

you desire happiness in this life, and also to be blessed hereafter to all eternity, observe this new commandment to love one another. And as you do desire to declare that you have received free grace, and that you have that seal with which God seals the soul for his own, to live with him for ever, be exhorted to be of one mind, and love one another. "Rejoice in the Lord, and be of one mind;" be united one to another, and let your hearts abound in love more and more one toward another.

SERMON VI.

"The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."—
MICAH VI. 9.

METHINKS I see a great rod ready to be laid upon the back of this nation, and I would therefore at this time endeavour to inform you what the voice of this rod is; and have to that end chosen this scripture to speak unto.

In this chapter then you have God's controversy with his own people, set down at the end of verse 2: "For the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel." And then he chargeth them with

1. Unthankfulness for many years, in verses 3, 4, 5: "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherewith have I wearied thee? Testify against me, for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," &c.

2. He chargeth them with formality, and shews them the evil of it, in verses 6, 7: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams," &c. And then,

3. He pleads against them, in verse 8: "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." And then,

4. He seals up the sentence in this verse of my text: "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

Wherein you have three things especially remarkable.

1. The people the Lord's voice crieth unto, and that is unto the city. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city."

2. You have an exhortation to hear the voice of the rod. "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

3. You have an argument to press you so to do; it is your wisdom: "The man of wisdom shall see thy name." "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city," that is, unto Samaria and Jerusalem, the chief cities: "And the man of wisdom shall see thy name;" the dispensations of God in the way of his mercy or justice are his name. As a man is known by his name, so God is known by his dispensations; which though they be dark to the world, yet the man of wisdom shall see them and discern them. "Therefore hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it," the rod; that is, the rod of correction. Now there is,

1. The rod of power and dignity, "He shall send his rod out of Zion."

2. There is a rod of discrimination: "I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you under the bond of the covenant," Ezek. xx. 37,

3. There is the rod of direction: "Thy rod and thy staff they shall comfort me."

4. There is a rod of government, both ecclesiastical and civil. As for ecclesiastical, saith Paul, "Shall I come unto you with a rod;" and as for civil, "He that spareth the rod hateth the child."

5. There is a rod of destruction: "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, and dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel," Psalm ii. 9.

Now it is a rod of correction that we are to understand here, from whence I take up this observation:

That when God visits the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their best wisdom to hear the rod and who hath appointed it; it is their true interest and best wisdom so to do.

For the opening and clearing hereof, I shall speak to these four or five propositions.

First, That God doth not steal upon a people with his judgments, but he first warns them before he smites them.

Secondly, When God smites his own people, he deals with them in the way of rod.

Thirdly, That God's rod is a teaching rod.

Fourthly, That the message of the rod is commonly sent to the great cities and to the great towns of a nation or people.

Fifthly, When God smites his own people with the rod, it is their best wisdom and their duty to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.

First, Though God consumes a nation at once, and destroys a nation at once, at last; yet he still doth and will warn a people before he destroys them: God will not steal upon a people with his judgments, but he first warns them before he consumes them. He hath his murdering pieces which he will discharge in due time, but he will first discharge his warning pieces. And God doth sometimes warn people by his word, and sometimes by his works and dispensations. Ezek. xxxiii. 2, "Son of man, speak unto the children of thy people, and say unto them, If I bring a sword upon the land," &c. And at the 7th verse he applies it. So saith he, "Thou, O son of man, I have set thee as a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word from my mouth, and warn them from me." Would you know what this warning is, why it is a warning by the word.

Sometimes God warns his people by his works and dispensations, by his judgments upon others and by his afflictions upon themselves, he brings a lesser judgment to prevent a greater; it is with the works of God as it is with his word. Now God doth sometimes hew down men by the word, yea he hews them down by the ministry of the word. There is a time when God will hew down sinners by the ministry of the word, and lays them upon the ground a drying, as I may say, for hell, before they come there. Matt. iii. "The tree that bringeth not forth fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Hosea vi. 5, "Therefore I have hewed them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of my mouth," &c. There is a time of hewing down, a time when God will hew men down by the ministry of the word; and as he doth thus by his word, so he doth the same also by his works and dispensations: and though God may and can des-

troy a people at once, yet he will not seize upon them before he warns them. That is the first proposition.

