

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 three-fold :

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

transgression; proclaim and publish the free offering, for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

The third cause is their incorrigibleness, as at verse 6, "I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places, yet have ye not returned to me, saith the Lord." And at verse 7, "And also I have withholden rain from you, and I have caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another city, so two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 9, "I have smitten you with blasting and with mildew, when your gardens, and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive trees increased, the palmer worm devoured them, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 10, "I have sent among you the pestilence, after the manner of Egypt, your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord," and at verse 11, "I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord."

Thirdly, Therefore by way of inference he concludes;

"Therefore this will I do unto thee O Israel, and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

In these words you have a double inference which God makes.

Therefore thus will I do unto thee, I have been a long time striving with you, as if he should say, and I have been at a stand whether I should punish you or not, yet have ye not returned unto me, therefore now I am resolved, "thus will I do unto thee." And then

Now I am resolved, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, therefore do thou prepare to meet thy God, O Israel; I do not send you a challenge, saith God, that you should prepare to meet with your God to fight with him, or to resist him, not to meet God in his anger and to oppose him, no; but prepare to meet thy God by preventing his judgments, with your repentance, and returning unto him. If a man be coming to your house, and you go out to meet him, why then

you prevent him by meeting of him ; so when we prevent God's judgments by our repentance, we are said to meet with God.

From hence then I take up this observation or doctrine.

That when God is resolved to come out against a nation or people, it is their duty to prepare to meet with God.

For the opening and prosecuting hereof I shall labour to shew you,

First, That God doth seem sometimes to be at a stand concerning a people, whether he should trust to them any longer or not, or whether he should punish them or not.

Secondly, That if they do not come to him, and meet with him, he will then resolve to go out against them in his wrath.

Thirdly, That when God doth resolve to go out against a people in his wrath, it is their duty to prepare to meet him.

Fourthly, I shall labour to shew, how a people or family or person, may prepare themselves to meet with God in the way of his anger, when he is going out against them.

First, Though God is always resolved in himself what to do with a people, yet he seems to us to be at a stand, whether he should deliver them or not, or whether he should punish them or not, whether he should shew mercy to them or not ; as you may see *Exod. xxxiii. 5*, " For the Lord said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, ye are a stiffnecked people ; I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment and consume thee ; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee," that I may shew, or make known what to do unto thee, as it is in the Hebrew : this is speaking after the manner of men ; and so in *Gen. xviii. 21*, " I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me, and if not I will know," and again, *Gen. xxii. 12*, " Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God," speaking after the manner of men. And again *Hosea vi. 4*, " O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee, O Judah, what shall I do unto thee ;" and *Hosea xi. 8*, " How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee Israel, how shall I make thee as Admah, how shall I set thee as Zeboim : " here are four hows in our translation, though but two in the Hebrew, " How shall I give thee up, how shall I deliver thee, how shall I make thee as Admah,

how shall I set thee as Zeboim :” as if the Lord, to speak after the manner of men, were in a great strait, and knew not what to do, was not resolved what to do ; so I say though God is always resolved in himself, yet he seems to us to be at a stand sometimes, whether he shall shew mercy or no.

But you will say, how doth this come to pass, that God doth sometimes seem to be thus at a stand.

I answer, you know how it is with a tender father, that hath a rebellious child ; saith the father, I will thrust him out of doors, I will utterly cast him off, I have often admonished him and threatened him and corrected him, and yet he is never the better, therefore I am resolved even to turn him out of doors ; aye, but then he reflects and thinks again, He is my child, he is the son of my bowels, how shall I, how can I give him up, how can I turn him out of doors ? Why now God is more tender to his children, than any father can be to his children, and therefore his being at a stand doth speak out and declare his bowels to his people : his bowels are at work whilst their sins provoke him ; one while he looks upon their sins and another while he looks upon Christ’s satisfaction ; one while he hears the law call, Justice, justice, another while he hears Christ cry, Mercy, mercy ; there is justice and mercy both in God, that he may have the honour of both, and therefore God seems to be at a stand sometimes ; says God, These are my people, and if I punish them the enemies will reproach me, and I shall be dishonoured, and they are my people still for all their sinning against me, and thus God seems to be at a stand.

