communion with God, and the stirring up of our devout affections to him. (3.) They spake often one to another concerning the God they feared, and that name of his which they thought so much of; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak; and a good man, out of a good treasure there, will bring forth good things. They that feared the Lord, kept together as those that were company for each other; they spake kindly and endearingly one to another, for the preserving and promoting of mutual love, that that might not wax cold when iniquity did thus abound. They spake knowledgeably and edifyingly to one another, for the increasing and improving of grace and holiness in them; they spake one to another in the language of those who fear the Lord, and kept on his name—the language of Canaan; when profaneness was come to so great a height as to trample upon all that is sacred, then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another; [1.] Then when iniquity was bold and barefaced, the people of God took courage, and stirred up themselves, the innocent against theievil; Job xxxv. 8. The worse others are, the better we should be when we are daring, let not virtue be sneaking. [2.] Then when religion was reproached and misrepresented, its friends did all they could to support the credit of it, and to keep it in countenance. It had been suggested that the ways of God are melancholy, unpleasant ways, solitary and sorrowful; and therefore then iniquity against true religion—Job xxxv. 8. The worse others are, the better we should be when we are daring, let not virtue be sneaking. [3.] Then when seducers were busy to deceive, and to possess unwary souls with prejudices against religion, they that feared God were industrious to arm themselves and one another against the contagion, by mutual instructions, exhortations, and one of God's word, and to strengthen one another's hands. As evil communication corrupts good minds and manners, so good communication confirms them.
2. How God dignified them, and what further honour and favour he intended for them. They who spake of his jewels, no doubt looked with disdain and displeasure upon those that feared him, hecorted and bantered them; but they had little reason to regard that, or to be disturbed at it, when God condescended them. 

(1.) He took notice of their pious discourses, and was graciously present at their conferences; The Lord hearkened and heard it, and was well pleased with what was said. He heard what was said, and heard what bad men would say, and that they spake not right; here he hearkened, and heard what good men did say, for they spake aright. Note, The gracious God observes all the gracious words that proceed out of the mouths of his people; they need not desire that men may hear them, and commend them; let them not seek praise from men by them, nor affect to be taken notice of by them, but let it content them, that, be the conference ever so private, God sees and hears in secret, and will reward openly. When the two disciples, going to Emmaus, were discoursing concerning Christ, he hearkened and heard, and joined himself to them, and made a third, Luke xxiv. 15.

(2.) He kept an account of them. A book of remembrance was written for before him. Not that the Eternal Mind needs to be reminded of things by books and writings, but it is an expression after the manner of men, intimating that their pious affections and performances are kept in remembrance as punctually and particularly as if they were written in a book; as if journals were kept of all their conferences. Great kings had books of remembrance written, and read before them, in which were entered all the services done to them, and by whom, as Esther ii. 23. God, in like manner, remembers the services of his people, that, in the review of them, he may say, Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. God has a book for the sighs and tears of his mourners, (Ps. lvi. 8.) much more for the pleadings of his advocates. Never was any good word spoken of God or for God, from an honest heart, but it was registered, that it might be recompensed in the resurrection of the just, and in no wise lose its reward.