Secondly, When God smites his own people he deals with them in the way of the rod; though he punish others with scorpions, yet, saith he, for you that are in covenant with me, if you sin, "I will visit your transgressions with a rod." Look what worldly afflictions come upon the saints; they are struck with the rod. What greater afflictions do you read of than what fell upon Job; why yet it was the stroke of the rod: "Let him take away his rod from me," Job ix. 34. When God deals with his people, I say, he deals with them in the way of the rod; and if you ask the reason why God uses the rod with his own people, I answer,

1. Because they are his own children. "If you endure chastisement God deals with you as with children; if you be without chastisement you are bastards and not sons," Heb. vii. 7, 8. I know no better argument against the Church of Rome, says Luther, than this, that she reigns without the cross. If two children are fighting together, and a man comes and parts them, and strikes one of them and not the other, you will presently imagine that the child which he strikes is his own. And so if you ask why God useth the rod to his people, I answer, because they are his own children. And,

2. As they are children, so he loves them, and he that spareth the rod hateth the child. Now God doth not hate his children, "for every son that he loveth he chastiseth;" God loves his children and therefore he deals with them in the way of the rod.

3. There is "much folly bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction bringeth it out," saith Solomon, and therefore God doth sometimes correct his people because of their folly.

Why do schoolmasters use the rod, but only to make children learn their lessons; if they would learn without he would not use the rod. And why doth God use the rod with his people, but to learn them their lessons; for these reasons therefore doth God use the rod with his people.

But you will say, Doth not God use the rod with the wicked too; do not they come under the rod as well as the righteous?

I answer, Solomon saith, "The rod is for the back of the fool;" and wicked men are called fools in Scripture. God doth sometimes chastise the godly by the wicked; the wicked are the rod in God's hand. And sometimes, again, God doth punish wicked men by the saints, the saints being the rod in God's hand. Sometimes, I say, wicked men are the rod for the godly: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff of their hand is mine indignation," Isa. x. 5. And sometimes the godly are the rod of God in the hand of God for punishing the wicked: "The portion of Jacob is not like them, for he is the former of all things, and Israel is the rod of his inheritance, the Lord of hosts is his name. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war, for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms," Jer. li. 19, 20. So, I say, as the Lord whips the saints by the wicked, so he also lashes the wicked by the godly, they being the rod in the hand of the Lord.

But you will say is there no difference between these two?

I answer, Yes, for there is a whipping rod, a rod of correction, and there is also a breaking rod; a whipping rod for the saints and a breaking rod for the wicked. In the iind Psalm it is said, "Thou wilt rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Though God doth afflict his own people with the rod—the wicked being the rod in God's hand—yet he will cast that rod into the fire when he hath done with it; but though he doth also punish the transgressions of the wicked by the righteous, they being the rod in God's hand, yet will he not cast that rod also into the fire upon that account. The saints may rejoice when they see the wicked punished, because they know that themselves shall not be thrown into the fire; but the wicked have no cause to rejoice when they see the godly afflicted, because they may be sure they themselves shall be thrown into the fire when they have done their work. The child may laugh when he sees the rod thrown into the fire, because he knows he shall not be thrown in himself.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet it is a rod that chastiseth in measure, as you may find Isa. xxvii. 7, 8: "Hath he smitten him as he smote those that smote him, or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure when it shooteth

forth thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind." And so in Psalm lxxxix. 31, 32: "If his children forsake my law, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes." And so 2 Sam. vii. 14: "I will be his Father and he shall be my son; if he commit iniquity I will chastise him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men." So I say, though God chastise his own people with a rod, yet it is in measure, but the bones of the wicked shall be broken, it shall fall very heavy upon them.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet it is in season, it is but what is very seasonable; they are so cut and lopt as that they may grow again. "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes," Prov. xiii. 24, or in the morning; that is, he doth it in season: but now the wicked are so cut off that they never grow more.

Though God visiteth the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet his loving kindness he will never take away from them. "If they sin (saith God), I will visit them with a rod, but my loving kindness I will not take away from them," Ps. lxxxix. 33. But it is not so with the wicked.

Though God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, yet he will not suffer the rod to rest upon their backs. If your garments be dirty or dusty, you take a rod or a wand and beat out the dust, but when it is out you do not let the rod rest upon the garment; so God causeth his rod to pass upon his people, but when their dirt and filth is out and removed, he will take away the rod from off them, and will not suffer it to rest upon their backs. So that you see there is a vast difference between the rod of the wicked and the rod of the godly in these particulars: the rod of the wicked is a breaking rod, but the rod of the godly is a correcting rod; the rod of the godly is thrown into the fire, the rod of the wicked is not so; the rod of the godly is seasonable, the rod of the wicked is not; the rod of the godly is in love, the rod of the wicked not so; and, lastly, God will not let the rod rest upon the back of the righteous, but the rod of the wicked shall never be removed. And that is the second proposition.