But you will say, When may God seem to be at a stand, and not to be resolved what to do speaking after the manner of men.

I answer, when the saints and ministers of God know not what is best to be done in regard of the times, then is God at a stand, for, saith the Lord, “ Shall I do any thing, and not reveal it to my servants the prophets :” therefore I say when the saints and servants and ministers of God are at a stand, and know not what to do, then, God seems to be at a stand.

When the dispensations of God go forward and backward, then the Lord seems to be at a stand ; when a man goes out of his house about his business, and goes forward and back-



ward in the street, you will say, that man is not well resolved what to do, nor which way to go; and thus it seems to be sometimes with God, his dispensations in the world go forward and backward, and this is the time that God is as it were at a stand, whether he shall shew mercy or no; and so I have done with the first general.

Secondly, That though God seem to be at a stand sometimes, yet if men do not come unto him and meet him, he will resolve to go forth against them, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee:" I have been a long time striving with you, and yet have ye not returned unto me, and now I am resolved, and this is God's message.

Now for the clearing of this.

I shall open the truth of it unto you.

I shall prove it. And,

I shall shew you, when God may be said to go forth against a people or nation.

For opening of it, you must not think, as I said before, that God is at any time unresolved in himself, or that he knows not what to do, no, "For known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world," unto the end, says the apostle, Acts xv. 18. There is nothing future, or to come, to God; God is not measured, neither doth he measure by time; there is nothing before nor after with God in eternity; all is present and altogether before him at once, and therefore I say, God is not at any time unresolved in himself, what he shall do with this or that people. Now further, God is said to will a thing in a twofold respect, either in regard

Of his decree, or

Of his dispensations.

In regard of his decree, his love is from eternity and yet the same man may seem to be a child of wrath in regard of the dispensation. Every elect person is a child of God from eternity in regard of God's decree, and yet he is a child of wrath until he be converted in regard of God's dispensations. So when I say, that God seems to be at a stand and unresolved, and that if men do not come unto him he will then go forth against them; this is not to be understood in regard of his decree, but in regard of his dispensations. But

For the proof of it. It is said, "God will not always

strive with the children of men," neither will he always wait and expect fruit from a fruitless and barren people; read the parable of the fig tree, Luke xiii. 7: "A certain man had a fig tree &c. and he said unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold these three years I come, seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none, cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground." Now though this parable doth concern the Jews, it concerns us also, wherein we may see there are three times, which go over the heads of all those that sit under the gospel.

A time of soul mercy; a time of God's forbearance; and a time of judgment or cutting down.

There is a time of forbearance and striving, a time when God seems to be at a stand, but then if men will not come unto him, he will resolve to go forth against them. Rom. ii. 4, 5: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds." So I say that though God seem to be at a stand as to his dispensations, yet if men do not come in unto him, he will then resolve to go forth against them in his wrath.

But you will say further, when may God be said to go forth against a nation or people in his anger.

For answer you may know it by God's dispensations, if his dispensations do bespeak so much, and do plainly declare that God is going forth against a nation or people, then you may be sure that he is resolved to go forth in his anger: and therefore,

Observe when a judgment comes that is extraordinary, then the Lord is gone out against that people. "The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth, the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands," Ps. ix. 16.

Look when God restrains prayer from a people, when he knocks off and draws off the hearts of his children from praying for such a people, then is God certainly come out against them in his wrath.

When all things work together for the worst, then the Lord is against that people; when all things instead of working

together for the best, do the contrary, and work together for the worst, then is God surely against that people.