(3.) He promises them a share in his glory hereafter; (v. 17.) They shall be mine, with the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels. When God utterly cuts off the Jewish church and nation for their infidelity, the remnant among them, that believed his word, and, having waited for the consolation of Israel, welcomed him when he comes, shall be admitted into the Christian church, and shall become a peculiar people to God; God will take care of them, that they perish not with them that believe not; but that they be hid in the day of the Lord's anger against that nation. They shall be my segullah, my peculiar treasure, (It is the word used, Exod. xix. 5.) in the day of his anointed; and God designed to do so; some read it. These pious ones shall have all the glorious privileges of God's Israel appropriated to them, and centring in them; they shall now be the peculiar treasure, when the rest are rejected; they shall now be the vessels of mercy and honour, when the rest are made vessels of wrath and dishonour, vessels in which is no pleasure. This may be applied to all the objects of the Lord's grace; his covenant community, which shall be his; they shall put between them and others in the great day. Note, [1.] The saints are God's jewels; they are highly esteemed by him, and are dear to him, they are comely with the comeliness that he puts upon them, and he is pleased to glory in them; they are a royal diadem in his hand, Isa. lxxiii. 3. He looks upon them as his own proper goods, his choice goods, his treasure, laid up in his cabinet, and the furniture of his closet, Ps. cxxxv. 4. The rest of the world is but lumber, in comparison with them. [2.] There is a day coming when God will make up his jewels; they shall be gathered up out of the dirt unto which they are now thrown, and gathered together from all the places to which they are now scattered; he shall send forth his angels to gather his elect, who are his jewels, from the four winds of heaven, (Matt. xxiv. 31.) to gather his jewels into his jewel-house, as the wheat from several fields into the barn, so the penitent and holy Christians, from all parts of the world, to Christ, and none but saints, and saints made perfect; then God's jewels will be made up, as stones into a crown, as stars into a constellation. [3.] Those who now own God for theirs, he will then own for his, will publicly confess them before angels and men. They shall be mine; their sanctification shall be completed, and so they shall be perfectly and entirely mine, without any remaining interests of the world and the flesh. Their relation to God shall be acknowledged, and his property in them; he will separate them from those that are not his, and give them their portion with those that are his; for to them it shall be said, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. They were in doubt, sometimes, whether they were beloved of God; but now they know it is for sure and certain; there is no longer any reason to doubt; God himself will say unto them, You are mine; now, their relation to God is what they are reproached with, but it will then be glorified in, God himself will glory in it.

(4.) He promises them a share in his grace now; I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him. God had promised to own them as his, and take them to be with him; but it might be a doubt whether he would. He now says, I will spare them, I will not deal with them as they deserve. I will rejoice over them, (so some expound it,) as the bridegroom over his bride, Isa. liii. 5. Zeph. iii. 17. But the word usually signifies to spare with commiseration and compassion, as a father pities his children, Ps. ciii. 13. Note, [1.] It is our duty to serve God with the disposition of children; we must be his sons, must by a new birth partake of a divine nature, must consent to the covenant of adoption, and partake of the spirit of adoption: and we must be his servants; God will not have his children trained up in idleness, they must do him service, and they must do it from a principle of love, with cheerfulness and delight, as those that are therein serving their own true interest, and this is serving as a son with the father, Phil. ii. 22. [2.] If we serve God with the disposition of children, he will spare us with the tenderness and compassion of a father. Even God's children that serve him, stand in need of sparing mercy, that mercy to which we owe it that we are not consumed, that mercy which keeps us upon earth, and doth us much good, yet knowing there is not a just man on earth, that does good, and sin not, and that every sin deserves God's wrath, prays, Lord, spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy; see Neh. xiii. 22. And God as a Father will show them this mercy. He will not be extreme to mark what we do amiss, but will make the best of us and our poor performances; he will not deal with us as we deserve, but as we are, and as we have done, and may do, and will do; and he will spare us, and save us from the ruin they deserve. The father continues to spare the son, and does it with complacency, because he is his own; thus God will spare humble penitents and petitioners, as a man spares his own son that serves him, though we do him so little service, nay, we do him so much disservice.