Thirdly, God's rod is a teaching rod: when God smites

his people he deals with them in the way of the rod, and that is a teaching rod, it brings a message with it. For the clearing of this I shall shew you,

1. What those lessons are which the rod teacheth.

2. How this rod teacheth.

1. If you ask what lessons this rod teacheth ; I answer in the general, the rod teacheth the same lesson that the word teacheth, the rod teacheth no new doctrine ; but more particularly, the rod hath a lesson for

The converted, and for

The unconverted.

If you be unconverted, the rod calls upon you to turn to God. If a drunkard be sick, the rod of sickness says, O drunkard, leave off thy drunkenness and turn to the Lord. This lesson the rod teacheth ; and it taught the jailor, and Paul, and the prodigal. When the rod of misery and poverty was upon the prodigal, why then, says he, " I will return to my father, for in my father's house is bread enough." Thus the rod teacheth the unconverted to turn to the Lord. Art thou in thy sins still, therefore, O poor sinner, and hast thou gone on a great while in thy sins, and hath God warned thee often by his word to turn to him, and doth he now come upon thee with his rod ? why this is all but to teach thee the same lesson still, though in another way ; and the lesson is, " Hear and your souls shall live," but if you will not hear the whipping, the correcting rod, you shall hear and feel the breaking and the destroying rod. This is the lesson which the rod teacheth the unconverted.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to mortify your sins more and more. " The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil, so do stripes the inward parts of the belly," Prov. xx. 20. " By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged," Isa. xxvii. 9. By this, that is, by affliction, by the rod ; if therefore you have neglected any duty that you have performed heretofore, or ought to perform, the rod now calls upon you to do it, now " remember your first works and repent."

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to prize those common mercies which you have not valued heretofore. You have had peace, but you have not prized it ; now the rod of war should teach you to prize it : you have had a quiet habitation, but have not prized it ; now the rod of tumult calls

upon you to prize your quiet habitation, and to be thankful for it. This is another lesson which the rod teacheth.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to honour your own graces, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed," Rom. v. 3. You know how it is with a countryman that makes hay; the hay lies abroad, and he sees a black cloud a coming, and he calls to his men to cock up and gather up the hay. Why, look into the nation, and see what a cloud is over us! this calls upon the people of God to gather up their evidences. Here is a black cloud over us: oh, all ye people of God, gather up your evidences, that by the dark night of affliction you may have light to read your own graces. This is another lesson the rod teacheth.

If you be converted, the rod calls upon you to sympathize with others in their afflictions; by you own afflictions you are called upon to compaasionate others in their afflictions.

And, lastly, if you be converted, the rod calls upon you to provide for your great and last change. David understood this, and therefore he says, "Lord, teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart to true wisdom," Psalm xc. 12.

These are the lessons which the rod teacheth.

2. If you would know further what the rod teacheth, I answer negatively,

The rod doth not teach you by any skill or knowledge of its own, but the Spirit of the Lord in the rod, that teacheth; "Blessed is the man that thou chastenest and teachest him out of thy law," Ps. xciv. 12. By the rod a man shall see that presented to him which lay hid before. When the glass is shaken you see that sand which you could hardly or not at all perceive before; so when a man is shaken by affliction, his sins are discovered by him; and a sight of sin is the first step to conversion.

By the rod you are humbled and broken and made more fit and capable to receive instruction. When the young horse is once well broke, then he is afterwards fit for the saddle; now afflictions break men and fit them for God's service and for God's work. If a narrow mouthed vessel be in continual motion and unfixed, you cannot pour any liquor into it; you must first fix the vessel, and then you may put what you will

into it: so afflictions will fix you and settle you. You have many a poor man that no ground will hold him, as we use to say, till afflictions come, and then they settle him. If you sow seed, you must first plough the ground, and then you sow the seed. Now what soul is there which doth not need God's plough? Why God's rod is his plough; and when this rod comes and breaks and humbles the heart, then it will receive the good seed of God's word into the furrows of the heart. And further,

By the rod a man will be forced to lay hold of and stick to those promises which he could not lay hold on before; for when the rod comes and brings him low, the man is glad to run to the promise: and truly it is a very great comfort to us that we have a promise to run unto when we are brought low with the rod. And thus you see what lessons the rod teacheth, and also how the rod teacheth: it is a teaching rod. And so I have done with the third proposition; the next follows.