As you may know when God is resolved to go out against a people in his dispensations, so you may also know it by our practices. As when God afflicts a people for crying sins, and yet incorrigibleness follows, then doth the Lord resolve to go against that people in wrath. As you may see in this chapter wherein our text is, there you find the people were guilty of great sins, of great oppression, and great superstition and idolatry, and God did not only afflict them for these sins but for others too, and therefore you find in the 7th verse, "I have withheld the rain from you, and have caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another." Here was distinction of judgments according to their several sins. And so at the 11th verse: "I have overthrown you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as firebrands plucked out of the burning." &c. God exercised them with several afflictions, and they were distinguishing afflictions too, and yet they were incorrigible; God tells them that he had afflicted them with cleanness of teeth and want of rain, "and yet have they not returned unto me, saith the Lord, therefore thus will I do unto thee," &c. Thus you see what distinguishing afflictions they were exercised with, "I have sent the pestilence among you, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord;" and yet after all these sore strokes, they still remained incorrigible, and therefore God was resolved to go forth against them in his wrath, and so I have done with the second general.

Thirdly, It is the duty of a people or nation to prepare to meet the Lord, when he is coming out against them. "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do thus, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

For the clearing of this I shall endeavour to shew you:

That it is a dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger and justice.

That though it be dreadful, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as to others.

That though it be not so dreadful to the people of God as to others, yet it is very uncomfortable for them too to meet with God in his wrath.

That when God is gone forth against a people in his anger,

and in the way of his wrath, it is their duty to prepare to meet with God.

It is a very dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger, "Who may abide the day of his wrath? It is a fearful thing (saith the apostle) to fall into the hand of the living God," Heb. x. 31; "For our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29, not a warming fire. There is a warming fire in your houses, and that is very comfortable in cold weather, but there is a consuming fire also, a fire that burns down houses and cities, and that fire is very terrible and dreadful; why our God is a consuming fire; your fire consumes your wood and coal, but it doth not consume your house, it doth not remove the rocks; but the fire of God's anger doth so, as you may see, Nahum i. 5, 6, "The mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea the world, and all that dwell therein; who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide the fierceness of his anger, his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him." Thus you see it is a very dreadful thing to meet with God in the way of his anger. But

Though it be dreadful and terrible, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as to others.

Though God be angry with his own people; yet it is but little in comparison to what he is with others; as in Zech. i. 2: "The Lord was sore displeased with your fathers," and at the 12th verse, there it is said, "God had indignation against them threescore and ten years," and then at the 15th verse: "And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." Here you see God was greatly displeased with the heathen, and but little displeased against his people; his displeasure is but little to them in comparison with what it is to others.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet his anger is their friend. If a man be my friend, not only his purse is my friend, but his sword also, if I have occasion; so if God be my friend, not only his love is my friend, but his anger too; but it is not so with the wicked.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they have



always free grace to fly unto and to be their friend ; but it is not thus with the wicked.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know, or may know that God is in covenant with them, and that they have some sweet and precious promises which belong to them. "Who can abide the fierceness of his wrath," &c., Nahum i. 5, 6. But look at the 7th verse, "The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him." In the worst times the people of God have promises to run unto for shelter : mark how the promise comes in here ; having shewed the fierceness of God's wrath in the 5th and 6th verses, "Who can stand before his presence," &c. ; he comes in with this promise at the 7th verse, "The Lord is good, and a strong hold in the day of trouble ; he knoweth them that trust in him."

Though God be angry with and afflict his own people, yet they know, or may know that God is afflicted with them, Christ partakes in their afflictions with them.

Though God do afflict his own people for their sins, yet they know, or may know that God always gives a due allowance in reference to their sins and infirmities ; the best gold must have an allowance of some dross, and the best saint must have an allowance upon the account of his infirmities. Says the Lord, Hosea xi. 8, "How shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim ?" Why did not the Lord say, How shall I make thee as Sodom or Gomorrah ? says Jerome, it was because Admah and Zeboim were lesser cities, and were drawn into sin by the example of the great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah : and so the ten tribes were drawn into sin by the great cities of Judah and by Jerusalem, and therefore God says, "How shall I make thee as Admah," &c. So, I say, God doth always give an allowance to his own people, even in the day of his wrath.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they may see God smile sometimes, even through his frowns. Faith doth many times pull the vizard from the face of Christ, as I may say, that when he seems to be their enemy, yet still they know that all things shall work together for their good.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know, or may know, that God will always have a hiding-place for

them, and so he will never provide for others. It may be observed, that when God's people in former times were persecuted in one part of the world, they had always acceptance and entertainment in some other part of the world; and when they were persecuted from thence, they had still acceptance elsewhere, according to that of Christ, "If they persecute you in one city, flee unto another, until the Son of Man come," Matt. x. 23. Why what is the meaning of this, but that God will always have some hiding-place for his people, until Christ come again.