5. How they will thus be distinguished from the children of this world; (v. 18.) *Then shall he re-
turn, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between sinners and saints; between those that serve God, and make conscience of their duty to him, and those that serve him not, but put contempt upon his service. Ye that now speak against God as making no difference between good and bad, and therefore say, It is in vain to serve him, (v. 14.) ye that are the only worshippers of God, and that particularly respects the manifest difference that was made by the Divine Providence between the believing Jews and those that persisted in their infidelity, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation, by the Romans. But it is here to have its full accomplishment at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and on that great discriminating day, when it shall be easy enough to discern between the righteous and the wicked. Note. (1.) All the children of men are either righteous or wicked, either such as serve God or such as serve him not. This is that division of the children of men, which will last for ever, and by which their eternal state will be determined; all are going either to heaven or to hell. (2.) In this world it is often hard to discern between the righteous and the wicked; they are mingled together, good fish and bad in the same net; the righteous are so disinterested, and the wicked so disguised, that we are often deceived in our opinions concerning both the one and the other; there are many who, we think, serve God, who, having not their hearts right with him, will be found none of his servants; and, on the other hand, many will be found his faithful servants, who, because they followed not with us, did not, as we thought, serve him; but that which especially raised the difficulty here, was, that the Divine Providence seemed to make no difference between the righteous and the wicked; you could not know wicked men by God's favoring upon them, for they commonly prospered in the world, nor righteous men by his dealing against them: for they were involved with others in the same common calamity; none now knows God's love or hatred by all that is before him, Ex. xli. 1. (3.) At the bar of Christ, in the last judgment, it will be easy to discern between the righteous and the wicked; for then every man's character will be perfectly, and perfectly discovered, every man will then appear in his true colours, and his dispositions will be disclosed. Some men's sins indeed go beforehand, and you may now tell who is wicked, but others follow after; however in the great day, we shall see who was righteous, and who wicked. Every man's condition likewise will be both perfected and everlasting determined; the righteous will then be perfectly happy, and the wicked perfectly miserable, without mixture of time. The righteous are all set on the right hand of Christ, and invited to come for a blessing, and all the wicked on his left hand, and are bid to depart with a curse, then it will be easy to discern between them. As to ourselves, therefore, we are concerned to think among which we shall have our lot, and, as to others, we must judge nothing before the time.

CHAP. IV.

We have here proper instructions given us, (very proper to close the canon of the Old Testament with,) I. Concerning the state of recompense and retribution that is before us; the misery of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous, in that state, v. 1-3. And this is represented to us under a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the unbelieving Jews with it, and of the comforts and triumphs of those among them, that received the Gospel in the preaching of H. Cotton, 1st Corinthians, C. H. Concerning the state of initial preparation we are now in, in which we are directed to have an eye to divine revelation, and to follow that; they then must keep to the law of Moses, (v. 4.) and expect a further discovery of God's mind, by Elijah the prophet, that is, by John Baptist, the harbingers of the Messiah, v. 5, 6. The last chapter of the New Testament is much to the same purport, setting before us heaven and hell in the great world, and obliging us to adhere to the word of God in this world.

1. FOR, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. 2. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. 3. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet, in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts.

The great and terrible day of the Lord is here prophesied of; which, like the pillar of cloud and fire, shall have a dark side turned toward the Egyptians that fight against God, and a bright side toward the faithful Israelites that follow him. The day cometh, the Lord cometh, the day of the Lord; and it has reference both to the first and to the second coming of Jesus Christ; the day of both was fixed, and should answer the character here given of it. I. In both Christ is a Consuming fire to those that rebel against him. The day of his coming shall burn as an oven; it shall be a day of wrath, of fiery indignation. This was foretold concerning the Messiah, Ps. xxi. 9. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies, and shall make them as a fiery oven, in the time of thine anger: it will be a day of terror and destruction like the burning of a city, or rather of wood, the trees whereof are withered and dried, for to that the allusion seems to be, as Isa. x. 17, 18. The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame, and it shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field. Now observe here;

1. Who shall be fuel to this fire; all the proud in heart, whose words have been stout against God, and their necks stiff, and unapt to yield to the yoke of his commandments. All those that in the pride of their countenances will not seek after God, nor submit to the grace and government of Jesus Christ; all that proudly say, will not have Christ to reign over them. And all those that do wickedly in their affections and conversations, that wilfully persist in sin, in contempt of and contradiction to the law of God; they are such as do wickedly against the covenant, as another prophet had lately expressed it, Dan xi. 32. God, that has a perfect knowledge of every one character, knows who are the proud, and of every one actions, knows who are, that do wickedly, and shall be as stubble to this fire, they shall be consumed, utterly consumed, and it is wholly owing to themselves that they shall be so, for they make themselves stubble, combustible matter to this fire. If they were not stubble, it would not burn.
them! for the fire will be to every man according as he and his works are found; if they be wood, hay, and stubble, they will be consumed; but if they be gold, silver, and precious stones, they will abide the fire, and be purified by it, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. 13. They who think on their unbelief oppose Christ, thereby set themselves as briars and thorns before a devouring fire, Isa. xlvii. 4, 5.