Fourthly, As the rod is teaching, and doth bring a message with it; so this message is sent especially to the great cities and towns of a nation or people. "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city" here in the text. Why what city or cities? It was Jerusalem and Samaria. But did not God's voice cry unto the lesser towns and villages? Yes; but when a national rod comes, the message is especially sent to the great towns and cities of a nation. For,

The rod comes to avenge the quarrel of the word. Look, therefore, on that place or people that have had the greatest opportunities, as to hearing of the word and having the means of grace, and yet have abused them; the greater controversy hath the rod with that place or people. Now great towns and cities have commonly the greatest opportunities as to the word and ordinances, and many times they are most abused in and by these; and therefore the voice of the rod is especially to great towns and cities. "Woe unto thee, Capernaum." And why unto Capernaum and not to the towns and villages? Why! "Woe unto thee, Capernaum, for thou hast been exalted unto heaven," in regard of the means, and yet hast not repented, Matt. xi. 23; therefore, Woe unto thee above all the rest of the towns about thee. And so, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (saith Christ) I cannot but weep over thee; I

would have gathered you but you would not," &c. Therefore I cannot but weep over you; though the lesser towns and villages shall be destroyed as well as the great ones, yet I weep not over them but over Jerusalem, for she hath had the means of grace more abundantly and yet hath not repented; and therefore I cannot but weep over it. When the rod comes, I say, it comes more directly to the great towns and cities of a nation.

God will be sure to punish those who are ringleaders of rebellion in a nation. Now great cities and towns if they are not good, are ringleaders to other towns to do evil; even as a great oak, which drops upon the lesser trees under him, spoils their growth and corrupts them. And so if a man be rich and not good, he drops upon others and spoils others. So I say, great towns if not good, spoil and corrupt the lesser towns and villages; as, if they be good, they are an help and an encouragement to others in goodness. Therefore the Lord's voice crieth unto the cities, and they should all hear the rod, and who hath appointed it. That is the fourth proposition. The fifth and main followeth, that,

Fifthly, When the Lord doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their true interest and best wisdom to hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

There are three things in this proposition:

1. When God doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their duty to hear what the rod saith. And,
2. Not only to hear what the rod saith, but also to consider who hath appointed it. And,
3. It is their true interest and best wisdom so to do.

I shall not much insist upon these. But for the first:

1. When the Lord doth visit the transgressions of his people with a rod, it is their duty to hear what the rod saith; for as you hear, God's rod is a teaching rod, and therefore when the rod comes, it is your duty to lay your ear close to the rod to hear what it says, for otherwise you will be found despisers of its message. If a king send his ambassador to speak and treat with another, and he turns his ear from him and will not hear him, why, will not he be found a despiser of the message? Now the rod is a messenger, an ambassador, and it comes from heaven; if you will not hear it, you despise the message of the rod. Not

hearing is despising; therefore when the rod comes, hear the message of it. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Almighty," saith Solomon, Prov. iii. 11.

2. It is your duty to hear the rod, and also to consider who hath appointed it; not only to hear the instrument, but the author also whereby the rod is acted and guided. For

Thereby you will honour God in his dispensations. It was the speech of Mr. Dod when the soldiers broke into his house and plundered him, saith he, It is the Lord that hath taken them away. He did not say, This thing *they* have taken away, and *they* have taken away such and such things; no, he would not give them that honour, but as Job said, when the Sabeans took away his goods, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away;" so said he, I will not honour them so much, as to say that *they* have taken away any thing from me, but the Lord hath done it; and thereby he gives God the honour of his dispensations, and so must you if you will hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will much strengthen your faith.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will be enabled to submit sweetly to the sharp anger of God's dispensations: "I was dumb and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," saith David, Psalm xxxix. 9. So when Shimei cursed David, his servants would have taken off his head; No, saith David, "Let him alone, it is the Lord that hath bidden him," 2 Sam. xvi. 11. Mr. Fox makes mention of a young man, a martyr, that when he was upon the cart going to the fire, his father, who was a papist, came out of his house, and would have beaten him, but the people hindering him, Pray, said he, let him alone, for he is my father. So I say, by hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will submit unto the Lord, because he is your Father.

By hearing the rod and who hath appointed it, you will be led to prayer, and be brought to pray. Prayer becomes a man or woman when they are under the rod. Pray tell me, when the child is whipped by his father, doth the child fall down to the rod, and beg of the rod to spare him? no, but he falls down to him in whose hand the rod is, to his master or his father, and cries to him, O spare me, pray spare me. So be not stubborn, but fall down to the Lord when you are

under the rod, and say, Lord spare me. Do not say to the rod, Spare me; do not cry to that when it is upon your backs; no, but see God and observe his hand and cry to him for help. But then,

3. As it is our duty to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, so it is also our true interest and best wisdom to do it, because it is the way to prevent further strokes. When a child is under the rod and will not submit, Why, says the master, since you are so stout and so stubborn, I will try who shall be master, you or I. And so he strikes on still, until the child cries out, I have done: Why then, says the master, I have done too. And thus it is with us, when we are under the rod, if we be stubborn, and refuse to hear the rod of God and who hath appointed it, Well, says God, I will try who shall be master, you or I. What is the reason that some men go so long, so many years with the rod upon their backs, but because they have not heard the rod and who hath appointed it. But now when a man shall say, Lord, I have done; Why then, says God, I have done too, O soul.