Though God be angry with his own people, yet they know or may know that they are delivered from wrath to come, and they may comfort themselves thus: It is true that this dispensation of God toward me is in anger, but yet I am delivered from wrath to come. But now it is not so with others. The present dispensations of God's wrath upon the wicked, are but forerunners of his eternal wrath which shall come upon them. But it is not so with the saints. And so I conclude this second particular, That though it be very dreadful when God goes forth against a people in his wrath, yet it is not so dreadful to the people of God as it is to others. But,

Though it be not so terrible for the people of God to meet with God in his anger, and as it is for others; yet it is a very hard and uncomfortable thing for them to meet with God in this way, for they are used to have other kind of meetings with God, they use to meet him in the assemblies, to meet him in love, there the saints desire to meet with God. But,

If God do go forth against a people in his wrath, it is their duty, the duty of them all, and of God's own people also, to go forth to meet God. It is here commanded in the text, by way of reason. It is the duty of God's people and of others also, to honour God when they are under his dispensations. Now when men go forth to meet God, then they honour him. Abraham and Lot intended to honour the angel, and therefore they went forth to meet him; Joseph would honour his father Jacob, and therefore he went forth to meet him; Moses would honour his father Jethro, and therefore he went forth to meet him; Abigail would honour David, and therefore she went forth to meet him; Martha

would honour Christ, and therefore went forth to meet him; Cornelius and the believing Romans would honour Paul, and therefore they went forth to meet him. And so if a man be coming to your house, if you would honour him, you go forth to meet him. Why now it is our duty to honour God, and therefore it is our duty also to prepare to meet with God, that we may thereby honour him.

And further, it is the duty of all God's people to hold a compliance with his dispensations. Now if you do not go to meet with God, you do not comply with his dispensations. So that I say, when God comes forth against a people, it is their duty to go forth and to prepare to meet him. And so I come to the fourth general which was proposed.

Fourthly, If it be the duty of a people, when God goes forth against them in his anger, to prepare to meet him; why then what shall we do to prepare ourselves to meet with God, for sometimes God seems to be at a stand, and to be unresolved what to do, and sometimes he is resolved to go forth against a people: now what shall we do that we may prepare to meet God in both these cases?

I shall answer these two questions, and speak to them distinctly, and so conclude without any further application.

If you would meet with God in this case, then break off from your uncertainties and leave them. Do not stand, Shall I, shall I? as we say, in reference to your repentance and newness of life, be not uncertain in your judgments and practices. As in Hosea vi. 4, "O Ephraim (saith God), what shall I do unto thee?" Why, Lord, might they say, why art thou at an uncertainty with us? Why, saith God, because you are at an uncertainty with me; your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Sometimes you take up good resolutions, but they fade away again presently; sometimes you are grieved and troubled for sin, but your repentance fades away as the morning dew; sometimes you will perform duties, but your goodness fades away quickly: and therefore I am at this uncertainty with you, because you are at such uncertainty with me. Would you then meet with God in this case, why then break off from your uncertainties, that is the first.

If God seem to be at a stand, then do you repent and turn

to God, for this is that which God expects and looks for, "Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord." The Lord repeats it again and again, in the close of several verses, though I have been at a stand, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore, I say, when God seems to be at a stand, be sure that you return unto God; and what I say unto one, I say unto all, and to my own soul also: Doth the Lord seem to be at a stand with us, then let us all return to the Lord by repentance, it may be he stays his hand to see what we will do.