2. What shall be the force, and what the fruit, of this fire. The day that cometh shall burn them up, shall both terrify andCriterion them, and shall leave them neither root nor branch, neither son nor nephew; (so the Chaldee Paraphrase) neither they nor their posterity as a nation, nor their wickedness as the cause of it, shall be wholly extirpated and cut off. Who knows the power of God's anger? The proud, and those that do wickedly, will not fear it, but they shall be made to feel it. Where are they now that called the proud happy, when thus they are made completely miserable, when there remains no branch of their happiness to be enjoyed for the present, nor any root of it out of which it might again spring up.

Now this was fulfilled, (1.) When Christ, in his doctrine, spake terror and condemnation to the proud Pharisees, and the other Jews that did wickedly; when he sent that fire on the earth, which burnt up the chaff of the traditions of the elders, and the corrupt glosses they had put upon the law of God. (2.) When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, and (as those Jews, as a nation, were) quite blotted out from under heaven, and neither root nor branch left them. This seems to be principally intended here; our Saviour says that those should be the days of vengeance, when all the things that were written to that purpose should be fulfilled, Luke xxii. 22. Then the unbelieving Jews were as stubble to the devouring fire of God's judgments, which gathered together to them as the cagles to the carcase. (3.) It is certainly applicable and is to be applied, to the day of judgment, to the particular judgment at death, (some of the Jewish doctors refer it to the punishment that seizes on the souls of the wicked immediately after they go out of the body,) but especially it will have its accomplishment in the general judgment, at the end of time, when Christ shall be revealed in flaming fire, to execute judgment on them that are both high and low; when they shall be burned as stubble, and the whole world shall then burn as an oven, and all the children of this world, that set their hearts upon it, and choose their portion in it, shall take their ruin with it, and the fire then kindled shall never be quenched.

II. In both, Christ is a reviving Light to those who serve him Faithfully, to those who fear his name, and give him the glory due to it, (v. 2.) They stand in awe of that name of his, which the wicked profane and trample upon. Here are mercy and comfort kept in store for all those who fear the Lord, and think on his name. Observe,

1. Whence this mercy and comfort shall flow to them? To you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing in his wings. The day that comes, as it will be a stormy day to the wicked, a day in which God will rain upon them fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest, as he did on Sodom, (Ps. xi. 6.) a day of clouds and thick darkness, (Amos v. 18. 29.) so it will be a fair and bright day to those who fear God, and reviving as the rising sun is to the earth; and particular notice is taken of the rising of the sun upon Zoar, when that was mercifully distinguished from the cities of the plain, 2 Pet. ii. 5. the day of the Lord, 2 Pet. iii. 12. So, to you that fear God is comfort spoken; when the hearts of others fail for fear, let them lift up their heads for joy, for their redemption draws nigh, Luke xxii. 28. But by the Sun of righteousness here we are certainly to understand Jesus Christ, who would undertake to secure the believing remnant, in the day of the general destruction of the Jews, from falling with the rest, and to comfort them in that day of distress and perplexity with his consolations, he directed them that were in Judea to flee to the mountains, (Matth. xxiv. 16.) and they did so, and were all safe and easy in Pella. But it is to be applied more generally; (1.) To the coming of Christ in the flesh, to seek and save them that were lost; then the Sun of righteousness arose upon this dark world. Christ is the Light of the world, the true Light, the great Light that makes day, and rules the day, (John viii. 12.) as the sun; he is the Life of men, (John i. 4.) to men's souls as the sun is to the visible world, which without the sun would be a dungeon; so would mankind be darkness itself without the light of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ. Christ is the Sun that has light in himself, and is the Fountain of light, (Ps. xix. 4. 6.) he is the Sun of righteousness, for he is himself a righteous Saviour; righteousness is both the light and the heat of this Sun, the word of his righteousness is so, it guides, instructs, and quickens; so is the everlasting righteousness he has brought in; he is made of God to us Righteousness, he is the Lord our Righteousness, and therefore is fitly called the Sun of righteousness; through him we are justified and sanctified, and soar brought to see light. This Sun of righteousness, in the fullness of time, arose to the world, and threw light into the world, (John iii. 19.) a great light, Matth. iv. 16. In him the day-star from on high visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, Luke i. 78. 79. Righteousness sometimes signifies mercy or benignity, and it was in Christ that the tender mercy of our God visited us. (2.) It is applicable to the graces and comforts of the Holy Spirit, brought into the souls of men. Grace of the Spirit stands it of Christ's giving the Spirit to those that are his, to shine in their hearts, and to be a Comforter to them, a Sun and a Shield. Those that are possessed and governed by a holy fear of God, and a dread of his majesty, shall have his love also shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost; and then the sun may be said to arise there, and to bring both a delightful day and a fruitful spring along with it. (3.) It is applicable to the form of the world, to that that should be to the whole of the world, incessant and welcome sun-rising to all that fear his name; it will be that morning of the resurrection, in which the upright shall have dominion, Ps. xix. 14. That day which to the wicked will burn as an oven, will to the righteous be bright as the morning; and it is what they wait for, more than they wait for the morning.