Beloved, it is our best wisdom and our best course, to hear the rod and who hath appointed it.

All that I shall say for application is this: It is our true interest and best wisdom, when the rod comes, to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, as hath been proved.

Oh then that men were wise and did understand it in this day. O England, England, the rod is in thy streets at this time; certainly there is a swinging rod hangs over this nation. O England, what shall I say unto thee, but what the prophet saith here, "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." O London, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it." O Norwich, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it." O Yarmouth, "Hear thou the rod and who hath appointed it;" for you shall thereby honour God and strengthen your own faith, you shall be able to keep silence in the evil day; you shall be made more fit to pray, and the rod will be sooner removed from you. Therefore as you desire that God may have the honour of all his dispensations, and that your faith may be strengthened, and that you may be enabled to be silent in an evil day; then "Hear the rod and who hath appointed it."

But you will say, What shall we do that we may hear the

rod and who hath appointed it? We do confess that there is a smart rod upon the back of this nation, and upon the back of our families; but what shall we do that we may hear the rod and who hath appointed it?

I answer, stand and look upon the rod, and you will find two things especially in the rod:

1. Your sin. And 2. God's design.

As for your sin, look what sin that is which God holds before your face, before your conscience, all the time he is striking of you with the rod, that is the sin he strikes you for. If a dog worry a sheep, you commonly go and beat the dog in the face of the worried sheep, that the dog may thereby know and understand for what he is beaten: so when the Lord comes and holds out one sin for you to look on especially, then you may be sure the rod comes upon you for that sin.

Again, Look what sin that is which doth naturally bring the rod, that is the cause of it. As for example, if a man be drunk, and do thereby bring himself into a fever, will you not say that drunkenness was the cause of it?

Again, Look what sin that is which is most like the rod of all others; that sin is that which brings the rod. As for example, suppose the rod of this nation be decay of trading, may we not think that some stolen wedge of gold is in this nation, which is the cause of this rod, because it is like it. Or suppose the rod of this nation be, the Lord's forsaking of it; may we not think that apostacy is the cause of it, because it is like it. Therefore, if you would hear the rod and who hath appointed it, then observe what sin that is which is the cause of it. But,

2. And so to conclude, as you are to look upon your sin, so also upon God's design in the rod. Now God seldom or never gives any mercy to a people, but he first brings them into the quite contrary condition. As for example, if God intends to give you great assurance of his love, he will first suffer you to fall into great temptations and darkness, that he may thereby fit you for great assurance. Or if God intend to raise you to great honour in the world, he will first suffer you to lie under some great reproach, that you may be thereby the more fit for your honour. And so if God intend to fix and settle a nation, he will first suffer it to come into

great confusion and tumult, because the Lord will thereby prepare that nation for the glorious settlement which he intends.

How is it therefore with you; do you feel or see the rod of God upon this nation, or upon your families, or upon the back of your own particular person? then "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it." For God's rod is a teaching rod, and it brings many lessons with it. Therefore what I say to one, I say to all, and to my own soul also, "Hear ye the rod and who hath appointed it."

SERMON VII.

"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—AMOS IV. 12.

IN this chapter the prophet Amos endeavours to pronounce some heavy judgments against God's own people, Israel, wherein there are three things most considerable:

1. The judgment threatened.
2. The cause of the judgment. And
3. The inference thereupon.

1. The judgment threatened. And that is in the 2nd and 3rd verses: "The Lord hath sworn by his holiness, that lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks." As if he should say, I will send anglers among you, that shall pull you out of your houses, as the little fishes are pulled out of the water. And then he goes on in the 3rd verse, "And ye shall go out at the breaches, saith the Lord." Though you be great and strong, yet will I make breaches among you, saith the Lord. This is the judgment threatened.

2. Here is the cause of the judgment, and that is threefold:

Oppression, as at the 1st verse: "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy," and so forth.

Another cause is idolatry, and superstition; as at verses 4, 5, "Come ye to Bethel, and transgress at Gilgal, multiply