If God seem to be at a stand, and if you would meet with him, then go and make your choice: Chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

If the Lord seem to be at an uncertainty in point of his dispensations, and if you would meet with God, then take heed that you do not desire the woeful day, take heed that there be none among you who do desire the woeful day to come. A day of confusion in a nation is a woeful day, a day of civil war is a woeful day, civil war begins with uncivil sins, and ends in uncivil butcheries. Again,

If God seem to be at a stand in point of his dispensations, and if temptations do then come to draw you off from God, then do you answer all with this: How shall I do this thing and yet not sin against God, how shall I do this thing and yet not sin against my own conscience; shall the Lord have his *hows* for you as I may say, and will you have none for him? Shall the Lord say, How shall I give thee up, O England! How shall I give thee up, O London! How shall I give thee up, O Yarmouth! and will not you say, How shall I sin against the Lord; shall the Lord's bowels yearn and turn within him for you, and shall not you turn to God? Shall the Lord say, O drunkard, how shall I give thee up? O swearer, how shall I give thee up? O sabbath-breaker, how shall I give thee up? O unclean person or the like, how shall I give thee up? And shall not you say, How shall I do this thing and yet not sin against God? Therefore do thus and then you will be able to meet with God in this case.

But as for the second part of this question. Suppose the



Lord be resolved, as I hope he is not, to go forth against this nation, you may observe how he stands hovering as it were over the nation; but if God should resolve to go out against us, would you know how to prepare to meet with God?

Then you must observe what those evils are that do provoke God, and labour and strive against them till they be removed; and in order hereunto,

If you would meet with God in the way of his justice and anger, then you must get Christ into your arms, as I may say, and so go forth and meet God. It is written of one, that when he would gain favour of his king, he used to get the king's son in his arms, and so he got the favour he desired; so if you would find favour with God, get Jesus Christ into your arms, and so go forth to meet him.

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger and justice, then you must humble yourself before him and submit unto him: there are two parts in humiliation, sorrow for sin, and submission to God; now it may be you are wanting in one of those, therefore labour to abound in both, and so go forth to meet God.

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger and justice, then do you live justly, and deal justly and righteously. "He hath shewed thee O man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah vi. 8. Oh, my friends, labour to do what God commands and what God expects: now when he comes out against a people in the way of his justice, he expects that they should be found doing justice; read verse 9, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it:" God's voice is to scare us, and to cause us to leave sin and to turn unto him, and therefore he says, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it."

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger, then present unto God your free will offerings, and pray unto him and seek his face. When Jacob went forth to meet his brother Esau, he sent presents to him, and his brother's face was changed. Oh, what will become of those that never prayed one prayer more in private for all this anger and wrath of God that seems to be coming out against us!

If you would meet with God in his anger, then get suffering grace: how can you be able to meet with God in the way of his anger in suffering times, if you have not suffering grace?

If you would meet with God in his anger, be sure to be doing the work of your present day. Shew mercy to those that want mercy. They that are merciful shall obtain mercy with God. What will your money avail you in the day of God's wrath? The only way to meet with God in his wrath is to shew mercy.

If you would be able to meet with God in the way of his anger, then wait upon God in the way of his judgments, and in due time you shall be able to say, This is our God; "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him;" and if God be going, lay hold of him, take hold upon him, for so we are commanded. Isa. xxvii. 4, 5, "Fury is not in me," &c. Or, "Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me."

If you would meet with God in the way of his anger, then lay aside your particular interests, and think it your duty and desire to do it.

If you would prepare to meet with God in the way of his anger, then now, whilst you have a little time, go and set yourself and your house in order, that whatsoever may come, you may have nothing else to do but to die; and then if God do come in judgment and anger, you may be able to say, I have heard the rod and have trembled and have prepared to meet with God. And if God should not come in wrath, but some other way, yet you will have great comfort in your preparing to meet with God. For either God will come out against the nation in anger or he will not; if he do not, you will not lose by your preparing to meet him; but if he do, and you are prepared to meet with him, then will God meet with you in love, because you have prepared to meet with him in anger.

Therefore as you desire to be found doing the work that God would have you to do in this case, think of and remember what hath been spoken. All you that hear this word of God, prepare to meet with God; you know not how soon the Lord may come out against you in wrath, his dispensations in the world seem to run backward and forward: therefore be

always ready and prepared to meet with God, which way soever he may come, according to this of our text: "Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do thus unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

END OF VOL. II.