What this mercy and comfort shall bring to them; He shall arise with healing under his wings, or, in his rays, or beams, which are as the wings of the sun. Christ came, as the sun, to bring not only light to a dark world, but health to a diseased, dis-tempered world. The Jews (says Dr. Poole) have a proverbial saying, As the sun riseth, infirmities decrease; the flowers which drooped and languished all night, revive in the morning as if they were come into the world, to be the great Physician, yea, and the great Medicine too; both the Balm in Gilead and the Physician there; when he was upon earth, he went about as the sun in his circuit, doing this good; he healed all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people; he healed by wholesale, as the sun does; he shall arise with healing in his wings; so some read it, and they apply the story of the morning to the recovery of his government, and being thereby made whole, and his finding that virtue went out of him, Mark v. 28. 30. But his healing bodily diseases was a specimen of his great design in coming into the world to heal the diseases of men's souls, and to put them into a good
state of health, that they may serve and enjoy both
God and themselves.
3. As God's effect it shall have upon them.

(1.) It shall make them vigorous in themselves;
"Ye shall go forth, as those that are healed go
abroad, and return to their business." The souls
shall go forth out of their bodies at death, and the
bodies out of their graves at the resurrection, as
prisoners out of their dungeons, and both to see
the light, and be set at liberty. Ye shall go for thy
pleasure, and when in thy pleasure the sun returns.
Some make it to mean the going forth of the Christians from Jerusalem, and the escape
they thereby made from its destruction. And thus
the souls on whom the Sun of righteousness arises,
go forth out of this world, go forth out of Babylon,
as those that are made free indeed. Ye shall like-
wise grow up; being restored to health and liberty,
ye shall increase in knowledge, and grace, and spir-
ituall strength. The souls on which the Sun of
righteousness arises, are growing up toward the per-
fecL man; those that by the grace of God are made
wise and good, by the same grace are made wiser
and better; and their path, like that of the rising
sun, shines more and more to the perfect day, Prov.
ix. 18. Their growth is compared to the calves of the stall, which is a quick, strong, and use-
ful growth. "Ye shall grow up, not as the flower of the
field, which is slender, and weak, and of little
use, and withers soon after it is grown up, but as
the calves of the stall," that, as one of the rabbins
expounds it, grow great in flesh and fatness, with
which both God's altars and men's tables are re-
plenished, and so the growth of his saints, on the
Sun of righteousness arises, honours both God and
man. Some read it, instead of Ye shall grow up,
Ye shall move yourselves, or leap for joy, shall
be as frolicksome as calves of the stall, when they
are let loose in the open field; and it denotes the joy
of the saints, who rejoice in Christ Jesus; they shall
even leap for joy; are always caused to triumph.
(2.) It shall make them victorious over their en-
emies; (v. 6.) Ye shall tread down the wicked. Time
was, when the wicked trod them down, said to their
souls, Bow down, that we may go over; but the
day will come, when they shall tread down the
wicked. The wicked, being made Christ's foot-
stool, are made theirs also, (Ps. cx. 1.) and come,
and worship before the feet of the church, Rev. iii.
9. The angels, as the apostles, Rev. x. 6. And the
believers by faith overcome the world, when they sup-
press their own corrupt appetites and passions, when
the God of peace bruises Satan under their feet,
then they tread down the wicked. When it
came to the turn of the Christians to triumph over
the Jews that had insulted over them, then this pro-
mise was fulfilled; They shall be ashes under the
soles of your feet, they shall not only be trampled
down, but trodden to dirt. When the day that
comes, shall have burnt them up, they shall tum
upon them as ashes; when the righteous shall rise
to everlasting life, the wicked shall rise to ever-
lasting contempt; and though they shall not tri-
umph over them, they shall triumph in that God
whose justice is glorified in their destruction. The
soles of your feet, they shall not only be trampled
over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron,
Rev. ii. 26, 27. This ye shall do, in the day that I shall
do this. Note, The saints' triumphs are all owing
to God's victories; it is not they that do this, but
God that does it for them; that says, Come, set
your feet on the necks of these kings. Some read it,
"In the day that I make, or shall make; the great
day of God's wrath,
will say with joy, This is the day that the Lord has
made." The day of the destruction of Jerusalem is
called the great and notable day of the Lord, (Acts
ii. 20.) and our Saviour, in foretelling that destruc-
tion, made use of such expressions, as, like these
here, might be applied likewise to the end of the
world and the last judgment; for it was such a ter-
rible revelation of the wrath of God from heaven,
and caused such a scene of horror upon this earth,
that it might fitly serve for a type of that glorious
transaction which will be an outlet to the days of
time, and an inlet to the days of eternity. By the
fulfillment of this prophecy in the destruction of the
Jewish nation, we should have our faith confirmed
in the assurances Christ has given us concerning
the dissolucion of all things; Surely I come quickly;
say Christ the Lord of hosts, to whom all power
in heaven and earth is committed.

4. Remember ye the law of Moses my
servant, which I commanded unto him in
Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and
judgments. 5. Behold, I will send you
Elijah the prophet before the coming of
the great and dreadful day of the Lord: 6. And
he shall turn the heart of the fathers to
the children, and the heart of the children
to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth
with a curse.

This is doubtless intended for a solemn conclusion,
not only of this prophecy, but of the canon of the
Old Testament, and is a plain information that they
were not to expect any more sayings or writings by
prophets any more of the dictates of the Spirit of prophecy, till the beginning of the gospel of
the Messiah; which sets aside the Apocalypse as
no part of the holy writ, and which therefore the
Jews never received.

Now that prophecy ceases, and is about to be
sealed up, there are two things required of the peo-
ples of God, that lived then.
1. They must keep up an obedient veneration for
the law of Moses; (v. 4.) Remember ye the law
of Moses my servant, and observe to do according
to it, even that law which I commanded unto him in
Horeb, that fiery law which was intended for all
Israel, with the statutes and judgments; not only
the law of the Ten Commandments, but all the other
appointments ceremonial and judicial then
thereunto. Observe here, 1. The honourable
mention that is made of Moses, the first writer of
the Old Testament, in Malachi, the last writer.
God by him calls him Moses my servant; for the
righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.
See how the penmen of scripture, though they lived
in several ages at a great distance from each other,
(it was above 1200 years from Moses to Malachi,)
so cunningly conformed to keep the law, and God had
one another, being all actuated and guided by one
and the same Spirit. 2. The honourable mention
that is made of the law of Moses; it was what God him-
sel commanded, he owns it for his law, and he com-
manded it for all Israel, as the municipal law of
their kingdom. Thus will God magnify his law,
and make it honourable. Note, We are therefore
concerned to keep the law, and God has com-
manded it, and commanded it for us, for we are the
spiritual Israel; and if we expect the benefit of the
covenant with Israel, (Heb. viii. 10.) we must ob-
serve the commands given to Israel, those of them
that were intended to be of perpetual obligation. 3.
The summary of our duty, with reference to the
law; we must remember it. Forgetfulness of the
law is at the bottom of all our transgressions of it.
If we would rightly remember it, we could not but
conform to it; we should remember it when we have
occasion to use it; remember both the commar
"s
them, and the sanctions wherewith they are enforced. The office of conscience is to bid us remember the law of the Messiah; yet others of them say not the same person, but another of the same spirit; it should be noted, those who hold this opinion ask John, "Art thou Elias, or that prophet that should bear his name?" John i. 19—21. But we Christians know very well, that John Baptist was the Elias that was to come, Matt. xvii. 10—13, and very expressly, Matt. x. 14, This is Elias which was to come; and v. 10. the same of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger, &c. In Elijah was a man of great power and prophecies, zealous for God, held in repeating sin, and active to reduce an apostate people to God and their duty; John Baptist was animated by the same spirit and power, and preached repentance and reformation, as Elias had done; and all held him for a prophet, as they did Elijah in his day, and that his baptism was from heaven, and not of men. Note, When God has such work to do, he does it by raising up men to do it as he formerly raised up, and can put into a John Baptist the spirit of an Elias.

2. When he shall be sent, before the appearing of the Messiah, which, because it was the judgment of this world, and introduced the ruin of the Jewish church and nation, is here called the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, which shall bring the wrath of God upon them. That he should be sent, when he first came, was as that day will be, when he comes again—though a great and dreadful day to those that embrace him, yet a great and dreadful day to those that oppose him. John Baptist was sent before the coming of this day, to give people notice of it, that they might get ready for it, and go forth to meet it.

3. On what errand he shall be sent; He shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, that is, he shall be employed in this work, he shall endeavour, as it were, to greater effect, to decide and baptize shall have a direct tendency to it, and with many shall be successful: he shall be an instrument, in God's hand, of turning many to righteousness, to the Lord their God, and so making ready a people prepared for him, Luke i. 16, 17. Note, The turning of souls to God and their duty is the best preparation of them for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. It is promised concerning John, (1.) That he shall give a turn to things; shall make a bold stand against the strong torrent of sin and impiety, which he found in full force among the children of his people, and bearing down all before it. It is called his coming to restore all things, (Matth. xvii. 11.) to set them to rights, that they may again go in the right channel. (2.) That he shall preach a doctrine that shall reach the hearts and have an influence upon them, and work a change in them. God's word, in his mouth, shall be quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Many had their consciences awakened by his ministry, who yet were not thoroughly wrought upon, such a spirit and power was there in it. (3.) That he shall turn the hearts of the fathers, and the children, and the young men to the fathers, (for so some read it,) to God and to their duty. He shall call upon young and old to repent; and shall not labour in vain, for many of the fathers that are going off, and many of the children that are growing up, shall be wrought upon by his ministry. (4.) That thus he shall be an instrument to revive and confirm love and unity among relations, and shall bring them closer, and
bind them faster to each other, by bringing and binding them all to their God. He shall prepare the way for that kingdom of heaven, which will make all its faithful subjects of one heart and one soul, (Acts iv. 32,) which will be a kingdom of love, and will slay all enmities.

4. With what view he shall be sent on this errand; lest I come and smite the earth, the land of Israel, the body of the Jewish nation, (that were of the earth earthy,) with a curse. They by their impiety and impenitence in it had laid themselves open to the curse of God, which is a separation to all evil. God was ready to smite them with that curse, to bring utter ruin upon them, to strike home, to strike dead, with the curse; but he will yet once more try them, whether they will repent and return, and so prevent it; and therefore he sends John Baptist to preach repentance to them, that their conversion might prevent their confusion; that unwilling is God that any should perish, so willing to have his anger turned away. Had they universally repented and reformed, it had had this desired effect; but they generally rejecting the counsel of God in John’s baptism, it proved against themselves, (Luke vii. 30.) and their land was smitten with the curse, which both it and they lie under to this day.

Note, Those must expect to be smitten with a sword, with a curse, who turn not to him that smites them with a rod, with a cross, Isa. ix. 13. Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree, says John Baptist, and it is ready to be smitten, to be cut down with a curse; therefore bring forth fruit meet for repentance. Some observe that the last word of the Old Testament is a curse, which threatens the earth, (Zech. v. 3.) our desert of which we must be made sensible of, that we may bid Christ welcome, who comes with a blessing; and it is with a blessing, with the choicest of blessings, that the New Testament ends, and with it let us arm ourselves, or rather let God arm us, against this curse. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.